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COTSWOLD
District Council

Tuesday, 18 November 2025

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COUNCIL

A meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Chamber - Council Offices, Trinity Road, Cirencester, GL7 1PX on **Wednesday, 26 November 2025 at 2.00 pm.**

Jane Portman
Interim Chief Executive

To: Members of the Council
(Councillors Mark Harris, Ray Brassington, Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, David Fowles, Laura Hall-Wilson, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Andrew Maclean, Helene Mansilla, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Nigel Robbins, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson, Len Wilkins and Tristan Wilkinson)

Recording of Proceedings – The law allows the public proceedings of Council, Cabinet, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Committee Administrator know prior to the date of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
   To receive any apologies for absence. The quorum for Council is 9 members.

2. **Declarations of Interest**
   To receive any declarations of interest from Members relating to items to be considered at the meeting.

3. **Minutes** (Pages 13 - 20)
   To confirm the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 24 September 2025.

4. **Announcements from the Chair, Leader or Chief Executive**
   To receive any announcements from the Chair of the Council, the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

5. **Unsung Heroes Awards**
   Purpose
   To announce the Unsung Heroes awards for this quarter.

6. **Public Questions**
   To deal with questions from the public within the open forum question and answer session of fifteen minutes in total. Questions from each member of the public should be no longer than one minute each and relate to issues under the Council's remit. At any one meeting no person may submit more than two questions and no more than two such questions may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

   The Chair will ask whether any members of the public present at the meeting wish to ask a question and will decide on the order of questioners.

   The response may take the form of:
   a) a direct oral answer;
   b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
   c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

7. **Member Questions**
   A Member of the Council may ask the Chair, the Leader, a Cabinet Member or the Chair of any Committee a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Cotswold District. A maximum period of

fifteen minutes shall be allowed at any such meeting for Member questions.

A Member may only ask a question if:

a) the question has been delivered in writing or by electronic mail to the Chief Executive no later than 5.00 p.m. on the working day before the day of the meeting; or
b) the question relates to an urgent matter, they have the consent of the Chair to whom the question is to be put and the content of the question is given to the Chief Executive by 9.30 a.m. on the day of the meeting.

An answer may take the form of:

a) a direct oral answer;
b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

The following Member questions were submitted prior to the publication of the Agenda.

Question 1:

Councillor Julia Judd to Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning.

CDC is currently recruiting Enforcement Officers. There seems to be an ongoing issue with recruitment and retention of staff in this department.
In January 2023, Cllr Stephen Andrews put forward the motion "Armed Forces Covenant Re-Endorsement", which I seconded and used the opportunity to talk about The Veteran's Gateway.

The Veterans Gateway offers information, advice and support for army veterans and their families. They are the first point of contact for army veteran welfare needs including employability and ongoing opportunities. If training is needed, this can be funded by The Forces Employment Charity.
I liaised with both organisations who responded enthusiastically to my suggestion that an Enforcement Officer role would be a great fit for army veterans, as it is for ex-Police, as there are many transferable skills.
I liaised with Planning Services Management and shared the information and contact details of both The Veterans Gateway and The Forces Employment Charity. As CDC is in the process of recruiting an Enforcement Officer, has this line of enquiry been pursued?

Question 2:

Councillor Laura Hall-Wilson to Councillor Paul Hodgkinson, Cabinet Member for Health, Culture and Visitor Experience.

I am a frequent user of the pool at Cirencester Leisure Centre and along with

many of my contemporaries with young families, we have become concerned at the lack of managerial oversight of some of the younger members of staff at the centre, culminating recently in a physical altercation between two members of staff at the side of the pool during the children's swimming lessons. I am sure you will agree that it is completely unacceptable.

In the lead up to this event, there have been several Sundays where lifeguards are overwhelmed by too many children and families trying to join the warmer teaching pool having been allowed to pay and enter the pool through reception and on many occasions the pool is simply too cold for babies to be in there for any length of time. The level of cleanliness in the wet changing areas often falls below an acceptable standard, there needs to be more proactive cleaning during the time the pool is open.
Given Cirencester is the largest centre in the district this does not reflect well on this service and presumably these issues are also prevalent at other centres.
Please can you confirm you are aware of these issues, and confirm what actions you will take to address them?

Question 3:

Councillor Tom Stowe to Councillor Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council.

Following an investigation carried out by the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit a report was presented to Audit and Governance Committee in September which highlighted significant issues and irregularities regarding CDC procurement processes.
The report refers to both an "Officer" and a "Councillor" and their role in 3 specific procurement exercises and confirms there have been clear breaches of procurement rules which are specifically
designed to protect public money, ensure good value for money, prevent fraud and corruption and aid transparency and fairness for businesses supplying the council.
"Section 4" of the report details the findings on the procurement exercise surrounding "Company B" and a review of the Council's brand identity and design guidelines.
The findings of this internal investigation confirm that an unnamed Councillor "recommended" a company to be targeted to carry out this work, implying clear favouritism towards this business. This 'mystery' Councillor was clearly deeply involved in this procurement process. The report goes on to highlight several other serious concerns regarding this and other procurement processes.
You have previously publicly refused to identify the mystery Councillor referred to in the report.

From the evidence provided, there seems to be clear evidence of multiple breaches of the CDC Councillor's Code of Conduct by this mystery Councillor, as follows:-

- Rules of conduct 7 – (5) Do not use your position improperly to confer on or secure for yourself or any other person, an advantage
- Rules of conduct 7 – (6) Do not do anything which compromises, or is likely to compromise, the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, the Authority.
- Rules of conduct 7 –(9) Do promote and support high standards of conduct when serving in your public post by leadership and example.
- Rules of conduct 7 – (10) Do not behave in a manner which brings your role or the Authority into disrepute.
- Rules of conduct 7 – (15) When making decisions on behalf of, or as part of, the Authority: Do ensure that decisions are made on merit, particularly when making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits.

CDC officers are refusing to pursue a formal code of conduct complaint lodged by the Conservative Group as we are unable to name the mystery Councillor in our complaint. Given the severity of the issues highlighted in this report, it is undeniably in the public interest to disclose the identity of this 'mystery' Councillor and that they are held accountable.
Continuing to "cover-up" and withhold the identity of this Councillor is causing reputational damage to CDC as well as casting a cloud over other elected members, as the Public continues to speculate over the identity of the Councillor concerned.
There are a number of serious potential implications arising from this report including reputational damage, legal challenges from suppliers who have been treated unfairly, financial risk from litigation, breach of governance and accountability and the potential for corruption.
It is crucial that the Council demonstrates complete transparency regarding this issue and the public have a right to know what role this Councillor is currently playing in Local Government. Who is the mystery councillor?

Question 4:

Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Andrea Pellegram, Cabinet Member for Environment and Regulatory Services.

At a previous Council meeting, I asked you a member question regarding the removal of all the public litter bins at the lay-bys on the public highways and whether this decision was the right one.

I requested that a review was carried out into not only the cost saving but also the fact that litter continues to be left in lay-bys and is blown across neighbouring fields which is both unsightly as well as a hazard to animals.

Please can you update me on the progress of this review?

Question 5:

Cllr Len Wilkins to Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning, Juliet Layton.

Bourton on the Water and other market towns in the District are suffering from many properties being turned into Air B&B and other holiday let units, this is contributing to our young people being unable to stay in the village. Can CDC take any action to control this as part of the local plan review?

Question 6:

Councillor Gina Blomefield to Councillor Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council.

I was delighted to receive the CDC organogram in August showing the structure of the council following Phase 2 of the Publica transition, this has been enormously helpful.

At the time there were a number of vacancies showing, please could you confirm the current number of employment vacancies at Cotswold District Council and confirm whether there is a policy on how to deal with vacancies which remain unfilled?

Question 7:

Councillor Tony Slater to Councillor Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council.

Now that Publica Phase 2 transition is complete and we look forward to the impending Local Government Reorganisation, please can you confirm that CDC maintains a comprehensive Asset Risk Register. Please confirm how often it is updated, monitored and reviewed. Please confirm who carries out this work and who is ultimately responsible?

Question 8:

Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Paul Hodgkinson, Cabinet Member for Health, Culture and Visitor Experience.

As a senior Portfolio Holder of this administration and a longstanding and well-respected elected member, please could you confirm what involvement you have previously had in procurement exercises on behalf of this Council? Could you confirm what training you received regarding procurement rules and processes?

Question 9:

Councillor Dilys Neill to Councillor Tristan Wilkinson, Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation.

I have been approached by several private hire vehicle drivers in my ward who are concerned about the proliferation of vehicles from outside the district who are working in the area. There has been a particular expansion in the number of drivers who are working via Uber. Kevin Dunford has been very kind in explaining that there is a loophole which allows drivers who have personal, vehicle & operators licences with another district to work across district boundaries.

This is causing concern among local residents as well as drivers. Firstly, it is clear

that these drivers do not know the locality and even with the use of SatNavs, they can't always find the destination. Secondly, there is concern that the vehicles may be used for cross border criminal activities. Thirdly, the livelihood of drivers licenced to Cotswold District is threatened.

Is there anything which CDC can do to support our local drivers? The situation is likely to get worse with the advent of robot taxis.

8. **Appointment of a Permanent Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service), Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer** (Pages 21 - 28)
Purpose:
The purpose of this report is to approve the recommendation of the Performance and Appointments Committee that the Interim Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) and Returning Officer / Electoral Registration Officer is appointed on a permanent basis from 1 January 2026.

Recommendation(s):
Council is recommended by the Performance and Appointments Committee to:

1. Appoint Jane Portman to the role of permanent Chief Executive Officer with effect from 1 January 2026 on an annual salary of £140,000 with an additional one-off allowance of up to £8,000.
2. Appoint Jane Portman as the Council's Head of Paid Service for the purposes of Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 with effect from 1 January 2026.
3. Appoint Jane Portman as the Council's Returning Officer for the purposes of Section 35 of the Representation of the Peoples Act (1983) and Regulation 4 of the Parish & Community Meeting (Polls) Rules (1987).

9. **Mid-Term Review of Members' Allowances Scheme** (Pages 29 - 56)
Purpose:
To present to Council the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel which has undertaken a mid-term review of the Council's members' allowances scheme.

Recommendation(s):
That Council considers the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, which are that:

1. The special responsibility allowance (SRA) for Leader is increased from 3.0x the basic allowance to 3.5x the basic allowance.
2. The SRA for Deputy Leader is increased from 2.0x basic to 2.5x basic.
3. The SRA for Cabinet Member is increased from 1.5x basic to 2.0x basic.
4. The SRA for Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee is increased from 1.0x basic to 1.5x basic.
5. The SRA for Chair of Audit and Governance Committee is increased from

0.5x basic to 1.0x basic.

6. Any agreed increases to SRAs are backdated to 1 April 2025 (being the mid-point of the 4-year Scheme).
7. The existing allowance for Co-opted Members of £1,000 per annum is included in the Scheme.
8. That additional clarification is provided on expenses claims in the Scheme, specifically that:
    a. The list of approved duties for which expenses can be claimed is included in the Scheme.
    b. VAT receipts are requested for mileage claims.
    c. Mileage claims should normally be calculated from the Councillor's home address.
    d. Claims should be made within 3 months of the expenditure being incurred.
    e. Mileage rates are aligned with HMRC rates to prevent the creation of taxable benefits.
9. Officers engage with town and parish councils in the New Year on the option of establishing a tiered allowances scheme to guide town and parish councils in the payment of allowances to elected town and parish councillors, to enable the Independent Remuneration Panel (as the Parish Remuneration Panel) to assess whether such guidance would be useful.
10. Note that the Parish Remuneration Panel has recommended to Cirencester Town Council that Cirencester Town Councillors (including the Chair) receive an allowance set at 20% of the basic allowance paid to Cotswold District Councillors.

10. **Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/2027** (Pages 57 - 70)

Purpose

To consider the revised Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2026/27.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet recommends that Full Council resolves to:

1. Agree the increase to income bands as detailed within paragraphs 3.2, 3.3 and Annex A of this report from 1 April 2026.
2. Agree that any balance remaining in the earmarked reserve 'Hardship Fund' be made available in 2026/27 financial year for reasons detailed in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of this report.

11. **Community Governance Review** (Pages 71 - 86)

Purpose:

The purpose of the report is to request that Council approve and adopt the Terms of Reference for a Community Governance Review along with draft proposals.

Recommendation:
That Council resolves to:

1. Approve and adopt the terms of reference and draft proposals for consultation for the Community Governance Review.

12. **Programme of Meetings for 2026/2027** (Pages 87 - 94)

Purpose:
To set a programme of Council and Committee meetings for 2026/27.

Recommendation(s):
That Council resolves to:

1. Agree the programme of meetings from June 2026 to May 2027 as set out in Annex A and Annex B.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer), in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme of meetings in the event that there is any future decision of Council to change the committee structure or committee remits that impacts the programme of meetings.
3. Delegate authority to the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services to set the meeting dates for the Performance and Appointments Committee, member training and briefing sessions, any working groups established by the Council and any meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee (Licensing Act 2003 Matters) and the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee (if required).
4. Agree that, subject to any alternative proposals Council considers and agrees, meeting start times will be rolled forwards from 2025/26.

13. **Local Government Reorganisation Proposal - Full Proposal for Local Government reorganisation (LGR) in Gloucestershire** (Pages 95 - 788)

Purpose:
To note the two proposals for local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire that have been developed collaboratively with all seven Gloucestershire councils for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 17 November 2025, Council on 26 November 2025 and Cabinet on 26 November 2025.
The options are:

a) creating a single unitary authority for the whole county and
b) creating two unitary authorities, based on an East / West division of existing district and city councils. The proposal for East Gloucestershire Council comprises Tewksbury Borough Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Cotswold District Council and the associated proportion of Gloucestershire County Council. The proposal for West Gloucestershire Council comprises Gloucester City Council, Forest of Dean District Council and Stroud District Council and the associated proportion of Gloucestershire County Council.

Following engagement with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Council,

Cabinet will decide which, if any proposal should be formally submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in response to his invitation dated 5 February 2025.

Recommendation:

1. That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Council consider the following two proposals for local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire and make any recommendations they wish to Cabinet for their decision.
2. That Cabinet considers which, if any, of the proposals it wishes to submit to Government regarding the future of local government in Gloucestershire
3. That Cabinet resolves to treat the decision as urgent under Part D6, paragraph 4.14 of the Constitution, and therefore disapplies the call-in procedure, on the grounds that any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would prejudice the Council's and the public's interests.

14. **Next meeting**

The next meeting of Council will be held on 21 January 2026 at 2.00 pm.

(END)

COTSWOLD
District Council

Council
24/September2025

Minutes of a meeting of Council held on Wednesday, 24 September 2025

Members present:
Mark Harris (Chair)

Gina Blomefield	Angus Jenkinson	Tom Stowe
Nick Bridges	Julia Judd	Jeremy Theyer
Patrick Coleman	Juliet Layton	Clare Turner
David Cunningham	Andrew Maclean	Michael Vann
Tony Dale	Mike McKeown	Jon Wareing
Mike Evemy	Dilys Neill	Ian Watson
David Fowles	Andrea Pellegram	Len Wilkins
Paul Hodgkinson	Nigel Robbins	Tristan Wilkinson
Nikki Ind	Tony Slater	

Officers present:

Jane Portman, Interim Chief Executive Officer	Tyler Jardine
Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services	Kira Thompson, Election and Democratic Services Support Assistant
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer)	Michelle Burge, Chief Accountant and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Julia Gibson, Democratic Services Officer	Joseph Walker, Head of Economic Development and Communities

36 Apologies

Apologies were received for Councillor Clare Bloomer, Councillor Ray Brassington, Councillor Laura Hall-Wilson, Councillor Joe Harris, Councillor Helene Mansilla and Councillor Lisa Spivey.

37 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

38 Minutes

Council considered the minutes of the Council meeting held on 16 July 2025.
A wording error was identified in the response to Councillor Gina Blomefield's question from the previous meeting.

Councillor Juliet Layton proposed the approval of the amended minutes, the proposal was seconded by Councillor Stowe, put to the vote and agreed by Council.

RESOLVED that the amended minutes of Full Council 16 July 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

Voting record:
For 21, Against 0, Abstentions 6

To APPROVE the minutes of Full Council 16 July 2025 (Resolution)		
For	Gina Blomefield, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, David Fowles, Mark Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Tony Slater, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Michael Vann, Ian Watson, Tristan Wilkinson and Len Wilkins	21
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	Andrew Maclean, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Nigel Robbins, Clare Turner and Jon Wareing	6
Carried		

39 Announcements from the Chair, Leader or Chief Executive

Chair's Announcements
The Chair highlighted the success of both the Phoenix Festival, which welcomed over 22,000 people and the Orpheus Festival, noting the value of such events in strengthening community life. He thanked volunteers, noted Cotswold Districts Council's funding had enabled inclusion and community pride, and suggested similar events be supported further north in the District.

The Leader welcomed Tyler Jardine, the new Trainee Democratic Services Officer, and wished him a long and successful career at Cotswold District Council.

Leaders Announcements
The Leader congratulated two local winners of the BBC Gloucestershire Make a Difference Awards.

Ed Simpson, a 16-year-old from Cirencester who had raised over £100,000 for charity while undergoing treatment for leukaemia, had won the Young Hero Award. Students from the National Star College received the Green Award for creating a hedgehog-friendly campus.
The Leader reminded Members of the following events:

- A planning enforcement briefing was planned for Monday 29 September. The briefing would update members on enforcement issues, discuss challenges, and aimed to improve communication between members and officers.
- An online Local Government Organisation (LGR) briefing on 14 October. This briefing was in preparation for the Council discussion in November. Members were reminded that the Cabinet would formally submit the Council's response after the November discussion.
- An All-Member briefing on the Local Plan update scheduled for 7 October, ahead of the Regulation 18 consultation documents being considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13 October and Cabinet on 16 October. The public consultation was expected to start in early November.

40 Public Questions

There were three public questions.

Question 1
Nicola Charleswaith, a resident, raised concerns about ongoing rat infestations at their newly purchased home. They reported that, despite notifying the Senior Environmental Officer and Health Officer on 12 September no progress report had been received. The infestation had caused damage to electrical wiring, leading to power loss, and required multiple pest control interventions. The resident highlighted health hazards, property damage, personal disruption, and the impact on their family, and requested clarity on what long-term preventative measures would be enforced.

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning shared the feedback obtained from officers.
Following the resident's concerns, the Officer had visited the property, confirmed it had been boarded up, and contacted the property owner's business address but received no response. They planned to serve a "prevention of damage by pests" notice if no satisfactory action was taken. Further, the officer shared recent correspondence with the neighbouring property owner, who expressed surprise at the infestation and indicated they would engage a pest control firm to investigate. The officer confirmed that the issue remained open and would continue to be pursued due to its unacceptable nature.

Question 2
Valerie Dyson, a resident, raised concerns about black bin collections in Middle Duntisbourne since the June 2024 service reorganisation, reporting frequent missed

collections. The issue was attributed to insufficient small vehicles for narrow lanes, with only one narrow access truck often breaking down. The resident questioned why the Council had not invested in new vehicles despite unspent 2024–25 capital allocations, noting that the missed collection rate was over double the target, and asked why bin collection was not being prioritised.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Regulatory Services acknowledged ongoing issues with Friday bin collections, caused by vehicle breakdowns, insufficient crews, and reliance on agency staff. A new Friday service round will soon be implemented, moving some collections to Wednesday. Vehicle replacement and refurbishment plans were underway. Improvements to communication with residents, including a future app, were being developed. Smaller vehicles suitable for narrow lanes were being considered.

Question 3
Councillor Ben Eddolls, Member for Stow on the Wold Town Council, raised concerns about the poor condition of public toilets in Stow on the Wold, describing them as frequently dirty and inadequate for visitor numbers. Complaints had been received from the public highlighting issues with cleanliness, functionality, and odour.
The Cabinet Member for Health, Culture and Visitor Experience acknowledged the seriousness of public toilet standards, noting that users should expect clean facilities. They confirmed raising previous concerns with officers and the contractor, and that toilets were currently cleaned three times a day. While visitor numbers during the summer made maintaining cleanliness challenging, the Cabinet Member emphasised the need to review practices, improve standards, and follow up with officers.

41 Member Questions

Members' written questions, written responses, supplementary questions and supplementary responses can be found in Annex A attached.

18:41- Councillor David Fowles left the meeting and did not return.

42 Corporate Plan 2024-2028 Update

The purpose of the report was to seek Council adoption of a refreshed Corporate Plan for the period 2025 through to 2028.

The report was introduced by Councillor Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council.

The Council had updated its priorities to reflect changing national and local contexts, including the proposed Local Government Reorganisation and the new Local Plan for the district. A new priority, "Planning for the Future," was added to guide sustainable

development, housing, and transport, acknowledging that the Council may not exist in three years.
Other priorities included maintaining high-quality, reliable services amid uncertainty; tackling the climate emergency by reducing emissions, promoting biodiversity, and greening operations; delivering affordable and suitable housing while addressing empty homes and homelessness; and supporting a resilient local economy, including high streets, the visitor economy, and sustainable business growth.

Councillor Cunningham asked the Leader to clarify the differences between the updated corporate plan and the previous version, noting that they seemed very similar. The Leader explained that the last plan had dated from January 2024 and that the new version removed some previously delivered items while introducing new priorities, including "Planning for the Future." He highlighted that the updated plan provided clear direction for officers, assigned accountability to named Members, and included achievable delivery dates, ensuring it was both practical and actionable.

Councillor Layton seconded the report and reserved the right to speak.

The Chair then moved to the debate.

Members of the Conservative Group raised concerns that the Corporate Plan appeared uninspiring, underwhelming and rushed whilst not showing how outcomes would be measured to ensure success.
The Cabinet Member for Health, Cultures and Visitor Experiences highlighted the two key areas of his portfolio, the Creative Cotswolds and the Community Safety Partnership which were claimed to be inspirational in their delivery.

Members agreed that housing and community resilience was key to responding to the climate emergency and urged the Council to confirm that the registered housing providers were planning on updating older housing across the district.

Councillor McKeown, Cabinet Member for Climate Change and Digital, confirmed that the figures included in the Corporate Plan reflected the reduction in CO_2 of Cotswold District Council activities.

A Member stressed that housing alone does not build communities and called for better follow-through on infrastructure, environmental issues, and unfinished developments, emphasising the importance of the inclusion of "Planning for the Future" in the Corporate Plan.

Councillor Layton rose to second the resolutions and noted that the document served both to set aims and priorities for councillors and, importantly, to ensure officers were clear on them. The Local Plan was highlighted as central to much of the Council's work,

underpinning areas such as climate change, housing, registered providers, and community support.
The Chair invited Councillor Mike Evemy to sum up. It was noted that keeping staff informed and engaged during the LGR process would be essential to maintaining continuity of services. It was also highlighted that the Local Plan would play a key role in shaping the District's future, with an emphasis on building sustainable communities rather than solely increasing housing provision.

Voting record
For – 19, Against – 0, Abstain - 6
Councillor Len Wilkins and Councillor David Fowles did not vote.

To APPROVE the recommendations and adopt the Corporate Plan 2025 - 2028 (Resolution)		
For	Gina Blomefield, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, Mark Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Nigel Robbins, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson and Tristan Wilkinson	19
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	David Cunningham, Julia Judd, Andrew Maclean, Tony Slater, Tom Stowe and Jeremy Theyer	6
Carried		

43 Treasury Management Outturn

The purpose of the report was to receive and discuss details of the Council's treasury management performance for the period 01 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

The report was introduced by Councillor Patrick Coleman, Cabinet Member for Finance, who made the following points arising from consideration by the Audit and Governance Committee.

- The Audit and Governance Committee commended the 2024–25 Treasury Management Outturn Report, confirming that activities aligned with the approved strategy, prudential indicators, and statutory guidance, with no breaches identified.
- The Committee had identified the Council's prudent approach to maintaining sufficient internal cash balances and emphasised the continued focus on investment security and liquidity amid market volatility.
- It was acknowledged that the Council was in a stronger financial position than many other authorities, with resources carefully and wisely invested in pooled funds under sound professional advice.

- The Audit and Governance Committee suggested that future reports include clearer information on long-term investment performance expectations.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Nigel Robbins. He noted that investment returns were higher than expected, at £1.6 million against a forecast of £1.2 million, due to delayed capital spending and stronger yields.

19:31 Councillor Tony Slater left the Chamber and did not return.

The Chair then moved to the debate.

A question was raised regarding the approval of any future borrowing by the Council and whether the decision would come before Council or Cabinet. The Chief Accountant and Deputy S151 Officer would clarify the value which determined which body would action the request.

A Member observed that investment returns appeared broadly in line with service cost inflation, suggesting the Council had maintained the real value of its investments. The Deputy S151 Officer confirmed this was broadly correct, noting an average return of 4.6%, with overall costs rising by slightly less, resulting in a positive position overall.

Voting record:
For – 25, Against – 0, Abstain - 0
Councillors Tony Slater and David Fowles did not vote having left the meeting.

To APPROVE the treasury management outturn report 2024/25 (Resolution)		
For	Gina Blomefield, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, Mark Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Andrew Maclean, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Nigel Robbins, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson, Tristan Wilkinson and Len Wilkins	25
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

44 Notice of Motions

No motions were received.

45 Next meeting

The next Council meeting was 26 November 2025 at 2pm.

The Meeting commenced at 6.00 pm and closed at 7.40 pm

Chair

(END)

COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	**COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**COUNCIL - 26 NOVEMBER 2025**
Subject	**APPOINTMENT OF PERMANENT CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (HEAD OF PAID SERVICE), RETURNING OFFICER AND ELECTORAL RETURNING OFFICER**
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council Email: mike.evemy@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Angela Claridge – Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer) Email: angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Angela Claridge – Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer) Email: angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk Cheryl Sloan – Assistant Director, Workforce Strategy and Transformation Email: cheryl.sloan@publicagroup.uk
Summary/Purpose	The purpose of this report is to approve the recommendation of the Performance and Appointments Committee that the Interim Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) and Returning Officer / Electoral Registration Officer is appointed on a permanent basis from 1 January 2026.
Annexes	N/A
Recommendation(s)	Council is recommended by the Performance and Appointments Committee to: 1. Appoint Jane Portman to the role of permanent Chief Executive Officer with effect from 1 January 2026 on an annual salary of £140,000 with an additional one-off

	allowance of up to £8,000. 2. Appoint Jane Portman as the Council's Head of Paid Service for the purposes of Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 with effect from 1 January 2026. 3. Appoint Jane Portman as the Council's Returning Officer for the purposes of Section 35 of the Representation of the Peoples Act (1983) and Regulation 4 of the Parish & Community Meeting (Polls) Rules (1987).
Corporate priorities	All
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Leader of the Council Members of the Cabinet. Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer Assistant Director Workforce Planning and Transformation Recruitment Manager

COTSWOLD
District Council

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Performance and Appointments Committee has responsibility for all relevant matters relating to the salaries and contractual terms of the Chief Executive Officer / Head of Paid Service.

1.2 Following the announcement that the previous Chief Executive Officer was leaving the Council on 30 June 2025, the Performance & Appointments Committee (PAC), at its meeting held on 18 June 2025, agreed to commence the process of appointing an interim Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service), Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer. The role was proposed to be for a period of up to 9 months to ensure the Council's statutory duties were fulfilled and to provide sufficient time for a permanent appointment to be made.

1.3 Following the meeting on 18 June 2025, a Selection Panel was formed from Members of the Performance and Appointments Committee to undertake interviews for the interim Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) who also undertakes the role of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.

1.4 The Head of HR and the Council Leader sought suitable candidates for the role from the Local Government Association, Local Government East of England Talent Bank and internally. After an initial short-listing, interviews were conducted by the Selection Panel, and an interim appointment was recommended by the PAC.

1.5 At the Extraordinary Council meeting on 26 June 2025, the following recommendations were resolved:

1. Approve the recommendation of the Performance & Appointments Committee that the person named in Annex A be appointed as Chief Executive Officer/Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer for a period of up to 9 months from 1 July 2025 or the date of commencement in post of a permanent Chief Executive Officer, whichever is earlier, to ensure the Council's statutory duties are fulfilled and provide sufficient time for a permanent appointment to be made.
2. Appoint the interim Chief Executive Officer as the Council's Head of Paid Service for the purposes of Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, from 1 July 2025 until a permanent Chief Executive Officer is appointed.
3. Approve the recommendation of the Selection Panel that the candidate, whose profile is shown in Annex A, is appointed as Interim Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service), Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer with effect from 1 July 2025 or as soon as practically possible after that date.

4. Appoint, in the event that the interim Chief Executive Officer is unable to take up the role with effect from 1 July, 2025, David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive Officer to undertake the role of Head of Paid Service, Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer until such time as the interim Chief Executive Officer is available to take up the role.
5. Authorise the Head of HR to commence the process of appointing a permanent Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) and Returning Officer / Electoral Registration Officer.

1.6 The Council is advised that the Interim Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) and Returning Officer / Electoral Registration Officer commenced employment on 1 July 2025, so point 4 of the above recommendations was not enacted.

1.7 On 6 November 2025, the PAC met to consider point 5 of the recommendations; the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) and Returning Officer / Electoral Registration Officer.

1.8 This report sets out the considerations made by the PAC and the recommendations proposed for Council to resolve.

2. APPOINTMENT OF PERMANENT CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

2.1 When considering the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) and Returning Officer / Electoral Registration Officer for Cotswold District Council, the PAC considered a number of points to help inform their recommendation to Council. These considerations included the following:

- As part of the forthcoming Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), new unitary structures are scheduled to be established on 1 April 2028 (vesting day). Whilst this appointment is to a permanent position, the role of Chief Executive Officer for CDC will cease to exist on vesting day.
- The projected cost of undertaking an external recruitment process is approximately £27,000, with an anticipated duration of up to nine months, inclusive of the successful candidate's notice period.
- Risks associated with an external recruitment process and whether the limited tenure of this role reduces its appeal in the employment market. Recruitment to statutory officers in local government is challenging due to their significant accountability for governance, compliance and financial probity together with the requirement for a mix of technical and strategic leadership skills.

- Should a recruitment process prove unsuccessful and interim arrangements be required, the estimated cost of engaging an interim Chief Executive is in the region of £1,000 to £1,500 per day.
- Maintaining the continuity and stability established by the Interim Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) and Returning Officer / Electoral Registration Officer is essential following a period of significant change. This includes the transition from Publica, change in Chief Executive Officer and Council Leader and the uncertainty arising from LGR.
- Employees and elected members have expressed positive feedback regarding the Interim Chief Executive, noting the stability, strong leadership and effective delivery of Council priorities during this period.
- The experience and track record the Interim Chief Executive Officer brings to CDC in successfully delivering Council priorities and delivering LGR, having been instrumental in the creation of two unitary councils in previous roles.
- Discussions with the Interim Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) and Returning Officer / Electoral Registration Officer as to whether, if offered the role permanently, this would be accepted.

2.2 Taking all of the above factors into account and following confirmation from the Interim Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) and Returning Officer / Electoral Registration Officer of her interest in the role - subject to a review of terms and conditions - a salary benchmarking exercise was undertaken.

2.3 The benchmarking exercise took into consideration average Chief Executive Officer salaries in Gloucestershire, data provided by the Local Government Association (LGA) for the South-West region and for England as a whole, and the CDC Pay Policy which states that statutory officers' individual posts are graded via benchmarking exercises.

2.4 The benchmarking exercise also took into consideration remuneration packages which are normally offered for roles at this level. In accordance with Council's Relocation Policy, the role of Chief Executive Officer would be within scope for a relocation allowance which is an allowance of up to £8,000 payable on qualifying expenditure such as removal expenses, conveyancing and legal fees, temporary accommodation costs.

2.5 The relocation allowance is normally only payable if the individual is relocating to a sole permanent residence in the area. Due to LGR the Interim Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service) and Returning Officer / Electoral Registration Officer will not be relocating on a permanent basis (due to the short-term nature) but will either

purchase a second home or rent until vesting day to enable the majority of time to be spent working from the Trinity Road offices. It is therefore considered appropriate that an allowance of up to £8,000 maximum, as set out in the Relocation Policy, is included in the terms and conditions for appointment. All other terms and conditions are agreed nationally as part of the Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Chief Executives including the annual cost of living pay increase.

3. RECOMMENDATION

3.1 Having considered the points detailed under point 2.1 and the outcomes from the benchmarking exercise on remuneration, the Council is recommended by the Performance and Appointments Committee to:

1. Appoint Jane Portman to the role of permanent Chief Executive Officer with effect from 1 January 2026 on an annual salary of £140,000 with an additional one-off allowance of up to £8,000.
2. Appoint Jane Portman as the Council's Head of Paid Service for the purposes of Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 with effect from 1 January 2026.
3. Appoint Jane Portman as the Council's Returning Officer for the purposes of Section 35 of the Representation of the Peoples Act (1983) and Regulation 4 of the Parish & Community Meeting (Polls) Rules (1987).

3.2 Although the proposed salary sits towards the upper end of the range for Chief Executive Officers in Gloucestershire, below for Cheltenham Borough Council and Gloucestershire County Council, it is considered appropriate. This reflects the CEO experience that the incumbent brings, the wealth of experience in LGR, the current market situation, the short-term nature of the role, prevailing interim market rates and ensuring continuity for our council and employees.

3.3 These terms are acceptable to the Interim Chief Executive Officer.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 As set out in Part C2 of the Council's constitution, it is the responsibility of Full Council to *"confirm the appointment of the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) and designate officers as the Monitoring Officer and the S151 Officer".*

4.2 Part C3 of the Constitution sets out the responsibility of the Performance & Appointments Committee to *"consider all relevant matters relating to the salaries*

and contractual terms of the Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service and Statutory Officers".

4.3 As set out in the Council's 2025/26 Pay Policy Statement, approved by Council at its meeting on 19 March 2025, Full Council has the responsibility for appointing any officer where the salary package exceeds £100,000 per annum. The Interim Chief Executive Officer's salary package is currently £130,000 and the recommendation is to increase this to £140,000.

4.4 Given the interim nature of the role, an annual salary of £140,000 with an additional one-off allowance of up to £8,000 is recommended.

4.5 Therefore, an additional budget allocation of £60,000 is required in the current financial year (2025/26) funded from vacancy savings of £20,000 and £40,000 from the contingency budget held to mitigate in-year expenditure risks.

4.6 The additional budget requirement from 2026/27 of £40,000 will be included in the 2026/27 Revenue Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) that will be considered by Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There is a statutory duty to appoint a Head of Paid Service, and this is covered in the recommendations. By virtue of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001, as amended, the Council must include in its procedural rules that an offer of appointment as the Head of Paid Service is subject to the approval of Full Council. The Chief Executive Officer is designated as Head of Paid Service under Section 4 Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Before an offer of appointment may be made, the Regulations also require that the Council must ensure that each member of the Council's Cabinet is notified of the proposed appointment and given the opportunity to object to the proposed appointment. Cabinet Members will be consulted following the publication of this report and the outcome of that consultation will be reported to the Council at its meeting on 26 November.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 As set out in the main body of the report, the Council is legally obliged to designate an officer to fulfil the role of Head of Paid Service. Approving the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer fulfils this requirement.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1 The Council's employment practices are consistent with equalities legislation.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no climate or ecological emergency implications arising directly from this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	**COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**COUNCIL – 26 NOVEMBER 2025**
Subject	**MID-TERM REVIEW OF COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL'S MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2023-27**
Wards affected	None
Accountable member	Councillor Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council Email: Mike.Evemy@Cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development Email: Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Email: Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To present to Council the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel which has undertaken a mid-term review of the Council's members' allowances scheme.
Annexes	Annex A – Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel Annex B – Current Members Allowances Scheme with recommended changes shown
Recommendation(s)	That Council considers the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel, which are that: 1. The special responsibility allowance (SRA) for Leader is increased from 3.0x the basic allowance to 3.5x the basic allowance. 2. The SRA for Deputy Leader is increased from 2.0x basic to 2.5x basic. 3. The SRA for Cabinet Member is increased from 1.5x basic to 2.0x basic. 4. The SRA for Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee is increased from 1.0x basic to 1.5x basic.

	5. The SRA for Chair of Audit and Governance Committee is increased from 0.5x basic to 1.0x basic. 6. Any agreed increases to SRAs are backdated to 1 April 2025 (being the mid-point of the 4-year Scheme). 7. The existing allowance for Co-opted Members of £1,000 per annum is included in the Scheme. 8. That additional clarification is provided on expenses claims in the Scheme, specifically that: a. The list of approved duties for which expenses can be claimed is included in the Scheme. b. VAT receipts are requested for mileage claims. c. Mileage claims should normally be calculated from the Councillor's home address. d. Claims should be made within 3 months of the expenditure being incurred. e. Mileage rates are aligned with HMRC rates to prevent the creation of taxable benefits. 9. Officers engage with town and parish councils in the New Year on the option of establishing a tiered allowances scheme to guide town and parish councils in the payment of allowances to elected town and parish councillors, to enable the Independent Remuneration Panel (as the Parish Remuneration Panel) to assess whether such guidance would be useful. 10. Note that the Parish Remuneration Panel has recommended to Cirencester Town Council that Cirencester Town Councillors (including the Chair) receive an allowance set at 20% of the basic allowance paid to Cotswold District Councillors.
Corporate priorities	• Supporting Communities
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO

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Consultees/ Consultation	Cotswold district councillors were contacted in advance of the mid-term review and given the opportunity to raise any matters for consideration by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

COTSWOLD
District Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Cotswold District Council's (the Council's) Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) was requested by full Council to conduct a mid-point review of the Members' Allowances Scheme 2023-27 (the Scheme). The IRP has undertaken a review, which focused on Councillor workloads and specific matters raised by members and officers.

1.2 The IRP has made recommendations about increasing the levels of special responsibility allowances (SRAs) for the roles of Leader, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Chair of Audit and Governance Committee, backdated to 1 April 2025. The IRP has also recommended clarifications to rules around travel allowances and the inclusion of allowances for Co-opted Members within the Scheme.

1.3 The IRP also met in a separate capacity as the Parish Remuneration Panel (PRP) following a request from Cirencester Town Council that consideration is given to the creation of a tiered scheme for Town and Parish Councillor allowances within the district, based on Town and Parish Council size. The PRP has made a recommendation to Cirencester Town Council that Cirencester Town Councillors are paid an allowance set at 20% of the basic allowance paid to Cotswold District Councillors. The PRP recommend that wider engagement takes place with Town and Parish Councils to explore whether the adoption of a tiered scheme for Town and Parish Councillor allowances would be welcome.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Members of the Council are paid an allowance in recognition of their work, which is intended to partially compensate them for their time. As the role of a Councillor is a public service rather than a form of employment, the allowance is not intended to be set at the level of a salary.

2.2 The Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require local authorities to appoint Independent Remuneration Panels to consider and make recommendations on their Allowances Schemes. The Government's "Guidance on Consolidated Regulations on Local Authority Allowances" outlines the main statutory provisions and gives non-statutory guidance.

2.3 The IRP is required to recommend the levels of the basic allowance (paid to all councillors), special responsibility allowances, and travel, subsistence, co-optees' and dependent carer allowances. When setting or amending its Scheme, the Council is required to have regard to recommendations from its IRP.

2.4 The IRP previously recommended that the Council adopts a 4-year Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023-27 with a mid-point review. The Council on 24 May 2023 adopted a 4-year scheme based on the IRP's recommendations. The Scheme forms Part G Appendix C of the Council's Constitution.

3. MID-TERM REVIEW

3.1 The intention of the mid-term review was to specifically review councillor workloads and this was agreed when the current Scheme was adopted. At the time of the previous review members had reported an increase in the time spent on Council duties due to the Covid-19 pandemic and other national and world events such as the "Cost of Living" crisis and war in Ukraine. As a result, the IRP were unclear if that represented a permanent increase in the time members were spending on Council duties.

3.2 The mid-term review of the Scheme took place later than originally planned following the resignation of an IRP member which made the Panel inquorate. The Council undertook two rounds of recruitment and further appointments to the IRP were approved by full Council on 16 July 2025.

3.3 The IRP held 4 meetings during October and November in conducting the review and in doing so considered a range of evidence including representations by Members, an officer report, member survey responses and benchmarking data for comparable district councils.

4. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The IRP considered the level of the basic allowance but has opted not to recommend any change to the basic allowance at this time.

4.2 The IRP's recommendations are listed below and have been explained in more detail by the IRP in their report at Annex A:

(i) The special responsibility allowance (SRA) for Leader is increased from 3.0x the basic allowance to 3.5x the basic allowance.

(ii) The SRA for Deputy Leader is increased from 2.0x basic to 2.5x basic.
(iii) The SRA for Cabinet Member is increased from 1.5x basic to 2.0x basic.
(iv) The SRA for Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee is increased from 1.0x basic to 1.5x basic.
(v) The SRA for Chair of Audit and Governance Committee is increased from 0.5x basic to 1.0x basic.
(vi) Any agreed increases to SRAs are backdated to 1 April 2025 (being the mid-point of the 4-year Scheme).
(vii) The existing allowance for Co-opted Members of £1,000 per annum is included in the Scheme.
(viii) That additional clarification is provided on expenses claims in the Scheme, specifically that:
    a) The list of approved duties for which expenses can be claimed is included in the Scheme.
    b) VAT receipts are requested for mileage claims.
    c) Mileage claims should normally be calculated from the Councillor's home address.
    d) Claims should be made within 3 months of the expenditure being incurred.
    e) Mileage rates are aligned with HMRC rates to prevent the creation of taxable benefits.
(ix) Officers engage with Town and Parish Councils on the option of establishing a tiered allowances scheme to guide town and parish councils in the payment of allowances to elected town and parish councillors, to enable the Independent Remuneration Panel (as the Parish Remuneration Panel) to assess whether such guidance would be useful.
(x) Note that the Parish Remuneration Panel has recommended to Cirencester Town Council that Cirencester Town Councillors receive an allowance set at 20% of the basic allowance paid to Cotswold District Councillors.

4.3 Council is required to have regard to recommendations of the IRP when agreeing any change to its Scheme.

4.4 Officers have produced an updated version of the current Scheme with the changes recommended by the IRP shown in red text. This is included at Annex B.

COTSWOLD
District Council

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 Council is required to "have regard" to the recommendations of the IRP but may choose to not agree the recommendations, or to make different changes to those recommended by the IRP.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The recommended changes to SRAs would equate to an additional £31,440 per annum. The uplifting of SRAs may also lead to additional on-costs e.g. in the form of increased National Insurance contributions at a cost of £4,716 for 2025/26. The other recommended changes would not materially affect the overall cost of allowances.

6.2 The additional costs of £36,156 will result in an overspend within the 2025/26 councillors' allowance budget. However, this overspend will be fully offset by underspends elsewhere in the Council overall budget.

6.3 If approved these costs will be incorporated in the Council's 2026/27 budget.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Members allowances schemes are governed by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003. A scheme must include provisions for paying a basic allowance, special responsibility allowances, dependants' carers' allowance, travelling and subsistence allowance and co-optees' allowance. A scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index but may not rely on an index for a period of more than four years.

7.2 Council must have regard to recommendations of its IRP when adopting a new Scheme or agreeing changes to an existing Scheme.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 There are no identified risks associated with this report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 There are no differential impacts on groups with protected characteristics arising from this report.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no climate and ecological emergencies implications.

COTSWOLD
District Council

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

(END)

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Independent Remuneration Panel

Mid-Term Report and Recommendations – November 2025.

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1. INTRODUCTION from Nick Craxton, Chair - Independent Remuneration Panel

1.1 *Initially described as a "light-touch" mid-term review, the panel has actually conducted an extensive and thorough examination. This approach is entirely justified considering the feedback received about increasing workloads and the ever-evolving environment in which the Council is operating.*
It has been an honour to chair this panel, and I want to underscore the rigorous debates that shaped our decisions. We encountered diverse perspectives, and no conclusions were reached without careful consideration.
I am proud of the breadth of experience and representation on our panel. We brought together expertise from both the public and private sectors, with key HR and reward specialism, and included members from within the Cotswold District area as well as from further afield. This diversity has enriched our discussions and contributed to the depth of our review.

The Panel is pleased to present the 2025 mid-term report, which presents the Panel's findings and interim recommendations for the current scheme for consideration by the Council.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

2.1. The current Members' Allowances Scheme was adopted by Full Council in May 2023 and remains in force until 1 April 2027. When the Council resolved to adopt this scheme, it committed to undertake a midpoint review of the scheme. The intention of holding a mid-term review was to review councillors' workloads specifically.

2.2. The Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) convened three times in October 2025 to review evidence, interview Members, consider Members' responses to the 2024 questionnaire as well as new Member suggestions, and consider benchmarking and local governance developments.

2.3. The review was conducted between 2 October 2025 and 13 November 2025 and was supported by Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services, Angela Claridge, Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer), and Nickie Mackenzie-Daste, Senior Democratic Services Officer. The Panel also gratefully acknowledges the support and input of all Members who took part in the 2024 survey and those who submitted further evidence or comments.

3. BACKGROUND AND REGULATORY CONTEXT

3.1 Legal and Regulatory Framework

The Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, as amended ("the 2003 Regulations"), required all local authorities to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) to advise on their Members' Allowances Scheme. Councils are required to review their schemes periodically and seek the advice of their IRP before adopting or making any changes to their scheme. The Government's *Guidance on Consolidated Regulations on Local Authority Allowances* provided statutory provisions and non-statutory guidance to support this process.

3.2 Independent Remuneration Panel Composition and Terms of Reference

The Panel, convened to carry out the Mid-Term review as recommended in the May 2023 report, comprised six independent members of the public (one of whom subsequently resigned), appointed by the Council for their relevant skills and expertise. In accordance with the 2003 Regulations and consolidated guidance, the Panel's remit was to provide independent advice and recommendations to ensure that councillor remuneration was fair, transparent, and publicly accountable. Its advice covered:

- Basic allowance levels;
- Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs);
- Childcare and dependents' care allowances;
- ICT and other remuneration-related matters, including travel and subsistence;
- Allowances for co-opted (non-elected) members;
- Any other issues within the Panel's remit and covered by the 2003 Regulations.

3.3. Basis for Recommendations

In making recommendations, the Panel was required to consider:

- Roles and responsibilities of Members, including portfolio holders;
- Benchmarking with other district councils;
- The statutory framework for councillor remuneration and the Council's discretion within it, with reference to professional guidance from bodies such as the LGA;
- Any additional considerations highlighted by the Council or through Member representations.

- It was noted that affordability and the economic context was a matter for elected Cotswold District Councillors, and these elements did not form part of the considerations.

3.4 **Public Service Principle**

The Panel noted that the principle of public service was central to the councillor role, emphasising that not all duties should be remunerated and that part of a councillors' time should be given voluntarily. Consolidated guidance had highlighted this principle when determining the recommended basic allowance. Responses to the 2024 questionnaire had supported this public service ethos, and this was considered during the review

4. THE PANEL

4.1. Cotswold District Council formally appointed the following persons to the IRP. The IRP undertook the mid-term review of the current allowances scheme, as requested by Council in May 2023, and made recommendations on its future scheme.

- Nick Craxton – Chair
- Stefan Robinson – Vice-Chair
- Michael Paget-Wilkes
- Nikki Clark
- David Hindle
- Graham Russell (resigned)

4.2. The Panel was supported by Council officers. Consideration was given to an officer report and supporting evidence, including a member survey and benchmarking data.

5. ROLE AND TIME COMMITMENT OF A DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

5.1. Cotswold District Council comprises thirty-four elected Members. Members act as community leaders, undertake casework, and represent their wards in internal and external forums.

5.2. Councillors attend Full Council, committees, sub-committees, working groups, and may represent the Council externally. Although the Constitution allows for the Cabinet to comprise the Leader of the Council plus up to nine other members to be appointed by the Leader, the Cabinet currently comprises eight Members, including the Leader and Deputy Leader who both have full Cabinet Portfolio responsibilities, in addition to being Leader and Deputy Leader.

5.3. Evidence considered by the Panel highlighted:

- Increased workloads across Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny (O&S), and Audit & Governance (A&G) committees
- More complex planning and policy responsibilities
- Additional working groups and scrutiny activity
- Greater public engagement, primarily via digital channels
- Implications of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on roles

5.4. Councillors maintain regular contact with town and parish councils, often in dual roles. Councillors representing rural wards engage with several parish councils.

5.5. The Panel recommends revisiting time commitments in the scheduled 2027 full review.

6. PRE-CONSULTATION AND EVIDENCE GATHERING

6.1. Ahead of the review, Members were invited to submit any matters they would like the Panel to consider - all Councillors were emailed on 1 September and given 15 days to reply. Two responses from members were received (Joe Harris and Tony Slater), and their concerns were discussed in the review meetings. The Leader of the Council also provided oral evidence on 10 October 2025. The evidence from a 2024 survey of Councillors around workload and responsibilities was also made available to the Panel.

Key points included:

- Increased workload for Leader, Deputy, Cabinet, and Committee Chairs
- Expanded scrutiny function and A&G responsibilities
- SRAs not fully reflecting current demands
- A sustained additional workload for members in leadership roles due to LGR.

7. CURRENT SCHEME

7.1 The IRP undertook the last review of councillors' allowances for the Council in May 2023. The Scheme currently provides that all councillors are each entitled to a total basic allowance of £6,288 per annum for 2025/26. The basic allowance is subject to an indexation linked to the NJC for Local Government employees. In addition, some councillors receive special responsibility allowances for undertaking additional duties. Councillors may also claim the cost of travel and

subsistence expenses and for expenditure on the care of children or dependents whilst on approved duties.

7.2 When compared with areas of similar demographic profiles, Cotswold's basic allowance is slightly below the regional average

7.3 Workload evidence indicates the basic allowance remains appropriate for the purposes of the mid-term review.

8. SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES (SRAs)

8.1. Some Members have certain roles on the Council which attract a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA). SRAs are paid in addition to the basic allowance, it was noted that SRAs recognise additional responsibilities of key roles, with workloads varying by position. These include roles such as being Leader, Deputy Leader and a Member of the Cabinet, chairs of committees, and opposition group leaders. SRAs are calculated as multiples of the basic allowance and will therefore increase in proportion to the basic allowance when uplifts are applied to the basic allowance.

8.2 When considering the SRAs the Panel considered benchmarking data for the South-East England Region and South-West Councils and specifically councils with similar demographic and constraints.

8.3 The current Leader was interviewed by the Panel and representation was made in person on the SRA's for the roles of Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Chair of Audit and Governance Committee.

8.4 The Panel systematically reviewed requests to increase SRAs for the Leader, Deputy Leader, Cabinet Members, and committee chairs, ultimately agreeing on moderate increases for most roles, balancing benchmarking data and the need for consistency. It was recognised that Local Government Reorganisation has resulted in extra workload for a high proportion of those roles that come with SRA's.

8.5 **Leader's Allowance:** A member who is a former Leader of the Council has requested that consideration is given to increasing the value of the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) paid to the Leader of the Council. After considering a request to increase the leader's SRA from three to four times the basic allowance, the panel agreed to recommend a 3.5 multiplier, citing benchmarking with neighbouring councils, the enabling nature of the allowance, and the significant responsibility and time commitment in undertaking the role.

8.6 **Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members:** The Panel discussed the SRA for the role of Deputy Leader and recommended an increase from 2 to 2.5 times the basic allowance. The SRA for Cabinet Members was also discussed resulting in a recommendation to increase their SRA from 1.5 to 2 times the basic allowance, with the Panel noting the importance of maintaining appropriate differentials and recognising additional workload due to local government reorganisation.

8.7 **Committee Chairs: Overview and Scrutiny and Audit and Governance:** The Panel reviewed the responsibilities and workload of the committees and, based on evidence of increased duties and the crucial role these committees play in holding leadership to account—particularly in the context of LGR—recommended increases to the SRAs. Specifically, the Panel recommended raising the SRA for the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny from 1.0 to 1.5, and for the Chair of Audit and Governance from 0.5 to 1.0.

8.8 **Opposition Group Leaders:** The Panel agreed that the current allowance remained proportionate to the responsibilities of the role, which focuses primarily on holding the administration to account and coordinating political group activities. The Panel therefore agreed to recommend that no change to the calculation method was required.

8.9 **Co-opted Members** are recommended to be added to the scheme, as they have been appointed since the previous review. Co-opted members of the District Council, drawn from the public for their skills and expertise, are appointed to specific committees to support their functions and provide relevant expertise. It was noted that Co-opted Members of the Audit and Governance Committee were currently paid £1,000 per annum. The Panel concluded that there was no reason to recommend any changes to the current allowance.

8.10 The Panel felt that the recommended increases reflected additional workload, responsibility, and accountability under current governance and LGR changes.

9. OTHER ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES

9.1. ICT allowances and use of AI: The Panel noted that IT and data-security risks are at an unprecedented high, underscoring the importance of appropriate training and ongoing awareness for all councillors. To support safe and effective digital working, the Panel requests that, ahead of the next full review, the Council's IT team provide clear guidance on the secure use of emerging technologies, including AI, in the course of councillors' duties. This will enable the Panel to assess whether the current £300 per-annum ICT allowance remains adequate or

whether an alternative approach—such as the provision of Council-managed laptops to ensure stronger control over software access, downloads, and cyber-security—would offer improved protection and value.

9.2. Travel Allowances: The Members' Allowances Scheme outlined claimable allowances but did not define "approved duties" within the Scheme itself. An existing list of approved duties confirmed that district councillors could claim travel expenses for attending parish council meetings as district representatives, but not where they were also parish councillors. The Panel recommended appending the list of approved duties to the scheme for clarity.

9.3. The requirement for VAT receipts was also discussed. An email had been sent to all Members on 24 March 2025 which explained that following an Internal Audit report on Members' Allowances (which had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee in January 2025), a VAT receipt was required for all travel claims submitted by Members for journeys in the 2025/26 financial year and beyond. The Panel agreed that including a statement, as advised by the Auditors, confirming that this approach reflected standard practice and supported VAT recovery, would be appropriate.

9.4. The Panel also reviewed the Council's mileage rates against HMRC-approved rates and noted that higher rates for bicycles and passengers could create taxable benefits and increase administrative complexity. It was agreed that aligning rates with HMRC would simplify administration and prevent creating unintended tax liabilities for councillors, while acknowledging that higher rates may reflect support for sustainable travel. The Panel recommends aligning mileage rates with HMRC rates.

9.5. The Panel considered whether mileage claims should be calculated from councillors' home addresses. It was agreed that claims should ordinarily start from home, with travel from other locations limited to the equivalent home mileage. The Panel recommended adding clarifying wording to the Members' Allowances Scheme. It was noted that HMRC regarded councillors' home as their usual place of work and that future government regulation might permit remote attendance at statutory meetings, which currently require in-person attendance.

9.6. It was agreed that clarification on Allowances for Co-opted Members was necessary: Co-opted members may be reimbursed for legitimate expenses incurred in the course of their duties.

9.7. The Panel discussed the introduction of a two-to three-month deadline for Councillors to submit expense claims to ensure timely and accurate financial

reporting. This timeframe would help the Council manage budgets effectively, reduce the risk of errors or omissions, and ensure transparency and accountability in the use of public funds. It would also allow any queries or discrepancies to be addressed promptly, providing confidence to both Councillors and the public. It was noted that although the 2–3-month rule would be recommended there might be place for some leniency to allow for 'special circumstances'.

9.8. Childcare, dependents' care, and subsistence allowances were noted but no representations had been made about them, and other than the recommended requirement for subsistence claims to be made within 3 months of them being incurred no changes were proposed.

9.9. **Recommendations:**

- Append the list of approved duties to the Scheme (Annex A) for clarity.
- Introduce 2–3 month claim deadline with an exception clause.
- Clarify VAT receipt requirements.
- Consider alignment with HMRC mileage rates.
- Clarification around expense claims that mileage should be calculated from home address unless otherwise justified.

10. TOWN AND PARISH COUNCIL ALLOWANCES

10.1. Under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 district councils must have an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) whose responsibility it is to review and recommend allowances for the district council's own councillors. The same panel forms a "parish remuneration panel" (PRP) to advise town and parish councils in the district area.

10.2. Parish and town councils cannot set up their own IRPs and must have regard to the recommendations of the PRP when deciding on their members' allowances (such as a basic allowance or travel expenses).

10.3. It was agreed by the PRP that Town and Parish Councils be considered for member allowances in response to a request made by Cirencester Town Council, noting that allowances had not been reviewed for many years and that the sector had evolved significantly.

10.4. The PRP can make recommendations and the Parish or Town council then decide whether to adopt, modify, or reject those recommendations — but they must consider them before making any decision to adopt or amend an allowances scheme.

10.5. It was noted that the PRP's role is advisory only and that the district council has no role in parish councillors' allowances other than through supporting the work of the PRP. Each parish/town council remains responsible for deciding and paying its own allowances.

10.6. Cirencester Town Council requested consideration due to its £2m budget, 25 FTE staff, and major projects. Cirencester Town Council requested that the PRP consider adopting a tiered framework for town and parish councillor allowances based on population (which largely determines the level of responsibilities of the town/parish councils).

10.7. The PRP agreed to recommend an allowance for Cirencester's Chair and Members set at 20% of the district basic allowance (the population of Cirencester being broadly 20% of that of the Cotswold district area), recognising the urgency of their request and the town's population which is far higher than any of the other towns or parishes in the district. It was noted that a tiered approach, linked to population, may address differences between councils. It was also noted that co-opted town/parish councillors could not receive allowances (though expenses could be paid) and that carers allowances could not be paid to town and parish councillors under current law.

10.8. The PRP reviewed a draft tiered proposal for parish and town council allowances, agreeing to recommend a specific allowance for Cirencester and to consult further with other town and parish councils (in the form of a survey) before considering any broader recommendations. It was recognised by the PRP that a tiered approach, linked to population, could help Town and Parishes consider allowances going forward but that such a tiered approach would form part of the broader 2026/27 review.

10.9. **Recommendations:**

- Interim allowance for Cirencester Town Council: 20% of District Basic Allowance (Chair and Members)
- Circulation of a Teams survey to Town and Parish Councils to gather feedback.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT

11.1. The intention of the regulations in requiring the establishment of an IRP on members' allowances by each local authority, included the desire to extend the opportunity to become a councillor to as wide a cohort as possible, through the development of local remuneration schemes. This is in line with one of the three

aims of the Public Sector Duty of the Equality Act 2010 – to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it. The IRP has consistently held this intention as one of the principles under which it has made its recommendations.

12. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Element	Proposed Change	Rationale
Leader's SRA	3.5 × Basic Allowance	Full strategic and operational workload; Cabinet chair; LGR demands
Deputy Leader's SRA	2.5 × Basic Allowance	Deputises for Leader; portfolio leadership; LGR workload
Cabinet Members' SRA	2.0 × Basic Allowance	Service area leadership; policy & performance; resident engagement
Chair O&S	1.5 × Basic Allowance	Scrutiny leadership; work programme; task group oversight
Chair A&G	1.0 × Basic Allowance	Governance, audit, risk oversight; technical complexity
Co-opted Members	Include existing allowance of £1,000 p.a. in Scheme	For completeness
Travel / Expenses	Append approved duties list; clarify VAT & deadlines; mileage to be claimed from home address; consider HMRC mileage rates	Clarity, compliance, simplified administration

Element	Proposed Change	Rationale
To consider the introduction of a tiered system for Parish/Town Councils' allowances for elected members	Create and circulate a survey to be addressed to Town and Parish Councillors to enable an accurate assessment of workload to be made. Interim decision that Cirencester Town Council (CTC) Councillors should receive an allowance set at 20% of the basic allowance paid to district councillors.	To establish a tiered, evidence-based system reflecting workload and council size, providing Town and Parish Councils with a structured basis to adopt if they choose to pay allowances to elected members. CTC interim allowance recommended based on evidence about the responsibilities of CTC Councillors.

The panel recommends that all increases in SRA's are backdated to 1 April 2025.

13. CONCLUSION

13.1. The Panel recognised the dedication of Councillors and the increasing complexity of their roles under LGR, expanded scrutiny, and service pressures. The recommendations balance fairness, workload, and affordability. A full review of the scheme will be undertaken in late 2026 to inform a new scheme effective **1 April 2027**.

(End)

SUMMARY OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2023/24 – 2026/27

Cotswold District Council, in exercise of the powers conferred by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, hereby makes the following scheme:

1. Name and Duration

1.1. This scheme may be cited as the Cotswold District Council Members' Allowances Scheme.

1.2. This scheme shall have effect for the period financial years 2023/24 to 2026/27

2. Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances

2.1. Subject to Section 3 of this Scheme a basic allowance at a rate of £5,544.00 per annum shall be paid to each Councillor. This is the starting figure for 2023/24 net of any uplift based on indexation for 2023/24 and the subsequent years (see 2.3).

2.2. Subject to Section 3 of this Scheme a special responsibility allowance shall be paid to those Councillors who hold the special responsibilities in relation to the authority that are specified in the following Table, and the annual rate of each such allowance shall be the amount specified against that special responsibility in that table:

2.3 The basic allowance will increase annually from 1 April* at the same rate as the percentage cost of living uplift in the national pay settlement for local government employees for that year. In the event that a cash sum, as opposed to a % increase is awarded, then the average increase in pay of those Publica staff supporting Cotswold DC and staff directly employed by Cotswold DC will be applied, as determined by the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer. If the pay settlement is not known until after 1 April then a backdated uplift will be applied.

2.4. Any Councillor stepping down from a role with a Special Responsibility Allowance (and relinquishing all responsibility) for the purpose of taking a period of maternity, paternity or adoption leave will be entitled to receive 50% of the special responsibility allowance for up to six months. This is not contingent on the Councillor being reappointed or re-elected to their previous role at the end of their period of maternity, paternity or adoption leave.

*The increase for 2023/24 will be deferred for 1 year.

3. Part-year Entitlements

3.1. The provisions of this paragraph shall have effect to regulate the entitlements of a Councillor to basic and special responsibility allowances where, in the course of the year, that Councillor becomes, or ceases to be, a Councillor, or accepts or relinquishes a special responsibility in respect of which a special responsibility allowance is payable.

3.2. Where the term of office of a Councillor begins or ends in the period between 1 April and 31 March, the entitlement of that Councillor to a basic allowance shall be to the payment of such part of the basic allowance as bears to the whole the same proportion as the number of days during which their term of office subsists bears to the number of days in the year. This provision also applies to Co-opted Members in respect of Co-opted Member allowances.

3.3. Where a Councillor has during part of, but not throughout, a period from 1 April to 31 March such special responsibilities as entitle them to a special responsibility allowance, that Councillor's entitlement shall be to payment of such part of that allowance as bears to the whole the same proportion as the number of days during which they have such special responsibilities bears to the number of days in the year.

	Rate
A. Basic Allowance This is a general allowance paid to all Councillors. All Councillors receive the same amount per annum. This allowance is paid automatically to each Councillor on a monthly basis	£6,288 per annum per Councillor
B. Special Responsibility Allowances These are special allowances paid to Councillors who hold positions with significant responsibilities over and above the general duties of an elected Member. Any such allowance is paid automatically to the relevant Councillor on a monthly basis. No more than 50% of Councillors should receive a SRA, The affected positions and sums payable are as follows:-	
• Chair of the Council (multiplier x 1)	£6,288 per annum
• Vice-Chair of the Council (multiplier x 0.5)	£3,144 per annum
• Leader of the Council (multiplier x 3.5)	£22,008 per annum
• Deputy Leader of the Council (multiplier x 2.5)	£15,720 per annum
• Cabinet Member (exc Leader & Deputy) (x 2~~1.5~~)	£12,576 per annum

• Chair of the Planning & Licensing Committee (x 1.5) • Vice-Chair of the Planning & Licensing Cttee (x 0.5) • Chair of the Audit & Governance Cttee (x 1~~0.5~~) • Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Cttee (x 1.5) • Vice-Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Cttee (x 0.5) • Leader(s) of registered minority political groups (x 1)	£9,432 per annum £3,144 per annum £6,288 per annum £9,432 per annum £3,144 per annum £6,288 per annum divided between the respective group leaders
C. Mileage Allowance This is an allowance paid in respect of mileage incurred by a Councillor or Co-opted Member in travelling to and from official Meetings and other approved duties and their home address. VAT receipts are requested in support of mileage claims (except for travel by electric vehicle). Claims should be made within 3 months of the expenditure being incurred. The rates are as follows:- **Motor Cycle** **Motor Car** The rates specified above may be increased in respect of the carriage of passengers, not exceeding four, to whom a mileage allowance would otherwise be payable, by **Bicycle**	24p~~36.4p~~ per mile 45p per mile 5p per passenger per mile~~20p per mile for the first passenger; and 10p per mile for the second and subsequent passengers~~ 20p~~45p~~ per mile
D. Fares/Parking A Councillor or Co-opted Member is able to seek reimbursement of actual expenditure incurred on other fares or parking fees in respect of attendance at official Meetings and other approved duties. VAT receipts must be produced. Claims should be made within 3 months of the expenditure being incurred.	Actual expenditure incurred

E. Subsistence Allowance A Councillor is able to seek reimbursement of actual, but reasonable, expenditure incurred in respect of meals/subsistence when attending official Meetings or other approved duties (including conferences/seminars) where absence from home, including travel time, exceeds 4 hours and no food etc. is provided. Receipts must be produced. Claims should be made within 3 months of the expenditure being incurred. No subsistence costs will be reimbursed in relation to attendance at meetings at any District Council offices. Alcoholic drinks cannot be claimed for.	Actual expenditure incurred
F. Child Care Allowance A Councillor is able to seek reimbursement of actual expenditure incurred on caring costs whilst attending official Meetings or other approved duties, up to a maximum sum per hour. The allowance is paid not only in respect of the duration of attendance at a particular Meeting by a Councillor but also in respect of "door to door" travel time to and from approved duties. The allowance is payable to any Councillor with a child or children under the age of 14 years who is/are, at the time, part of the claimant's household living with them and who would normally be looked after by them. The carer must not be someone who also ordinarily lives with the claimant as part of the household. The claimant must produce a receipt/return certified by the carer to validate any claim. Individual claims exceeding £100 may be invoiced direct to Cotswold District Council, for payment direct by the Council. The Democratic Services Manager shall have the delegated authority to ensure that care costs are reasonable based upon local rates.	Actual expenditure incurred

Claims should be made within 3 months of the expenditure being incurred.	
G. Dependant Care Allowance A Councillor is able to seek reimbursement of actual expenditure incurred on caring costs whilst attending official Meetings or other approved duties, up to a maximum sum per hour. The allowance is paid not only in respect of the duration of attendance at a particular Meeting by a Councillor but also in respect of "door to door" travel time to and from approved duties. The allowance is payable to any Councillor with a dependant relative or relatives who would normally be looked after by them. The carer must not be someone who ordinarily lives with the claimant as part of the household. The claimant must produce a receipt/return certified by the carer to validate any claim. Individual claims exceeding £100 may be invoiced direct to Cotswold District Council, for payment direct by the Council. The Democratic Services Manager shall have the delegated authority to ensure that care costs are reasonable based upon local rates. Claims should be made within 3 months of the expenditure being incurred.	Actual expenditure incurred
H. ICT Allowance An allowance to support the direct provision of ICT equipment/ broadband connectivity and support	£300 per annum per councillor paid monthly or drawn down in a lump sum
I. Withholding Allowances Where a Member is suspended or partially suspended from their responsibilities or duties as a Member of the Council and/or from their responsibilities or duties which attract a special responsibility allowance, that part of the basic allowance and/or special responsibility allowance, and	

travelling and subsistence allowances, payable to them in respect of the period of suspension or partial suspension be withheld.	
J. Renunciation of Allowances A Member may, by notice in writing to the Chief Executive, elect to forego all or any part of their entitlement to a basic or special responsibility allowance	
K. Co-opted Member allowances A general allowance paid to co-opted members of the Council's committees and sub-committees.	£1,000 per annum

APPROVED DUTIES

The following are deemed to be qualifying approved duties for the purposes of payment of travel and/or subsistence allowances -

(i) Attendance at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees, Panels, Boards and Working Parties formally constituted by the Council, whether as a member of that body or as an observer.

(ii) Attendance at meetings of the Local Government Association at National, Regional or County level, but not when held immediately before or after the Annual Conference;

(iii) Attendance at meetings of Outside Bodies to which a Member has been appointed to serve as the Council's representative (except where such allowances are payable by the Outside Body);

(iv) Attendance at a seminar or Away Day for Members;

(v) Attendance at approved Conferences;

(vi) Attendance by the Ward Member(s) at formally-convened Parish/Town Council Meetings, Parish Meetings or Parish Gatherings.

Note re (vi):

Mileage allowance only to be paid. However, mileage cannot be claimed where the District Councillor also serves on the parish/town council concerned.

(vii) Attendance of Chair and Vice-Chair of Council, Cabinet and Committees, together with the relevant Ward Councillor(s), at any formal meeting organised by the District Council for the purpose of parish liaison/engagement (N.B. this does not include attendance at Parish/Town Council Meetings, Parish Meetings or Parish Gatherings);

(viii) Attendance at Interview Panels and formal meetings to shortlist candidates for interviews;

(ix) The giving of official evidence on behalf of the Council at judicial proceedings and planning inquiries;

(x) Attendance of Chair and Vice-Chair of Planning (Regulatory) Committee and appropriate Ward Councillor(s) at Local Planning Inquiries and Informal Hearings, either as formal witnesses or observers;

(xi) A visit to a Government Department (previously authorised by the Council, Cabinet or a Committee);

(xii) Attendance at meetings of Leaders/Chairs of District Councils in the County (including as a substitute member);

(xiii) Deputising for the Chair of the Council by any Councillor in the absence of both the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council;

(xiv) Attendance at the Council Offices by Chair and Vice-Chair (Council, Cabinet and Committees) for discussion with Chief Officers or their nominated representatives on the agenda for a meeting;

(xv) Attendance at the Council Offices by Cabinet Members, in their capacity as Portfolio Holders, for decision-making purposes and/or discussions with Chief Officers or their nominated representatives;

(xvi) Attendance by Members of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee at decision-making meetings, in order to perform their overview and scrutiny role.

(END)

COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	**COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**COUNCIL– 26 NOVEMBER 2025**
Subject	**COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2026/27**
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Patrick Coleman – Cabinet Member for Finance Email: patrick.coleman@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing – Executive Director Operations Email: Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Mandy Fathers – Business Manager for Environmental, Welfare and Revenues Email: Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider and recommend to Full Council the revised Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2026/27.
Annexes	Annex A – Financial Modelling Annex B – Equality Impact Assessment
Recommendation(s)	Cabinet recommends that Full Council resolves to: 1. Agree the increase to income bands as detailed within paragraphs 3.2, 3.3 and Annex A of this report from 1 April 2026. 2. Agree that any balance remaining in the earmarked reserve 'Hardship Fund' be made available in 2026/27 financial year for reasons detailed in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of this report.
Corporate priorities	• Supporting Communities • Delivering Good Services
Key Decision	NO

Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Governance and Development, Head of Legal Services, Chief Accountant and Deputy Section 151 Officer, Managing Director (Publica) Cabinet Member for Finance

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Council Tax Support is a scheme to reduce Council Tax bills for people on low income and/or who receive benefits. This report brings forward proposals to amend the scheme for 2026/27 in order to give more support to those on low incomes.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Councils are required to review their Council Tax Support (CTS) schemes each year for those people of working age and decide if they want to make any changes.

2.2 As there are no impactful changes proposed to the scheme, consultation was not carried out. However, once the scheme has been approved, it will be published on the Council's website as well as various social media platforms.

3. MAIN POINTS

3.1 The Council implemented its own local CTS scheme of support to help those people on low incomes pay their Council Tax in April 2013. Further changes were made in April 2020, introducing the income banded scheme.

3.2 Annual wage growth is expected to be between 3% and 4% in Q4 of 2025 and to remain at a similar level during 2026. It is not yet known what the 2026 percentage inflationary increase will be for welfare benefits. Without changes to the CTS scheme, this would result in more households being moved into a high-income band and therefore having to pay a higher share of the full Council Tax for their property.

3.3 To continue to give support to households during the ongoing cost of living crisis, proposals are being made to increase weekly income bands by 3.8% or in line with the inflationary increase in welfare benefits. Based on a 3.8% increase, the bands would increase as follows:

3.80%	Single	Couple	Lone Parent	Lone Parent + 2	Lone Parent + 3	Lone Parent + 4	Couple + 1 Child	Couple + 2 Children	Couple + 3 Children	Couple + 4 Children	Percentage CTS Awarded
Band 1	0 - 154.48	0 - 183.08	0 - 211.69	0 - 234.58	0 - 257.47	0 - 303.24	0 - 280.35	0 - 303.24	0 - 326.12	0 - 371.89	**100**
Band 2	154.49 - 204.48	183.09 - 223.08	211.70 - 246.69	234.59 - 269.58	257.48 - 292.47	303.25 - 338.24	280.36 - 330.35	303.25 - 353.24	326.13 - 376.12	371.90 - 421.89	**80**
Band 3	204.49 - 254.48	223.09 - 273.08	246.70 - 296.69	269.59 - 319.58	292.48 - 342.47	338.25 - 388.24	330.36 - 380.35	353.25 - 403.24	376.13 - 426.12	421.90 - 471.89	**60**
Band 4	254.49 - 304.48	273.09 - 323.08	296.70 - 346.69	319.59 - 369.58	342.48 - 392.47	388.25 - 438.24	380.36 - 430.35	403.25 - 453.24	426.13 - 476.12	471.90 - 521.89	**40**
Band 5	304.49 - 354.48	323.09 - 373.08	346.70 - 396.69	369.59 - 419.58	392.48 - 442.47	438.25 - 488.24	430.36 - 480.35	453.25 - 503.24	476.13 - 526.12	521.90 - 571.89	**20**
Band 6	354.49 +	373.09 +	396.70 +	419.59 +	442.48 +	488.25 +	480.36 +	503.25 +	526.13 +	571.90 +	**0**

3.4 Based on the current CTS caseload used for remodelling the scheme, there is no impact, either negative or positive on CTS claimants as all retain their initial modelling bands.

3.5 In 2022/23 the Council implemented a Hardship Fund to support those residents who were struggling financially and provided the Council with evidence of financial hardship. This fund was created with financial support from Gloucestershire County Council, and Cotswold District Council. The fund was originally set at £40,000. To date there remains around £35,000.

3.6 Recommendations are being made to transfer any funding surplus into the financial year 2026/27 to ensure that the Council continues to support those residents in financial hardship.

3.7 The Council's client support officers continue to reach and offer additional support to who apply for this funding to ensure any long-term hardship is minimised. This might be through negotiating better details with utility companies, maximising benefit take-up, addressing expenditure or sign posting to another organisation for support,

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1. The Council administers a CTS scheme with an annual expenditure of approximately £4.9 million. From 2013/14, the Government reduced the level of funding for the local scheme effectively creating a grant reduction of 10% a year across all of the precepting authorities.

4.2 Any increase in the take-up of CTS will lead to a reduced tax-base and therefore reduced income to precepting bodies.

4.3 The proposed changes increase the estimated cost of the CTS scheme by approximately £21,720. This will be reflected in a decrease in the Council Tax base and Council Tax income recognised in the Collection Fund. The decrease in income will be spread proportionately across the major precepting authorities (Gloucestershire County Council, The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Cotswold District Council as well as the Town and Parish Councils). Making these proposed changes will decrease the total tax base by the equivalent of 9 band D properties and a loss of income as follows:

Financial Year	GCC	Police	Town/Parish	Cotswold	Total
2026/27	£16,024	£3,072.68	£1,107.11	£1,516.21	£21,720

4.4 The reduction in Council Tax income retained by the Council of £1,512.21 will be taken into account as part of the 2026/27 budget setting process.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1. The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax Benefit and instead requires each authority to design a scheme specifying the reductions, are to apply to amounts of Council Tax.

5.2 The CTS scheme is required under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 ("the Act"), as amended. The Act states that for each financial year, billing authorities must consider whether to revise their CTS scheme or replace it with another.

5.3 The deadline for making decisions is 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to take effect (under paragraph 5, schedule 1A of the Act). If the Council does not make/revise a CTS scheme by 11 March 2026, a default scheme will be imposed on the Council, which will be effective from April 2026.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 There are two risks to consider:

- That the benefit caseload increases significantly, resulting in expenditure exceeding the levels estimated within this report. To mitigate this risk, monthly monitoring is conducted, and any significant increase in caseload would be referred to the Chief Finance Officer.
- If the income bands are not increased in line with inflation, CTS for vulnerable households could reduce. This could cause reputational damage to the Council.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1. To ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010, an equality impact assessment has been completed and attached to this report under Annex B.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

8.1. None

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

9.1. None.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1. None.

(END)

COTSWOLD District Council

Current	Single	Couple	Lone Parent	Lone Parent + 2	Lone Parent + 3	Lone Parent + 4	Couple + 1	Couple + 2	Couple + 3	Couple + 4	
Band 1	0 - 148.82	0 - 176.38	0 - 203.94	0 - 225.99	0 - 248.04	0 - 292.14	0 - 270.09	0 - 292.14	0 - 314.18	0 - 358.28	100
Band 2	148.83 - 198.82	176.39 - 216.38	203.95 - 238.94	226.00 - 260.99	248.05 - 283.04	292.15 - 327.14	270.10 - 320.09	292.15 - 342.14	314.19 - 364.18	358.29 - 408.28	80
Band 3	198.83 - 248.82	216.39 - 266.38	238.95 - 288.94	261.00 - 310.99	283.05 - 333.04	327.15 - 377.14	320.10 - 370.09	342.15 - 392.14	364.19 - 414.18	408.29 - 458.28	60
Band 4	248.83 - 298.82	266.39 - 316.38	288.95 - 338.94	311.00 - 360.99	333.05 - 383.04	377.15 - 427.14	370.10 - 420.09	392.15 - 442.14	414.19 - 464.18	458.29 - 508.28	40
Band 5	298.83 - 348.82	316.39 - 366.38	338.95 - 388.94	361.00 - 410.99	383.05 - 433.04	427.15 - 477.14	420.10 - 470.09	442.15 - 492.14	464.19 - 514.18	508.29 - 558.28	20
Band 6	348.83 +	366.39 +	388.95 +	411.00 +	433.05 +	477.15 +	470.10 +	492.15 +	514.19 +	558.29 +	0

3.50%	Single	Couple	Lone Parent	Lone Parent + 2	Lone Parent + 3	Lone Parent + 4	Couple + 1	Couple + 2	Couple + 3	Couple + 4	
Band 1	0 - 154.03	0 - 182.55	0 - 211.08	0 - 233.90	0 - 256.72	0 - 302.36	0 - 279.54	0 - 302.36	0 - 325.18	0 - 370.82	100
Band 2	154.04 - 204.03	182.56 - 222.55	211.09 - 246.08	233.91 - 268.90	256.73 - 291.72	302.37 - 337.36	279.55 - 329.54	302.37 - 352.36	325.19 - 375.18	370.83 - 420.82	80
Band 3	204.04 - 254.03	222.56 - 272.55	246.09 - 296.08	268.91 - 318.90	291.73 - 341.72	337.37 - 387.36	329.55 - 379.54	352.37 - 402.36	375.19 - 425.18	420.83 - 470.82	60
Band 4	254.04 - 304.03	272.56 - 322.55	296.09 - 346.08	318.91 - 368.90	341.73 - 391.72	387.37 - 437.36	379.55 - 429.54	402.37 - 452.36	425.19 - 475.18	470.83 - 520.82	40
Band 5	304.04 - 354.03	322.56 - 372.55	346.09 - 396.08	368.91 - 418.90	391.73 - 441.72	437.37 - 487.36	429.55 - 479.54	452.37 - 502.36	475.19 - 525.18	520.83 - 570.82	20
Band 6	354.04 +	372.56 +	396.09 +	418.81 +	441.73 +	487.37 +	479.55 +	502.37 +	525.19 +	570.83 +	0

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Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment Form

When completing this form you will need to provide evidence that you have considered how the 'protected characteristics' may be impacted upon by this decision. In line with the General Equality Duty the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard for the need to:

a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;

b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This form should be completed in conjunction with the guidance document available on the Intranet

Once completed a copy should be emailed to cheryl.sloan@publicagroup.uk to be signed off by an equalities officer before being published.

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Mandy Fathers	
Date of assessment: 05/09/2025	Telephone: 01285 623571 Email: mandy.fathers@cotswold.gov.uk

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Existing – Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/2027

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

To make slight amendments to the Banding in the scheme

4. Are there any external considerations? (e.g. Legislation/government directives)

Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 states a CTS scheme is required and Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 states that the council must consult. Under paragraph 5, schedule 1A of the same Act, the Council is required to have a scheme approved by 11 March 2024.

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings	☑	Demographic data was used when modelling the scheme
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	☐	
Results of recent consultations and surveys	☐	
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data	☐	
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies within Gloucestershire	☑	A valued third sector support advocate for the district has been consulted with
Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	☑	Comparisons with previous schemes and those of neighbouring LA's has been considered
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	☐	
Other:	☐	

6. Please specify how intend to gather evidence to fill any gaps identified above:

N/A

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

No

If NO please outline any planned activities

N/A

8. What level of impact either directly or indirectly will the proposal have upon the general public / staff? (Please quantify where possible)

Level of impact	Response
NO IMPACT – The proposal has no impact upon the general public/staff	☐
LOW – Few members of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	✓
MEDIUM – A large group of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	☐
HIGH – The proposal will have an impact upon the whole community/all staff	☐
Comments: e.g. Who will this specifically impact?	

9. Considering the available evidence, what type of impact could this function have on any of the protected characteristics?

Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;
Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;
Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure

	Potential Negative	Potential Positive	Neutral	Reasons	Options for mitigating adverse impacts
Age – Young People			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of different age groups, but it is not specific to age	
Age – Old People			✓	The scheme is for working age people only – Pensioners have a different CTS scheme which is mandated by Central Government	
Disability			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people with disabilities but is not specific to disability	
Sex – Male			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Sex – Female			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all races, but it is not specific to race	
Religion or Belief			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people of all religions, but it is not specific to religion	

Sexual Orientation			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all types of sexual orientation, but it is not specific to sexual orientation	
Gender Reassignment			✓	The proposal is inclusive to all gender groups, but it is not specific to gender	
Pregnancy and maternity			✓	The proposal is inclusive to people who are pregnant and/or on maternity, but it is not specific to this group	
Geographical impacts on one area			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of the Cotswold district	
Other Groups			✓	This proposal is inclusive to all other groups that are not mentioned	
Rural considerations: ie Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.			✓	The proposal is inclusive to the whole of the Cotswold district	

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)

Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale
Change Policy when approved	Mandy Fathers	Craig Fisher	Following full Council approval in early 2026

11. Is there is anything else that you wish to add?

n/a

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function and where an negative impact has been identified actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact. We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment.

Completed By:	Mandy Fathers	Date:	05.09.25
Line Manager:	Jon Dearing [redacted]	Date:	05.09.25
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:	Cheryl Sloan [redacted]	Date:	08/09/2025

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COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	**COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**COUNCIL – 26 NOVEMBER 2025**
Subject	**COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council Email: mike.evemy@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer Email: angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Sarah Dalby, Electoral Services Manager Email: sarah.dalby@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To approve and adopt the Terms of Reference for a Community Governance Review, along with draft proposals
Annexes	Annex A – Draft Terms of Reference Annex B – Draft Proposals for consultation
Recommendation(s)	That Council resolves to: 1. Approve and adopt the Terms of Reference and Draft Proposals for consultation for the Community Governance Review (CGR).
Corporate priorities	• Supporting Communities
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Before commencing the review, an initial discussion with Parish and Town Councils about the review process was held via email. Parish and Town Councils were given information about how a CGR works and what changes the council can implement. As a result, a number of Parish and Town Councils have asked for boundary changes or a change in the number of councillors.

COTSWOLD
District Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Council has received a request from Cutsdean Parish Council to move to a Parish Meeting, and a request from Down Ampney Parish Council to change the number councillors and this prompted an invitation to all Town & Parish Councils asking for any proposals for change that they wish to be considered.

1.2 As a result, six Councils have put forward proposals for consideration.

1.3 This report seeks approval from Council to commence a review of these proposals by way of a Community Governance Review.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Community Governance Reviews (CGR) provide the opportunity for principal councils to review and make changes to community governance within their areas.

2.2 A CGR enables strong, clearly defined boundaries to be put into place, which reflect local identities and facilitate effective and convenient local government.

2.3 The guidance on CGRs states that it is good practice for a principal council to consider conducting a review every 10-15 years as well as in circumstances where there has been significant new housing development. Reviews can also be conducted as/when requests for change are received.

2.4 Following receipt of two requests for electoral changes, all Town & Parish Councils were invited to submit requests for electoral changes.

2.5 This report seeks approval from Council to conduct a CGR under the Terms of Reference at Annex A for the parishes included at Annex B.

3. WHAT IS A COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW?

3.1 A Community Governance Review (CGR) can take place for the whole or part of the District and can consider the following:

a. Creating, merging, altering or abolishing Parishes;
b. The naming of Parishes and the style of new Parishes;
c. The electoral arrangements for Parishes including:
   - the ordinary year of election;
   - the number of Councillors to be elected; and
   - the warding (if any) of the Parish

- Grouping Parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping Parishes

3.2 The Council is required to ensure that the community governance within the area under review will be reflective of the identities and interests of the community in that area, and is effective and convenient

3.3 In doing so, the CGR is required to take into account the impact of community governance arrangements on community cohesion; and the size, population and boundaries or a local community or Parish

3.4 The District Council is responsible for conducting CGRs within its area. The council will oversee the review and produce draft and final recommendations. Once approved, an Order will be made to implement the changes.

3.5 If any approved changes result in a change to a District Ward or County Division boundary, this will be reported to the Boundary Commission for England. The Commission will consider the proposals and make any necessary changes to the District Ward or County Division boundaries.

4. AREAS FOR REVIEW

4.1 The following parishes have requested changes and details of each proposal are set out in Annex B:

- Cirencester Town Council
- Cutsdean Parish Council
- Down Ampney Parish Council
- Fairford Town Council
- Moreton-in-Marsh Town Council
- Siddington Parish Council
- Southrop Parish Council
- Tetbury Town Council

5. PROCESS OF REVIEW

5.1 The Terms of Reference set out the process and timetable for the review process.

5.2 At the end of the consultation period, final recommendations will be brought to Council for consideration and decision.

5.3 Changes which affect District Ward or County Division boundaries will be reported to the Boundary Commission for England who will consider them before making appropriate changes to the District Ward or County Division.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

6.1 A Community Governance Review is the only way to consider the requests received.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no immediate implications resulting from this report. All work undertaken will be managed within existing resources.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act), Part 4, Chapter 3, devolves the power to take decisions about the creation, abolition or alteration of parishes, and their electoral arrangements, to district councils, London Boroughs or unitaries whichever is appropriate (Principal Councils).

8.2 Section 100(4) of the 2007 Act requires principal councils to have regard to the guidance issued by the Secretary of State under s100(1) and (3) and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England under s100(2).

8.3 Other pieces of legislation also need to be complied with, such as the Local Government Act 1972 - in relation to parish meetings and councils, the constitution of the parish council and requirements relating to parish councillors - and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, in relation to reviews and recommendations about electoral areas by the Boundary Commission.

8.4 The process involved has been described elsewhere in this report and needs to be rigorously followed to avoid future challenges.

8.5 This exercise can run alongside Local Government Reorganisation, although it would make the handover of matter to a unitary authority more straightforward if the process was completed before vesting day.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 If the Council decides not to undertake a CGR, local people and/or Parish/Town Councils may submit a petition requiring the Council to undertake a CGR. This would need to be completed within one year of receipt of the petition.

9.2 If consultation with stakeholders brings forward opposing views, there may be a delay in the indicative timetable provided. Any delay will be clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

10.1 Governance arrangements should reflect the identities and interests of local communities and promote local cohesion.

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Cotswold District Council Community Governance Review 2025

Terms of Reference

Introduction

Cotswold District Council is carrying out a Community Governance Review (CGR) in accordance with Part 4, Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (LGPIHA 2007) to consider parish boundaries, parish ward boundaries and councillor representation throughout the local authority area.

Cotswold District Council is required to have regard for the Guidance on CGRs issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. This guidance has been considered in drawing up these terms of reference.

Why is the Cotswold District Council undertaking the review?

A CGR provides an opportunity for district councils to review and make changes to community governance for the parishes within their area. Such reviews can be undertaken when there have been changes in population or in reaction to specific, or local, new issues to ensure that the community governance for the area continues to be effective, convenient and reflective of the identities and interests of the community.

The government has emphasised that ultimately recommendations made in a CGR ought to bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.

Guidance further states that it is good practice to conduct a full review at least every 10 – 15 years and keep the area under review in the interim.

Scope of the review

Cotswold District Council sought requests from Town & Parish Councils in the District for changes to electoral arrangements.

Cotswold District Council will have regard to Section 93 LGPIHA 2007 and will ensure that community governance within the areas under review reflect the identities and interests of the community in that area and is effective and convenient.

Note: Cotswold District Council wards are not within the scope of this review.

Timetable

Publication of these Terms of Reference formally begins the review, which must be completed within twelve months. The indicative timetable for the review is as follows.

Date	Action
November 2025	Terms of Reference for Review prepared and approved by Cotswold District Council
November 2025 – February 2026	Consultation on draft proposals
February 2026	Officers review responses and develop recommendations
March 2026	Recommendations considered by Cotswold District Council
March 2026	Where recommendations are approved, these will be implemented by Orders which include the effective date.
March 2026 – April 2026	Where deemed necessary, further consultation takes place on proposals
April 2026	Officers review responses and develop recommendations
May 2026	Final recommendations are considered by Cotswold District Council
May – June 2026	Recommendations are implemented by Order which includes effective date.

Consultation

Cotswold District Council are required to consult the local government electors and any other person or body who appears to have an interest in the review and to take the representations that are received into account by judging them against the criteria in the LGPIHA 2007.

Cotswold District Council intends to consult with all households and interested parties in the area through inviting initial submissions and seeking views on the draft proposals. They will also identify any other person or body who it feels may have an interest in the review and write to them inviting them to submit their views at both stages of consultation.

Comments from any other person or body that wishes to make representations will be welcomed.

In accordance with the Act, representations received in connection with the review will be taken into account, and steps will be taken to notify consultees of the outcome of the review by publishing them on Cotswold District Council's website.

Following the review

A Reorganisation Order may be drafted to cover any consequential matters that are necessary following the final agreed recommendations.

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Annex B Community Governance Proposals - Summary

			District Ward	Councillor(s)
Cirencester	Request to change boundary between Cirencester and Preston and Cirencester and Siddington (indicative maps attached)	Request will affect district ward and county division boundaries	Cirencester New Mills Cirencester Watermoor Siddington & Cerney Rural	Claire Bloomer Nick Bridges Mike Evemy
Cutsdean	Request to move from Parish Council to Parish Meeting	Change does not affect District Ward or County Division boundaries	Bourton Vale Ward	Len Wilkins
Down Ampney	Increase number of councillors by 2 – up to 9 in total	Change does not affect District Ward or County Division boundaries	The Ampneys & Hampton	Lisa Spivey
Fairford	Increase number of councillors by 2 – up to 15 in total	Change does not affect District Ward or County Division boundaries	Fairford North and Lechlade, Kempsford & Fairford South	Michael Vann Helene Mansilla & Tristan Wilkinson
Moreton-in-Marsh	Change of boundary to bring land from Batsford Parish Council	Request will affect district ward boundary	Currently in Moreton East. Move would take it into Moreton West	Angus Jenkinson & Daryl Corps
Siddington	Request to change boundary between Siddington and Cirencester (indicative maps attached)	Request will affect district ward and county division boundaries	Cirencester Watermoor Siddington & Cerney Rural	Nick Bridges Mike Evemy
Southrop	Increase number of councillors by 2 – up to 7 in total	Change does not affect District Ward or County Division boundaries	Coln Valley Ward	David Fowles

Tetbury	Town Council request to create wards in line with District wards	Change does not affect District Ward or County Division boundaries	All 3 Tetbury Wards	Ian Watson Laura Hall-Wilson Nikki Ind

Annex B – Community Governance Proposals - details

Cirencester	Cirencester Town Council have submitted a proposal for two changes: one to move the boundary between Watermoor Ward and Siddington and one to move the boundary between New Mills Ward and Preston. The attached maps show the proposals for consideration.
	Watermoor Ward and Siddington This change will move the following streets from Siddington Parish to Cirencester Parish: Bluebell Drive Cherry Tree Drive North Hill Road Primrose Way Spire View Swinford Close The Glade A total of 163 properties would move from Siddington to Cirencester, reducing Siddington from 731 properties to 568. Cirencester Watermoor would increase from 1580 properties to 1743. Any approved changes will come into effect from the ordinary elections in May 2027 for Town and Parish elections. A request to change the District Ward boundary will need to be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
	New Mills Ward and Preston The change would move the land west of Kingshill School up to the A419 junction from Preston Parish into Cirencester Town, New Mills Ward. This also changes the New Mills/Siddington & Cerney Rural District Ward boundaries. At present there are 6 properties in the proposed area. However, permission has been granted for development of the open land. This will add a further 280 properties to the site. Any approved changes will come into effect from the ordinary elections in May 2027 for Town and Parish elections. A request to change the District Ward boundary will need to be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
Siddington	**Siddington and Watermoor Ward** This change will move the following streets from Cirencester Parish into Siddington:

	Bridge Road Ermin Place Kingsmead Oaken Court, Cricklade Road Rose Way Siddington Road It also includes Tesco, Aldi and McDonalds A total of 205 properties would move from Cirencester to Siddington increasing Siddington from 731 properties to 936. Cirencester Watermoor would decrease from 1580 properties to 1375. This would also change the District Ward boundary between Watermoor Ward and Siddington & Cerney Rural Ward. Any approved changes will come into effect from the ordinary elections in May 2027 for Town and Parish elections. A request to change the District Ward boundary will need to be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
Cutsdean	Cutsdean Parish Council has asked to move from a Parish Council to a Parish Meeting. There are currently 56 electors in Cutsdean Parish, and the Council has 5 councillors. The Parish Council consider that this makes them unviable and they consider that a Parish Meeting would serve the area better. Guidance for the creation of new parishes states that a parish with fewer than 150 electors cannot be a parish council. This supports Cutsdean Parish Council's view that the Council is no longer viable. If the proposal is approved, the Council will be abolished and a Parish Meeting created in its place. The consultation will seek to establish the views of the electorate and ensure plans are in place for the community to continue to be represented through the parish meeting. The proposal is to consult on this return to Council in March 2026 with a final proposal. If approved at that time, the parish will be abolished from April 2026. If there is any delay in the decision process, the change will take effect from April 2027.
Down Ampney	Down Ampney have proposed a change in the number of Councillors from 7 to 9.

	This is based on the 20 – 25% increase in housing and the increased workload this will bring to councillors. If the proposal is approved, it will take effect from the May 2027 elections.
Fairford	Fairford, the Town Council have asked for an increase in the number of councillors from 13 to 15. The Council feel that as the population of the town has grown and more development is possible, this additional support would be of benefit. **Current electorate:** 3202 **Recommended scale:** 2001 – 4000 electors = 13 If the proposal is approved, it will take effect from the May 2027 elections.
Moreton-in-Marsh	Moreton-in-Marsh Town Council have asked for a change to their boundary to bring land in from Batsford Parish. The land is identified on the attached map and does not currently have any properties. The land is included in the current Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment.
Southrop	Southrop Parish Council have asked for increase in the number of councillors from 5 to 7. The Council feel that this would help share the workload of councillors. **Current electorate:** 221 **Recommended scale:** 201 – 500 electors = 7 councillors If the proposal is approved, it will take effect from the May 2027 elections.
Tetbury	Tetbury Town Council have requested that the Town be warded for electoral purposes. The wards would follow the same boundaries as per the attached map with 5 councillors representing each one. Warding will allow councillors to be focused on their ward area for specific projects or issues whilst keeping an overview of the whole Town area. Each ward will be its own electoral area and therefore as and when a councillor leaves, only their ward will be included in the by-election. At the ordinary elections, each ward will be a separate election with some being contested and others not. The change will benefit the Council through sharing of workload and also with potentially reduced costs at by-elections. If the proposal is approved, it will take effect from the May 2027 elections.

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COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	**COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**FULL COUNCIL – 26 NOVEMBER 2025**
Subject	**PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2026/27**
Wards affected	None
Accountable member	Councillor Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council Email: mike.evemy@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer) Email: angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Email: andrew.brown@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To set a programme of Council and Committee meetings for 2026/27.
Annexes	Annex A – proposed Programme of Meetings from June 2026 to May 2027 – Calendar format
Recommendation(s)	That Council resolves to: 1. Agree the programme of meetings from June 2026 to May 2027 as set out in Annex A and Annex B. 2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer), in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme of meetings in the event that there is any future decision of Council to change the committee structure or committee remits that impacts the programme of meetings. 3. Delegate authority to the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services to set the meeting dates for the Performance and

	Appointments Committee, member training and briefing sessions, any working groups established by the Council and any meetings of the Licensing Sub-Committee (Licensing Act 2003 Matters) and the Standards Hearings Sub-Committee (if required). 4. Agree that, subject to any alternative proposals Council considers and agrees, meeting start times will be rolled forwards from 2025/26.
Corporate priorities	• Delivering Good Services
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Management Team

COTSWOLD
District Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The report sets out the proposed programme of meetings for 2026/27 for Members to agree.

1.2 The report also provides necessary delegations to officers to make any alterations to the programme as necessary and to schedule meetings of bodies that meet on an ad hoc basis and Member training and briefing sessions. This ensures that Council does not have to meet to provide any minor alterations to the programme of meetings which cannot be foreseen.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Constitution requires that the Chief Executive produces a schedule of meetings for each municipal year, based on the requirements of the Council to conduct its business.

2.2 This report proposes a recommended programme of Council and Committee meetings for June 2026 to May 2027. Meeting dates for Cabinet are a matter for the Leader of the Council and are included in the programme for completeness.

2.3 Setting meeting dates encourages good governance, alongside open and efficient decision making. It also helps members and officers to plan their workloads and availability.

3. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2026/27

3.1 The draft programme of meetings for 2026/27 is set out at Annex A in line with the basis of similar years and the committee structure at present.

3.2 The general principle for the timetabling of meetings is that business of each committee needs to be transacted in a timely manner. Notwithstanding this, it's important that Members' needs are taken into account. Gloucestershire school holiday dates (shown as purple in Annex A) have been avoided where this does not adversely affect the overall meetings programme however the following meeting dates do fall within Gloucestershire school holidays;

- Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis, Private Hire, Street Trading Consent Matters) – Thursday 28 May 2026

- Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis, Private Hire, Street Trading Consent Matters) – Thursday 23 July 2026
- Planning and Licensing Committee – Wednesday 12 August 2026
- Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis, Private Hire, Street Trading Consent Matters) – Thursday 20 August 2026
- Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis, Private Hire, Street Trading Consent Matters) – Tuesday 27 October 2026
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Monday 30 March 2026

District councillors may also serve as county councillors and / or parish councillors. Meetings of Gloucestershire County Council have been set up to the end of the 2026 calendar year, with most meetings of that authority starting at 10.00am. Clashes with County Council meetings are few but where they do occur any members affected would be able to arrange a substitute for one meeting or the other.

3.3 An additional full Council meeting has been included in the programme for 17 June 2026 for consideration of the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan for Public Consultation.

4. MEETING START TIMES

4.1 No changes are proposed in this report to the start times of meetings. The current start times are as follows:

- Council meetings are held at 6.00pm during the summer months (BST) and at 2.00pm during winter months (GMT), with the exception being the February Budget Council meeting which is held at 6.00pm.
- Planning and Licensing Committee meetings are held at 2.00pm.
- Licensing Sub-Committee (Hackney Carriage, Private Hire and Street Trading Consent) and Licensing Sub-Committee (Licensing Act 2003 matters) are held at 2.00pm.
- Overview and Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committee meetings start at 4.00pm.
- Cabinet starts at 6.00pm. However, this a matter for the Leader rather than Council to change if so desired.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 Should Council wish to consider alternative proposals it could request that a further report is presented to a future meeting.

5.2 Any future proposals would require consultation with officers to ensure sufficient resource could be provided to facilitate any new meeting.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The number of meetings is similar to previous programmes of meetings and therefore should not have a significant impact on costs.

6.2 Members can claim mileage expenses for attending meetings and this is provided for through existing budgets.

6.3 There are Members who receive paper copies of agenda packs by post which has a financial cost. The number of copies varies from meeting to meeting, and the overall number is reduced as more Members access papers online or via the Modern.gov app.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legal implications, but it should be noted that Licensing Sub-Committee dealing with Licensing Act 2003 matters must be arranged to comply with the deadlines prescribed by the Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations 2003, so the dates cannot be predicted. This report seeks a delegation to Head of Democratic and Electoral Services to schedule these sub-committee hearings.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 There are no significant risks in relation to this report. However, if Members do not agree a programme of meetings there is a risk that Member and Officer availability could cause changes to be made at short notice. It is therefore important that Members agree a schedule of meetings in advance to give certainty for Council business.

8.2 If Members are not able to attend Committee meetings, this could affect the overall performance of those Committees in transacting Council business. However, for most meetings it is possible to nominate a substitute Member within political groups.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 The recommendations of this report are not expected to differentially impact any groups who may have specific characteristics.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Members are required to attend meetings in person so there will be emissions associated with journeys to and from meetings by car.

10.2 Whilst Members have electronic copies by default through Modern.Gov or through the Councillor extranet, many members do receive paper copies which has an environmental impact through use of paper.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None

(END)

2026-2027 Calendar

	Bank Holidays
	School Holidays
	Inaccessible (Previous/Next Month)
P&L	Planning and Licensing
LS	Licensing Subcommittee
Council	Council
A&G	Audit and Governance
O&S	Overview and Scrutiny
Cabinet	Cabinet
SIB	Site Inspection Briefing

May 2026

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
				1
4	5	6	7	8
		SIB		
11	12	13	14	15
		P&L		
18	19	20	21	22
		Council		
25	26	27	28	29
			LS	

June 2026

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
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O&S		SIB	Cabinet	
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A&G		P&L		
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		Council		
22	23	24	25	26
			LS	
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O&S				

July 2026

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
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		SIB	Cabinet	
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		P&L		
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		Council		
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			LS	
27	28	29	30	31

August 2026

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
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		SIB		
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September 2026

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		SIB		
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October 2026

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A&G		SIB		
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O&S		P&L	Cabinet	
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November 2026

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		SIB		
9	10	11	12	13
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O&S			Cabinet	
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		Council	LS	
30				

December 2026

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		SIB	A&G	
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January 2027

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	A&G		LS	

February 2027

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O&S		P&L	Cabinet	
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Council			LS	

March 2027

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April 2027

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			LS	

May 2027

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
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		SIB	ELECTIONS	
10	11	12	13	14
		P&L		
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		Council	LS	
31				

Party Conference Dates

Conservative 4 - 7 October 2026 Birmingham
Green T B C
Labour 27 - 30 September 2026 Liverpool
Liberal Democrats 13 - 15 March 2026 York

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COTSWOLD
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Council name	**COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 17 NOVEMBER 2025** **COUNCIL – 26 NOVEMBER 2025** **CABINET – 26 NOVEMBER 2025**
Subject	**FULL PROPOSALS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE**
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council Email: mike.evemy@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jane Portman, Interim Chief Executive Officer Email: jane.portman@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Angela Claridge, Director of Governance & Development (Monitoring Officer) Email: angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To note the two proposals for local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire that have been developed collaboratively with all seven Gloucestershire councils for consideration by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 17 November 2025, Council on 26 November 2025 and Cabinet on 26 November 2025. The options are: (a) creating a single unitary authority for the whole county and (b) creating two unitary authorities, based on an East / West division of existing district and city councils. The proposal for East Gloucestershire Council comprises Tewksbury Borough Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Cotswold District Council and the associated proportion of Gloucestershire County Council. The proposal for West Gloucestershire Council comprises Gloucester City Council, Forest of Dean District Council and Stroud District Council and the associated proportion of Gloucestershire County Council.

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	Following this engagement with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Council, Cabinet will decide which, if any proposal should be formally submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in response to his invitation dated 5 February 2025.
Annexes	Annex A: Proposal 1: Creating a single unitary authority for the whole county Annex B: Proposal 2: Creating two unitary authorities, based on an East / West division of existing districts as set out above.
Recommendation(s)	1. That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Council consider the following two proposals for local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire and make any recommendations they wish to Cabinet for their decision. 2. That Cabinet considers which, if any, of the proposals it wishes to submit to Government regarding the future of local government in Gloucestershire 3. That Cabinet resolves to treat the decision as urgent under Part D6, paragraph 4.14 of the Constitution, and therefore disapplies the call-in procedure, on the grounds that any delay likely to be caused by the call-in process would prejudice the Council's and the public's interests
Corporate priorities	• Delivering Good Services • Responding to the Climate Emergency • Delivering Housing • Supporting Communities • Supporting the Economy
Key Decision	Yes
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Corporate Leadership Team, Cabinet, Head of Legal Services and Chief Accountant & Deputy Section 151 Officer.



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The UK Government's local government reorganisation programme seeks to simplify structures, improve efficiency and strengthen accountability through the creation of new unitary authorities. In response to the Minister of State's invitation in February 2025, Gloucestershire councils have collaborated to develop two full proposals for consideration:

- A single unitary authority for the whole county
- Two unitary authorities based on an East/West division of existing councils as set out above

1.2 These proposals aim to deliver streamlined governance, financial resilience and improved service delivery for Gloucestershire's residents. Both options have been developed through a comprehensive programme involving all seven principal councils, supported by independent analysis from PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and stakeholder engagement

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the English Devolution White Paper on 16 December 2024. The White Paper sets out the government's proposals to devolve powers to the regions. The proposals explain how the government intends to introduce legislation which will give complete coverage of mayoral combined authorities across England. The White Paper also includes proposals to reorganise the way local government in England is structured.

2.2 The government is expecting all two-tier areas and smaller or failing unitary authorities to develop proposals for reorganisation to create unitary authorities. Although the English Devolution White Paper outlined that unitaries should be created with a population of at least 500,000 people, the government has since confirmed that a 500,000 minimum population is a guideline and that justification for deviation is acceptable if justified by the local context. Government will then look for these unitary authorities to join up to form mayoral combined authorities of approximately 1.5 million people.

2.3 Gloucestershire currently operates within a two-tier principal local authority structure comprising the County Council and six district level authorities (Gloucester City, Cheltenham Borough, Tewkesbury Borough, Forest of Dean District, Stroud District and Cotswold District).

2.4 On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State wrote to all Gloucestershire council leaders to set out further detail of the criteria against which final proposals will be assessed and to formally invite them to work together to develop a proposal for a single tier of local government. The Minister confirmed the timeline for this process as:

- The deadline for submission of interim plans was on or before 21 March 2025.
- The deadline for submission of full proposals is on or before 28 November 2025.

2.5 Following endorsement at Council on 19 March 2025, the then Leader of the Council submitted a joint response with all Gloucestershire council leaders to the Minister of State's letter of 5 February 2025 to provide an update on Gloucestershire's progress in developing proposals for LGR.

2.6 The joint response to the Minister of State, submitted on 21 March 2025, outlined the three options for reorganisation being considered by the principal authorities:

- A single unitary council for the whole county
- Two unitary councils, one comprising or approximating the districts of Gloucester, Forest of Dean and Stroud; the other comprising or approximating the districts of Cheltenham, Cotswold and Tewkesbury
- A city-based unitary council based around a 'Greater Gloucester' area, along with one or two unitaries for the remainder of the county area.

2.7 The joint response also included two appendices:

a. An independent options appraisal of a single unitary option and a two unitary option based on an East / West division of existing districts, commissioned by Gloucestershire County Council (GCC).

b. A proposal for a two unitary model based on an East / West division of existing districts, commissioned by Cheltenham Borough Council.

2.8 Cotswold District Council, in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council and the five other district councils, decided to develop two full proposals for local government reorganisation - proposals for a single unitary authority option and a two unitary authorities (East / West) option. Gloucester City Council indicated that it would develop the 'Greater Gloucester' proposal.

2.9 This report introduces two full proposals for local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire for the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Council's consideration before a decision on which, if any, proposal to support is taken by Cabinet. The two proposals are

(a) a single authority option (Annex A) and

(b) a two unitary authorities option based on an East / West division of existing districts (Annex B).

On 26 November 2025, the Cabinet will take a decision on which option, if any, the Leader of the Council should submit to government, ahead of the deadline of 28 November 2025 and following consideration by Council earlier on 26 November.

3. FULL PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The seven principal councils in Gloucestershire have a strong record of working together positively and therefore established a Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme in early 2025 to ensure an organised and joined-up approach to deliver the activity required to develop proposals and meet the government deadlines. This work has been overseen by a Chief Executives' Group reporting to a Political Leadership Board, comprising the leaders of the seven principal councils and is currently comprised of six workstreams:

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

3.2 Despite there not being unanimity among the seven principal councils on the preferred future structure of local government in Gloucestershire, there is significant common ground. The councils have worked collaboratively to develop two full proposals for LGR in the interests of all Gloucestershire residents and the staff working across the seven councils. They have also ensured that data and information have been shared with Gloucester City Council to support them in development of their 'Greater Gloucester' proposal.

3.3 Following submission of interim plans to the Minister of State on 21 March 2025 and the elections in May 2025, Gloucestershire County Council commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to undertake a detailed, independent and objective analysis of two options for LGR in Gloucestershire: a single unitary authority model and a two unitary authorities' model (East / West). This analysis was designed to support an evidence-based assessment of both options against the government's published criteria, against which full proposals will be assessed. The approach taken

has been to evaluate all available data and evidence impartially, with no predetermined outcome.

3.4 To support the development of full proposals (also referred to as detailed business cases) for LGR, PwC was also asked to assist the seven principal councils in shaping a high-quality, deliverable proposal for both options. These proposals are underpinned by a methodology that is recognised and trusted by government and draw on PwC's extensive experience in developing robust, evidence-based cases that meet the standards expected by government.

3.5 In addition to PwC's support, Cheltenham Borough Council commissioned Plexal, an innovation and growth company that works with government, to assist with the development of a vision and ambition for Gloucestershire, ensuring the proposals reflect a forward-looking vision shaped by a broad range of perspectives.

3.6 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. Through six LGR programme workstreams, officers across the seven principal councils, alongside relevant partners, have worked together 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 also helped shape the development of 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 county-wide services (disaggregation). The insights gained from these collective efforts have directly informed the full proposals.

3.7 Financial scrutiny has been a critical component of the process to ensure that proposals are deliverable and supported by a resilient financial case. Financial Directors (s151 officers) from all seven councils have conducted detailed reviews of the financial case, provided the inputs and validated the assumptions made.

3.8 To strengthen alignment and address complex issues, a series of workshops was held with council leaders, chief executives and service leads. These workshops were instrumental in building consensus and validating assumptions. Each section of the full proposals has been shared with council leaders and chief executives for review and sign-off to ensure collective challenge and ownership.

3.9 As a result of this comprehensive process, the full proposals for both the single unitary authority option and the two unitary authorities (East / West) option are robust and directly comparable. This enables the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider the proposals at their meeting on 17 November, and for Council to make informed recommendations at their meeting on 26 November regarding which option the Leader of the Council should submit to government. The proposals will be considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 26 November, following the Council meeting, ensuring that all members of Council have the opportunity to inform the Cabinet of their views on the matter. The third option for reorganisation included within Gloucestershire's joint interim plan response to the Minister of State, submitted on 21 March 2025, comprised a city-based unitary council based around a 'Greater Gloucester' area, along with one or two unitaries for the remainder of the county area. Whilst the 'Greater Gloucester' proposal has been developed separately, the same data and information has been provided to support Gloucester City Council, whose Leader and officers have been full and active participants in the joint programme arrangements, drawing on the joint outputs to develop their proposal.

3.10 Following publication of the Greater Gloucester proposal on 4 November 2025, a process of review and due diligence would be needed to advise Cotswold District Council members on the merits and implications of the 'Greater Gloucester' proposal. Due to the timing of this publication, CDC officers have had insufficient time to review and complete due diligence of this proposal ahead of the CDC democratic process. Officers will review the proposal and complete due diligence work, which could be used as part of the formal consultation to be undertaken by MHCLG in the new year. Therefore, the proposal is not being brought forward for full consideration at this stage of the LGR process.

4. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PROPOSALS

4.1 Members will note strong similarities in the drafting of the single unitary and two unitary authorities (East / West) proposals. Every effort has been made to work on a unified and consensual basis in the interests of Gloucestershire's residents and organisations and so key elements share common principles and approaches, including the overarching vision and ambition, locality working, the future operating model/s, our workforce assumptions and approach to using data and technology.

The proposed implementation roadmap has also been developed collectively and therefore shares key assumptions and elements.

4.2 Underpinning the similarities between the proposals has been agreement between leaders not to draft proposals as 'campaigning' or 'selling' documents. They have been developed with the utmost attention to the use of evidence and do not seek to promote a particular option at the expense of another. Given that Ministers will ultimately determine the structure of local government in Gloucestershire, it is in the interests of all members and officers that both options are capable of being delivered.

4.3 Despite large sections of the proposals being subject to common endeavour and therefore being similarly drafted, there are key differences between the proposals (beyond the obvious differences in geographic footprint) including:

- Options Analysis: For some of the government's criteria, the single unitary authority proposal is assessed as more closely aligned with key criteria.
- Financial Case: The single unitary authority proposal provides the opportunity for more efficiency and savings. In the two unitary authorities (East / West) option, there would be greater costs, and the West would have disproportionately greater needs than the East.
- Disaggregation: The two unitary authority (East / West) option would mean that most county wide services including social care would be disaggregated between the East and West councils.
- Fire and Rescue: The two unitary authority (East / West) option would require the creation of a separate Fire and Rescue Authority and service.

4.4 The above differences are not presented as decisive factors for members but are nevertheless to be considered and relate closely to MHCLG's criteria.

5. OPTIONS

5.1 Option 1: Overview & Scrutiny Committee makes any recommendations it wishes to Council and/or Cabinet about the proposals for consideration.
Council then considers the alternatives available to the Leader and makes a recommendation on its preferred option.

Cabinet considers the proposals and recommendations, if any, from Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the views of Council before deciding on which, if any, proposal the Leader should support on behalf of the Council.

5.2 Option 2: Do nothing – Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Council do not recommend the LGR full proposals for consideration by Cabinet on 26 November. This option is not advised because the Leader and senior officers have worked collaboratively with their counterparts at the six principal councils in Gloucestershire and it is important to consider both the single unitary authority and a two unitary authorities (East / West) LGR full proposals. It is also important that Cotswold District Council, as a key stakeholder in the county, is provided the opportunity to consider a matter that will shape the future of local government across Gloucestershire.

5.3 It is recommended that Cabinet, taking account of any recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the views of Council decides on its preferred proposal for LGR across Gloucestershire, and inform the Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness by 28 November 2025.

5.4 Timeline:

The following is the Government's timeline for local government reorganisation:

- 28 November 2025: Deadline for submission of full proposals for local government reorganisation to the Minister of State.
- Summer 2026 (this is likely to be June or July 2026): Ministerial decision expected.
- May 2027: Elections to new authority/ies.
- April 2028: Unitary Authority/ies vested, subject to the Minister of State accepting the submissions for the changes in local government and the formal legalities of creating the new unitary authority/ies, including secondary legislation and local consultation and engagement.

6. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

6.1 Formal consultation will be led by the Government, and it is anticipated that this will be undertaken in early 2026, sometime between January and April 2026.

6.2 To inform the development of full proposals, all seven principal councils jointly commissioned Cratus Group to design and deliver a countywide public engagement programme, to gather views from residents and stakeholders on the future shape and priorities of local government in Gloucestershire.

6.3 Between July and August 2025, Cratus Group engaged residents and stakeholders across Gloucestershire via 12 in-person events, two virtual webinars and a countywide survey which generated over 3,100 responses. A dedicated microsite and multi-channel communications campaign ensured broad reach across all six districts. The public engagement report can be found in Appendix 3 in Annexes A and B as well as a summary of how the findings were used to inform both proposals.

6.4 Additionally, to help inform the development of LGR proposals, there has been engagement with Town & Parish Councils, including a summit in June.

6.5 The objectives of undertaking this engagement were to understand how LGR / Devolution may impact specific stakeholders, what is important to them in relation to LGR / Devolution and address any concerns or issues they may have. The feedback received indicated strong cross-sector support for a single unitary authority model in Gloucestershire, and a summary of this engagement can also be found in Appendix 4 in Annexes A and B.

7. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT/FOLLOW UP

7.1 Once each of the principal councils in Gloucestershire has taken a decision on its preferred model for LGR, the leaders of the seven councils will submit a response to the Minister of State's statutory invitation of 5 February 2025 by 28 November 2025, setting out the options for LGR in Gloucestershire and the preferred option of each of the seven councils.

7.2 The proposed timeline for LGR is ambitious. Once a decision is made by the Minister of State as to the model for local government in Gloucestershire, the seven principal councils will need to move quickly from planning to delivery. Therefore, preparations have already begun, overseen by the existing LGR programme governance, to plan for the implementation of LGR in Gloucestershire and take the first practical steps in mobilising the LGR implementation portfolio and creating the conditions for successful implementation. This does not pre-empt a decision by the Minister of State but instead positions Gloucestershire Councils to lead effectively once a decision is made.

7.3 The proposals for LGR in Gloucestershire set out in Annex A and Annex B include an implementation roadmap, outlining how Gloucestershire will transition to its new local government model, whilst maintaining service continuity, protecting statutory services, and laying foundations for ambitious transformation.

COTSWOLD
District Council

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Officers recommend that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee considers the two proposals for local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire, and Council indicates its preferred proposal, if any, to Cabinet for consideration at its meeting on 26 November 2025.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Effective local government in Gloucestershire relies on strong and sustainable finances. The proposals for LGR in Gloucestershire, set out in Annex A and Annex B, include a detailed financial case outlining the implications of a single unitary authority and a two unitary authorities (East / West) model. It covers 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 on the Reorganisation Date

9.2 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, which Gloucestershire scores lower on. Income projections have been prudently adjusted downward to reflect this across both options with further updates anticipated following government guidance.

9.3 In a single unitary authority model, Gloucestershire would start with a balanced budget of approximately £851.4 million in both income and expenditure on the reorganisation date, assuming the existing principal authorities meet their planned savings over the years prior to the reorganisation date.

9.4 Under the two unitary authority model, 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. This assumes the existing principal authorities meet their planned savings over the years prior to the reorganisation date. 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 on the impact of Fair Funding, but the outcome of the government's review remains uncertain, and the estimated

gap/surplus is subject to change (either to narrow or increase the Day 1 gap between the two future councils).

9.5 In addition to the total income and expenditure position, it is also important to consider assets and long-term liabilities. The single unitary authority model would inherit long-term assets with a total value of £4.4 billion on the reorganisation date 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. Under a two unitary authority model, the West would inherit long-term assets with a total value of £2.3 billion on the reorganisation date with the East inheriting £2.1 billion. The West would take on total liabilities of £580.8 million and the East £563.9 million including outstanding borrowing and the DSG deficit of £234.3 million which has been allocated out using the share of Education, Health and Care Plans based on location of schools as a proxy.

9.6 A further consideration for ensuring financial sustainability of the new council(s) is the level of council tax income they require and how this affects what residents will be required to pay in the future. The new unitary council(s) will need to decide how to align council tax for their areas. The detailed financial case in Annex A and Annex B includes modelling to illustrate the options to be considered.

9.7 The assumptions and inputs used in the model have been tested and agreed by all seven Chief Financial Officers (s151 officers) across Gloucestershire councils.

9.8 <u>Reorganisation Savings</u>

Both a single unitary authority and a two unitary authorities (East / West) model reduce duplication and streamline governance, generating savings. The single unitary authority model generates annual gross savings of £21.1 million with no additional annual costs while the two unitary authority (East / West) model saves £18.9 million annually but incurs £8.1 million each year in additional disaggregation costs due to duplicated services and leadership across both councils, creating a net saving of £10.8m annually. Payback periods are shorter for a single unitary authority model (2 years) compared to a two unitary authority (East / West) model (4.9 years) with cumulative net savings after 10 years of £164 million and £54.8 million respectively.

9.9 <u>Transition Costs</u>

Transition costs are estimated at £21.3 million for a single unitary authority model and £30.1 million for a two unitary authorities (East / West) model reflecting duplicated governance and ICT infrastructure in the latter. These costs do not

include an activity costing of senior officer time likely to be consumed in the reorganisation process.

9.10 Impact On Cotswold District Council: Paragraphs 9.1 to 9.9 provide a summary of the financial impact of the single-unitary and two unitary proposals. The paragraphs below consider the immediate financial implications for Cotswold District Council.

9.10.1 Principles for the sharing of costs and the profile of transition-related expenditure have yet to be agreed across the Gloucestershire authorities. However, it would be prudent for the Council to start considering how adequate resources are set aside to provide sufficient capacity to ensure services continue to be provided to residents, and support residents and the Council with the reorganisation process.

9.10.2 As set out in the 2026/27 Budget Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Update report to Cabinet in October 2025, it was agreed that any additional budget surplus or one-off benefit is transferred to two specific earmarked reserves, subject to the wider financial position:

- Transformation and Change
- Capacity Building

9.10.3 This report estimates transition costs of £21.3m to £30.1m depending on the unitary authority model. Therefore, it would be prudent through the review of the Balances and Reserves Strategy to consider how a sum of up to £2m could be set aside in a specific earmarked reserve to enable the Council to meet its share of transition costs. The outcome from the review of the strategy will be included in the 2026/27 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) reports to Cabinet and Council in February 2026.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 By publishing the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024, the government made it clear that it expected all 21 two-tier local authority areas, including Gloucestershire, to develop proposals for the creation of unitary local authorities which would enable the creation of Strategic Authorities and provide devolution.

10.2 The Minister for Local Government and English Devolution wrote to Gloucestershire Leaders in February 2025. In the letter, the Minister introduced the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government's invitation to Gloucestershire councils to develop proposals for the creation of single tier local authority/ies for the

county, exercising their powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act). This same piece of legislation has been used in recent years to deliver reorganisation across England.

10.3 In Gloucestershire, interim plans were required to be (and were) submitted by 21 March 2025 and a full proposal should be submitted by 28 November 2025. This is the purpose of this report.

10.4 Whilst all 21 two-tier local authority areas in England were to provide Interim Plans by 21 March 2025, six areas were successful in joining the Devolution Priority Programme (meaning Strategic Authorities would be created at the same pace as the reorganisation) and were required to provide their full proposal by 26 September 2025. Surrey was required to provide its full proposal by 9 May 2025.

10.5 The creation of Strategic Authorities, including Gloucestershire unitary council(s), was not mentioned in the letter of 5 February 2025 to Gloucestershire leaders although work is being carried out on this proposal too.

10.6 The possible types of proposals for a single tier of local government (unitaries) are set out in the 2007 Act, as well as in Annex A of the 5 February 2025 letter, as follows:

- Type A - one single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county.
- Type B - one single tier of local authority covering an area that is currently a district or two or more districts.
- Type C - a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county or one or more districts in the county plus one or more relevant adjoining areas.
- Combined proposal that consists of two or more Type B proposals, two or more Type C proposals or one or more Type B proposals and one or more Type C proposals.

10.7 Proposals also need to follow further criteria set out in Annex A to the letter dated 5 February 2025, namely:

- Proposal must be made by 28 November 2025.
- The councils must have regard to the guidance from the Secretary of State set out in the Schedule to the letter.
- A council can make its own proposal or make a joint proposal with any of the other authorities invited to respond.

10.8 Under Part 1 of the 2007 Act, the Secretary of State is required by law to consult with the local authorities and any other persons they consider appropriate, prior to making a final decision as to reorganisation in Gloucestershire. This is different from any public engagement undertaken by the various councils in relation to proposals

they wished to put forward, as there was no requirement to formally consult at this stage.

10.9 It is anticipated that the Minister will decide as to reorganisation in the summer of 2026. If reorganisation is to go ahead, legislation will then need to be agreed by Parliament prior to moving to elections to the new 'shadow' unitary authority/ies. It is envisaged that these elections would take place in May 2027.

10.10 A Shadow Authority is an authority which will manage the transition from the current arrangements to the new ones. It will also carry out the functions of the new unitary council until the new authority comes into effect, on what is commonly called 'vesting day'. All existing councils across Gloucestershire will continue to operate and deliver services until vesting day.

10.11 It is anticipated that vesting day would be 1 April 2028 when all existing councils across Gloucestershire would cease to exist.

11. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

11.1 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) creates significant resource implications for the Council and ultimately the new authority/ies. These implications are summarised in Section 10 of this report and in greater depth in the single unitary authority and two unitary authorities (East / West) proposals (Annexes A and B). It will be vital that the new structure of local government for Gloucestershire provides for a stable financial footing.

Cabinet will wish to consider the estimated financial effects of reorganisation in the scenarios modelled including for:

- The one-off transition costs of the reorganisation process
- The 'Day 1' income and expenditure forecasts
- The 'Day 1' assets and liabilities for new authorities
- The ongoing revenue costs and benefits of reorganisation

11.2 The resource implications will not be the only key factor in reaching a judgement on support for either proposal but are of particular importance within the Minister's criteria and as such have been subject to significant collaborative work between Gloucestershire's seven principal councils.

COTSWOLD
District Council

12. RISK ASSESSMENT

12.1 The key risks that have been identified to date in relation to this decision are:

- The proposals submitted may not meet the expectations of Government particularly as expressed in the published criteria and guidance.

Mitigation: LGR full proposals include an options analysis of the two options against MHCLG criteria. MHCLG feedback on Gloucestershire's interim plans aligns with the approach taken to develop full proposals and advice and guidance has been sought from MHCLG, the Local Government Association (LGA) and other partners.

- A lack of consensus amongst the principal councils could lead to delays and missed deadlines.

Mitigation: Joint programme governance is in place to ensure shared accountability for developing the LGR full proposals by the government's deadline. A collaborative approach has been taken to developing the LGR full proposals including opportunities to build consensus and agree assumptions.

- Differing views could lead to a significant breakdown in relationships between partners impacting on business-as-usual activity across partners.

Mitigation: Leaders of the seven principal councils have agreed a set of partnership principles to work to during the development of LGR full proposals.

12.2 Given the complexity and scale of change involved in LGR implementation, it is critical that we proactively identify, manage and mitigate risks and issues associated with the portfolio.

12.3 The key risks that have been identified to date in relation to LGR implementation are:

- The scale and complexity of the change required across all seven councils may not be deliverable within the tight timescales.

Mitigation: A detailed implementation plan will be developed, delivered by a robust portfolio and programme management capability.

- The seven principal councils may not have the right capacity and capability to drive implementation delivery alongside maintaining business as usual service delivery for residents and communities.

Mitigation: Early identification of the key resources required enabling each of the seven principal councils to consider where existing resources can be redeployed or prioritised. Funding will also need to be identified as part of the overall transition investment for additional external support and backfill arrangements.

- Service performance or continuity could be adversely impacted during transition or immediately post the reorganisation date.

Mitigation: The principle of being 'safe and legal' on day one will be prioritised. A detailed implementation plan will be developed which prioritises and phases service transition activities and is informed by service areas.

- The transition budget may be insufficient to cover unexpected or unforeseen circumstances.

Mitigation: Contingency has been built into the transition costs to account for unexpected circumstances. A robust portfolio and programme management capability will be in place to oversee costs and financial risks.

- The savings identified may not be deliverable, impacting on the financial viability of the new council(s).

Mitigation: A benefits realisation framework will be established to track and manage benefits delivery, overseen by a robust portfolio and programme management capability.

- Key stakeholders, including staff, partners and elected members, may not be aligned with the vision of the new council(s).

Mitigation: Early engagement with stakeholders to help co-produce and develop implementation plans. A communications and engagement strategy will be developed.

- Key stakeholders, including staff, partners and elected members, may experience change fatigue from the level of change and disruption felt during implementation.

Mitigation: Change management resource and activity will be in place to support key stakeholders through this change. There will be investment in leadership and managerial development so that they are equipped and confident to support staff and engage with partners.

12.4 Moving forward, an LGR portfolio management approach will be established, working across all seven principal councils, to ensure that all risks are monitored and managed and that mitigation plans are in place.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT

13.1 An equalities impact assessment is set out in appendix 7 of annexes A & B

14. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

14.1 At this stage there is not enough information known about the changes that would be made to service delivery and ways of working to sufficiently capture impacts that would be valuable to inform any decision. However, overall environmental and climate matters have been considered in the Options Analysis section of the LGR full proposals to inform the decision.

14.2 Once a decision has been made by government as to the LGR model in Gloucestershire and implementation programmes have been scoped, full climate and ecological emergencies implications can be clarified.

15. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 The English Devolution White Paper refers to the Government's commitment to work with Strategic Authorities to drive progress on the green transition and capitalise on the social, economic, and wellbeing benefits for local communities. As part of implementation of LGR in Gloucestershire, the principal councils will remain committed to delivering considerable social value through better outcomes for Gloucestershire communities.

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 Initial Proposals for LGR In Gloucestershire (Council, 19 March 2025)

(END)

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Local Government Reorganisation in Gloucestershire

Single Unitary Authority (1UA) Full Proposal

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Executive Summary

Gloucestershire is poised for a bold transformation in local governance. This proposal recommends replacing the current two-tier system of county, district, borough, and city councils with a **Single Unitary Authority (1UA)** serving all ~659,000 residents. The 1UA model will streamline decision-making, eliminate duplication, and unlock significant financial and operational efficiencies - while strengthening local identity and empowering communities through innovative **Neighbourhood Partnerships**.

This reorganisation is not just structural, it's strategic. It aligns with Ministerial criteria for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and positions Gloucestershire as a national leader in regional devolution, ready to shape the future of public service delivery.

Economic and Demographic Context

- Gloucestershire's economy generated **£22.1bn GVA** in 2023, with strengths in **advanced manufacturing, cyber, aerospace, and agri-tech**
- **The population is projected to grow by 17.6% by 2047**, with a sharp rise in residents aged 65+
- Pressing challenges include **housing affordability**, **rural isolation**, and **climate resilience.**

Our Vision and Ambition

We're building on what makes Gloucestershire great to create a sustainable place with thriving communities, bold ideas, and opportunities for everyone. LGR is the enabling change that allows us to meet these challenges and deliver a ***smarter, fairer, and greener Gloucestershire***. Our six ambitions are:

1. **Driving breakthrough innovation for national resilience**
2. **Harnessing digital to tackle inequality, improve services, and drive innovation**
3. **Empowering communities through co-design and local decision-making**
4. **Putting wellbeing, housing, and nature recovery at the heart of growth**
5. **Unlocking talent, skills, and housing for inclusive growth**
6. **Using data to transform transport and public services**

These ambitions are designed to unlock Gloucestershire's full potential and deliver tangible benefits for residents.

The 1UA Financial Case

Potential day one financial position (c. 1st April 2028)	
Total income	£851.4m
Total expenditure	£851.4m
Net position	£0.0m
Reorganisation Costs and Benefits	
Gross annual reorganisation savings	£21.1m
Ongoing annual disaggregation costs	£0.0m
Net annual savings	£21.1m
One-off transition costs	-£21.3m
Payback period	2.0 years
Cumulative net saving after 5 years	£58.7m
Cumulative net saving after 10 years	£164.0m
Transformation benefits	
Recurring annual transformation savings fully delivered by year 5 – **Base**	£16.0m
Recurring annual transformation savings fully delivered by year 5 – **Stretch**	£26.2m

Governance, Democracy, and Place

- **110 councillors** for Gloucestershire
- A unified electoral cycle and **streamlined decision-making**
- Strong locality working via **Neighbourhood Partnerships** (15–25 neighbourhoods, 20k–50k population each)
- **Trusted, innovative partnerships** with Town and Parish Councils and the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sectors.

Digital, Data, and Technology (DDaT)

- A **digitally enabled council** with inclusive, responsive services
- Investment in **AI**, **predictive analytics**, and **cloud platforms**
- Focus on **digital inclusion** and robust infrastructure.

Built together, backed by evidence

Our proposals have been developed by **all Gloucestershire councils working together** in setting the vision, using a common evidence-base, and working within a single financial model and option appraisal process.

Our **public and stakeholder engagement has enriched and improved our proposals**. We are committed to delivering better outcomes for and with local people and making **LGR the platform for a better Gloucestershire.**

Both the single unitary (1UA) and two unitary (2UA) proposals have been developed using a common evidence base, shared data sources, and consistent analytical methods. As a result, there are significant similarities across both proposals.

In addition to the geographic footprints, key differences between the 1UA and 2UA proposals are highlighted within the shared options analysis and the respective financial cases.

Introduction and Context

Gloucestershire isn't like anywhere else in the UK.

From postcard-perfect Cotswold villages to codebreaking at GCHQ and the roar of the Shed at Gloucester Rugby, this is a county where history fuels a thriving present. Our culture, economy, and identity are deeply rooted yet rapidly evolving.

We're not defined by a single centre. Gloucestershire is a proud network of city, towns, villages, and rural communities, each with its own pulse. Cheltenham leads in innovation, Stroud bursts with creativity, the Forest of Dean harnesses natural assets, Tewkesbury drives manufacturing, Gloucester powers civic life, and the Cotswolds are shaping the future of sustainable energy.

Our diverse places have built a rich patchwork of industries, cultures, and stories. And now, with a bold vision for the future, a single tier of local government could unlock even more. A devolved Gloucestershire would be decentralised, interconnected, and resilient - ready to turn its unique strengths into shared success.



This document sets out the case for change for a new model of local government in Gloucestershire – a model that will enable us to build on what makes Gloucestershire great, to create a sustainable place with thriving communities, fresh ideas, and opportunities for everyone.

About Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire sits at the northern edge of the South West - perfectly placed and powerfully connected. It borders three unitary authorities - South Gloucestershire, Swindon, and Wiltshire - and links to Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, and Monmouthshire. Sitting to the north of the M4 / M5 crossroads, with the M5 weaving northwards through the county, Gloucestershire links north and south, east and west, and connects several major UK cities Cardiff, Bristol, Birmingham, Oxford, and London. The River Severn winds through the county's core, shaping both landscape and life.

Though 87.5% of the county is rural, **over 70% of residents live in urban areas**[1]. Cheltenham and Gloucester are the beating hearts of business, education, culture, and commerce, supported by a network of vibrant market towns that fuel local economies and serve rural communities.

- The population of Gloucestershire is currently 659,276[2]
- Gloucestershire spans 265,253 hectares[3]
- We are proud to have two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): the Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean
- Gloucestershire also has 12 National Nature Reserves and some 120 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within its borders
- According to the 2011 Census, 83.1% of Gloucestershire residents also work in the county[4].

Population Change

Gloucestershire is growing, and fast. Between 2014 and 2024, the county's population has risen by 7.8%, outpacing the national average of 5.9%. But growth hasn't been even. Districts like Tewkesbury are booming, with a staggering 16.6% population increase, ranking in the top 10% of fastest-growing local authorities six times since 2014[5].

At the same time, **Gloucestershire is ageing.** People aged 65+ make up 22.1% of the population, well above the national average of 18.8%. In rural areas like the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean, that figure climbs above 25%. The county also has fewer children and working-age adults than the national average.
Gloucester and Cheltenham have the highest proportions of young people within

[1] Rural Urban Classification 2021
[2] Mid 2023 Population Estimates, ONS
[3] SAM 2023, ONS Area to Mean High Water Excluding Area of Inland Water (Land Area) (AREALHECT)
[4] 2011 Census, ONS
[5] Mid Year Population Estimate. ONS

the county, reflecting their urban character and the presence of educational institutions.[6]

Looking ahead, the population is projected to grow by **113,929 people by 2047** - a 17.6% increase, far above the 12.7% forecast for England and Wales. Tewkesbury and Stroud are set for even greater projected growth of 29.6% and 22.2% respectively, driven by more available land for development. Cheltenham, by contrast, is expected to see the smallest rise at 10.1%[7].

Economy

Gloucestershire's natural beauty is both a challenge and a magnet. With AONBs covering large parts of the county, development can be constrained, but this same environmental quality makes the county a magnet for talent, investment, and tourism.

The economy is strong, diverse, and resilient. In 2023, Gloucestershire's economy generated £22.1 billion in GVA - 12.8% of the South West's output and 1% of the UK total[8]. It's a county where quality of life meets business opportunity.

Gloucestershire offers a powerful mix: **a skilled workforce, strong connectivity, available land, and a high-quality environment.** That's why it's home to major players like GE Aviation, Safran, Renishaw, EDF Energy, Ecotricity, Unilever-Walls, and St. James's Place, alongside a thriving ecosystem of entrepreneurs and innovators.

With deep roots in defence and aerospace, the county remains a manufacturing powerhouse, especially in advanced engineering. It's also a national centre for cyber and intelligence, anchored by GCHQ, the National Cyber Security Centre, and a growing cyber business park.

Despite its specialisms, **Gloucestershire's economy is diverse and balanced.** In 2023, the top employment sectors were wholesale and retail (14.8%), health and social care (13.8%), and manufacturing (10.6%)[9] - a mix that supports **stability and adaptability**.

Challenges Facing Gloucestershire

But Gloucestershire isn't without its challenges. Demographic change, widening inequalities, pockets of deprivation, environmental pressures, and rural isolation all pose serious hurdles to inclusive, sustainable growth.

[6] Mid Year Population Estimate. ONS
[7] 2022 based Subnational Population Projections, ONS
[8] Regional gross value added (balanced) per head and income components, ONS
[9] BRES, ONS

Demographic Change

Gloucestershire's population is ageing, and faster than the national average. By 2047, the number of residents aged 65+ is projected to surge by 43.4% (compared to 38.6% nationally), making up over a quarter (26.8%) of the county's population. Tewkesbury is set to see the sharpest rise at 54%, while even the lowest increase - 32.4% in the Forest of Dean - is significant[10].

At the same time, the working-age population (18-64) is barely growing, and the number of children and young people is expected to decline. This shift is reshaping the county's social and economic landscape.

More people are living with disabilities and long-term conditions across all age groups. There's also a rise in single-person households with limited family support, and a growing number of children with special educational needs (SEN) since 2015, all adding pressure to already stretched health and social care services.

By 2047, Gloucestershire's **dependency ratio** (the number of dependents per 100 working-age people) is projected to rise from 65 to 70[11]. That means fewer people supporting more, placing increasing strain on services, budgets, and the local economy.

The challenge is clear: how do we continue delivering high-quality care and support while maintaining a healthy, productive economy in the face of rapid demographic change?

Inequalities and Deprivation

Gloucestershire performs well overall, but averages hide deep inequalities. While county-wide outcomes often exceed regional and national benchmarks, they mask stark local disparities. 12 neighbourhoods across Gloucester, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, and the Forest of Dean (home to a combined 3.2% of the county's population) rank among the **10% most deprived in England[12]**.

Some communities face even greater barriers to inclusion and opportunity, including **rough sleepers, non-white and non-English speaking residents, traveller communities, and asylum seekers**. For these groups, access to healthcare, education, and skills development is often harder, and outcomes are worse.

[10] 2022 based Sub-national Population Projections, ONS
[11] 2022 based Sub-national Population Projections, ONS
[12] Indices of Deprivation 2019

Access to Housing

Housing in Gloucestershire is expensive, and getting on the property ladder is tough. In 2025, the average home cost **8.6 times the median salary**, higher than the national average (7.5) and just above the South West average (8.5). But this affordability varies widely: in Gloucester, the ratio is 7.3 and, in the Cotswolds, it soars to 13.8.

With mortgage lenders typically capping loans at 4.5 times income, many residents are priced out, forced into unsuitable housing, or pushed out of the county altogether. This makes it harder to attract and retain young people, key workers, and future talent[13].

Despite these pressures, housing supply has grown. Between 2019 and 2024, the number of dwellings in Gloucestershire rose by **5.2%**, outpacing both the regional (4.6%) and national (4.7%) averages[14].

Yet unlocking further housing and growth remains a major challenge. Much of Gloucestershire doesn't have a five-year housing supply, increasing the likelihood of speculative planning applications, misalignment with local priorities, and unsustainable growth. Planning constraints, infrastructure limitations, and the need to protect Gloucestershire's natural and historic environment all create friction. Balancing growth with sustainability, affordability, and community needs will be critical to the county's future.

Recent updates to the National Planning Policy Framework and the anticipated Planning and Infrastructure Bill promise a step change in housing delivery. The Bill will introduce a statutory Spatial Development Strategy, giving Gloucestershire a powerful new tool to shape future growth. Combined with the streamlining of the planning system via unitarisation, this could unlock significant sustainable development across the county. We must seize this opportunity, while being conscious of possible environmental and democratic risks.

Rural Isolation

Gloucestershire's rural charm is one of its greatest strengths, but also one of its biggest challenges. With 87.5% of the county classed as rural and nearly 30% of residents living in these areas, access to essential services isn't always easy[15]. Nearly **one in five people** live in areas ranked among the **20% most deprived in England** in terms of Barriers to Housing and Services[16].

[13] Median House Prices to Median Workplace Earnings, ONS
[14] Live tables on dwelling stock, MHCLG
[15] Rural/Urban Classification, 2022, ONS
[16] Indices of Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG

Travel times to key services - whether by public transport, car, or active travel - are longer than both regional and national averages[17]. And while high-speed broadband now reaches almost every address, **digital exclusion persists**: 4.4% of residents didn't use the internet at all between May 2023 and March 2024. In rural areas, where public internet access points can be over 45 minutes away by bus, those without a car face real digital isolation[18].

The challenge is clear: we must ensure Gloucestershire's most vulnerable and isolated residents stay connected - to services, to support, and to opportunity.

Climate Change and Flooding

Gloucestershire is making strides on sustainability, but the climate crisis is accelerating. Despite strong progress by county and district councils in cutting emissions and embedding greener practices, the risks to our communities, infrastructure, and economy are growing.

Climate Leadership Gloucestershire has been established as a strategic partnership of public sector bodies - including local councils, the NHS, police, and academic institutions - to coordinate and lead the county's response to the climate and ecological emergency.

Extreme weather is becoming more frequent and more severe. Gloucestershire is impacted by severe flooding, droughts, and heatwaves. A growing risk of wildfires has also been highlighted by agencies including the Forestry Commission, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

Flooding remains one of Gloucestershire's biggest climate threats. The devastating 2007 floods damaged around 5,000 homes and 500 businesses, leaving 135,000 people without water for two weeks. Even less intense events in 2012 and 2013 caused widespread disruption. But the impact goes far beyond damaged buildings. **Flooding hits lives, livelihoods, and mental health, especially for the most vulnerable.** That's why climate resilience must be front and centre in our housing strategy and growth plans.

The Current Model of Local Government in Gloucestershire

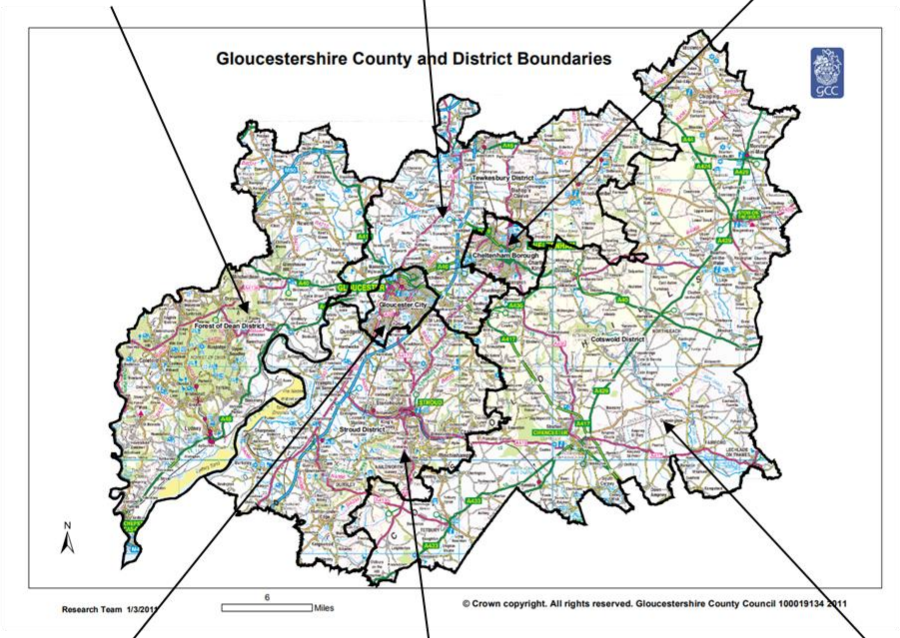
Gloucestershire operates under a two-tier system: a single county council alongside five district and borough councils and one city council. Most of the county is also covered by a network of **267 parish and town councils**, adding a third layer of local governance in most areas.

[17] Journey Time Statistics 2019, DfT
[18] Participation Survey, DCMS

Forest of Dean District
Administrative centre: Coleford
Population: 89,104
Net Revenue Expenditure:
£10,413,000

Tewkesbury Borough
Administrative centre: Tewkesbury
Population: 98,896
Net Revenue Expenditure:
£7,884,000

Cheltenham Borough
Administrative centre: Cheltenham
Population: 120,255
Net Revenue Expenditure:
£18,698,000



Gloucester City
Administrative centre: Gloucester
Population: 134,991
Net Revenue Expenditure:
£17,543,000

Stroud District
Administrative centre: Stroud
Population: 124,540
Net Revenue Expenditure::
£21,176,000

Cotswold District
Administrative centre: Cirencester
Population: 91,490
Net Revenue Expenditure:
£16,028,000

Political Landscape

With each council on a different electoral cycle, Gloucestershire holds local elections every year, creating a constantly shifting political landscape.

Cheltenham Borough Council	Leader and Cabinet model	Liberal Democrat majority administration
Cotswold District Council	Leader and Cabinet model	Liberal Democrat majority administration
Forest of Dean District Council	Leader and Cabinet model	No overall control; Green minority administration
Gloucester City Council	Leader and Cabinet model	No overall control; Liberal Democrat minority administration

Stroud District Council	Committee system	No overall control; Green minority administration
Tewkesbury Borough Council	Committee system	No overall control; Liberal Democrat minority administration
Gloucestershire County Council	Leader and Cabinet model	No overall control; Liberal Democrat minority administration

Table 1: Current political control across Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire's seven councils have 295 councillors, 37 of whom serve at both county and district / borough levels. In many areas, overlapping ward boundaries mean residents can be represented by up to **four different councillors**: one at the county level and three at the district or borough level. This layered system can create complexity in local representation and decision-making.

Number of councillors	**Gloucester City**	**Cheltenham Borough**	**Tewkesbury Borough**	**Stroud District**	**Cotswold District**	**Forest of Dean District**	**Gloucestershire County Council**
Liberal Democrats	17	36	16	2	21	1	27
Labour / Labour and Co-operative	7			18		4	1
Conservative	11		9	6	10	6	6
Green		3	4	24	2	15	9
Independents / Other	4	1	8	1	1	10	1
Reform			1			2	11

Table 2: Current political make up of Gloucestershire's councils

Partnerships and Joint Working

Gloucestershire thrives on strong partnerships within the county and beyond. We have a proven track record of coming together to tackle big challenges, and unitarisation offers a powerful opportunity to build on that foundation, strengthening collaboration and delivering even greater impact.

Statutory Partners

Gloucestershire's public sector is unusually coterminous. A single police constabulary and one police and crime commissioner serve the entire county. The county council also acts as the fire and rescue authority, with Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service fully integrated. While the county is currently served by a single NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB), this arrangement is set to evolve with the

formation of a new cluster alongside Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) ICB, marking a shift in how integrated care is coordinated across the South West region.

Some smaller units of delivery, such as primary care networks, fit within current district boundaries. There are three universities, the largest of which is the University of Gloucestershire, and over 300 schools.

A single unitary authority would unlock the full potential of Gloucestershire's aligned public services, turning these coterminous boundaries into a powerful platform for joined-up leadership, smarter delivery, and a stronger future for the county.

Joint Working

Gloucestershire already has a strong foundation for joint working, backed by a range of formal and informal governance arrangements**.** These reflect the close ties between different parts of the county and a shared commitment to collaboration.

Key structures include:

- **Leadership Gloucestershire:** a strategic alliance of senior public sector leaders - spanning councils, health, police, and key agencies - providing unified direction on cross-cutting issues to benefit communities countywide.
- **Gloucestershire City Region Board**: a joint committee of all seven councils, driving a shared vision for strategic growth and economic success, and championing Gloucestershire with partners, such as the Western Gateway Partnership, to attract further investment and growth.
- **Joint Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee:** a joint scrutiny committee which holds the Gloucestershire City Region Board to account - reviewing decisions, tracking the impact of economic investments, and shaping future growth priorities.
- **Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) and a Health and Wellbeing Integrated Care Partnership (ICP):** the HWB leads strategic coordination across health, social care, and public health services, bringing together leaders to tackle health inequalities and improve population wellbeing. The ICP develops and delivers the five-year integrated care strategy to improve health and care outcomes, aligning efforts across partners to reduce disparities and improve access and experience.
- **Strategic Local Plan**: when finalised, this will shape future housing and employment growth across three local planning authority areas.
- **Climate Leadership Gloucestershire**: an innovative public sector partnership of councils, NHS, police and academia institutions, developing solutions to tackle the climate emergency.

- **Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool:** Gloucestershire boosts local growth by pooling business rates to keep more revenue circulating within the county.
- Other informal arrangements exist to enable joint working on other areas of shared responsibility, e.g. **Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Partnership**, **Gloucestershire Strategic Migration Partnership**, **Gloucestershire Housing Partnership**, and the **Gloucestershire Children and Young People's Coalition**.

Beyond formal governance, collaboration is also embedded in service delivery:

- **Ubico**: a local authority-owned company delivering a range of environmental services across Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire, including waste, recycling, and street cleansing.
- **Publica**: a shared services partnership owned by Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Cheltenham, and West Oxfordshire councils. The councils work together through Publica to share skills and resources, including services such as ICT, customer services, benefits administration, housing, and car park enforcement.
- **Shared services**: various arrangements between different groups of councils for sharing back-office services, such as internal audit and risk (ARA) and legal services (One Legal).
- **Co-located services**: the Public Services Centre in Tewkesbury brings together the county council, borough council, police, health services, and the voluntary sector to provide a single access point for customers, pioneering the first Jobcentre Plus co-location in a local authority building.

These partnerships show what's possible but also highlight existing complexity. A more streamlined governance model could build on this strong collaborative culture, reducing duplication, and unlocking even greater impact for Gloucestershire's communities.

Economic Partnerships

Strong economic partnerships are the backbone of Gloucestershire's success - and devolution can take them even further.

Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), GFirst, established in 2011, has played a key role in uniting business, public, and voluntary sectors to secure government funding and drive job creation. Its **Strategic Economic Plan** (SEP) has supported business growth and skills development and maximised the county's strategic location along the motorway corridor. In 2024, its functions transitioned to the county council, marking a new chapter with the creation of the **Gloucestershire City Region Board**.

Gloucestershire is actively shaping a bold, county-wide vision for inclusive and sustainable prosperity through the development of a **Local Growth Plan (LGP)**.

Although not mandated as for mayoral authorities, Gloucestershire's public sector leaders are stepping up with a LGP that reflects a **shared ambition to unlock the county's full economic potential and improve life for everyone who lives here**. Co-created by all local authorities and shaped through extensive collaboration with businesses, education providers, the voluntary sector, and local communities, the LGP sets out a clear, compelling roadmap for long-term growth and resilience.

By aligning with national frameworks, the plan positions **Gloucestershire as a key contributor to the UK's economic and social missions**, ready to attract investment and drive innovation.

Across the county, **district councils are leading bold, community-driven innovation**, including:

- **Cheltenham**: partnered with Hub8 by Plexal to launch the **MX Innovation Centre**, a workspace for the local tech community.
- **Cotswold:** rolled out a **low-income family tracker** to target support for households in financial difficulty.
- **Forest of Dean**: Forest of Dean District Council, the Centre for Sustainable Energy, and local resident-led group Forest Community Energy have partnered to roll out the AURORA project in the area. This project, supported by several European universities, **promotes energy saving** awareness through inspiring events, a carbon tracker app, and community-owned solar panels.
- **Gloucester:** acknowledged by Nesta and others as sector-leading in asset-based community development, including the establishment of an innovative community development organisation.
- **Stroud:** introduced a **crowdfunding platform** to empower community-led projects and access a share of funding from the council.
- **Tewkesbury**: the **Growth Hub** offers fully funded business support in partnership with the borough council.

A unitary model would supercharge this local innovation, strengthening place-based leadership, aligning economic strategy, and making it easier to deliver joined-up, community-focused growth.

VCFSE Partnerships

Gloucestershire's voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector, powered by over 4,000 organisations, is vibrant and vital. At its heart is the **Gloucestershire VCS Alliance**, the independent voice that informs, strengthens, and develops the sector. The alliance promotes equal partnerships

between VCSE (voluntary, community, and social enterprise) groups and the public and private sectors, supporting VCSE groups and organisations to become more sustainable.

The Know Your Patch (KYP) networks, launched in 2018, are another standout success. Led by local VCFSE organisations in each district, they bring together community groups, service providers, and public sector partners around a shared belief: **strong, connected communities are the foundation of resilient lives**.

The Strategic Case (Vision & Ambition)

Local Government Reorganisation Enabling **a Smarter, Fairer, Greener Gloucestershire**

Local government reorganisation (LGR) gives Gloucestershire the chance to deliver more for its residents and to play a stronger role – together – in supporting national priorities. Current structures can be complex and duplicative, making it harder to deliver the best outcomes for our residents and to join up decisions across planning, housing, transport, health, skills, and the environment. **Reorganisation offers the opportunity to simplify accountability and cut duplication, offering our residents greater clarity and improved services.**

This change is what makes our ambitions deliverable. Breakthrough innovation can be scaled when investment, land use, and regulation are aligned. Digital inclusion can be advanced when infrastructure, skills, and social support are considered together. Communities can have a stronger role when co-design is embedded consistently across local services. Wellbeing, housing, and nature recovery can be treated as interconnected priorities rather than separate silos. Talent and skills can be directly linked to affordable homes and clear career pathways. Underpinning this is how data can be used effectively across the system to improve services, strengthen transport connectivity, and prevent people from falling through the cracks of a widely dispersed county.

Gloucestershire brings major strengths; we have a world-class economy rich in both heritage and future innovation, outstanding natural capital, and a collaborative civic culture. We also face challenges: 19% of our residents live in the lowest national quintile for access to housing and services, our population has distinct and diverse needs, and opportunities are unevenly shared. LGR is the enabling change that allows us to meet these challenges and deliver a ***smarter, fairer and greener Gloucestershire***. Our six ambitions set out how:

- **Driving breakthrough innovation for national resilience**: harnessing Gloucestershire's industrial and research strengths to create resilience-focused solutions in cyber, aerospace, agri-tech, advanced manufacturing, and natural capital.
- **Harnessing digital to tackle inequality, improve services, and drive innovation**: ensuring every resident has the skills, connectivity, and confidence to access services, education, training, and work.
- **Empowering communities through co-design and local decision-making:** giving residents a stronger role in shaping services, with tools and partnerships that make delivery more responsive to local needs.

- **Putting wellbeing, housing, and nature recovery at the heart of growth:** treating health, affordable homes, and environmental recovery as the foundations of prosperity.
- **Unlocking talent, skills, and housing for inclusive growth:** linking education and training pathways directly to housing and careers that help people stay and thrive in Gloucestershire.
- **Using data to transform transport and public services:** creating trusted, joined-up intelligence to improve safeguarding, support early and anticipatory intervention, and deliver more effective integrated transport.

Our Vision: **We're building on what makes Gloucestershire great to create a sustainable place with thriving communities, bold ideas, and opportunities for everyone.**

Our Six Ambitions for Gloucestershire

Ambition 1: Driving breakthrough innovation for national resilience

Gloucestershire will build on its established strengths in cyber, aerospace, defence, agri-tech, and advanced manufacturing to become a national leader in resilience-led innovation. We will draw on pioneering anchors such as GCHQ, Golden Valley[19], and the proposed Severn Edge project[20] along with our agricultural research centres at Hartpury University[21] and the Royal Agricultural University[22]. By fostering clusters of excellence and supporting research and development (R&D), the county will generate high-value jobs, attract private and public investment, and contribute solutions in areas such as energy security, sustainable food systems, secure supply chains, and the restoration of natural capital. With the upcoming Western Forest[23], alongside our ambition that the Forest of Dean achieves biosphere status[24], we can work at scale on innovation in land management, biodiversity recovery, and climate adaptation.

With our landscapes working alongside our technological advancements, we can ensure that Gloucestershire's resilience is rooted in both its environment and its economy. LGR will strengthen this by removing fragmentation across planning, investment, and regulation, allowing innovation to move from pilots and single clusters to an at-scale resilient economy. This

[19] www.goldenvalleyuk.com
[20] https://western-gateway.co.uk/news-and-blogs/news/severn-edge-sites-potential-home-new-smr-technology/
[21] www.hartpury.ac.uk
[22] www.rau.ac.uk
[23] www.nationalforest.org
[24] www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/biosphere

integration means that innovation breakthroughs in our resilience-led sectors are both developed here and deployed consistently, ensuring benefits are felt not only by residents and businesses in Gloucestershire, but the whole of the UK.

Example benefits:

- **A start-up in Cheltenham's Golden Valley innovation district collaborates with local universities and industry partners to develop new cyber-security tools.** With LGR removing fragmentation across investment and regulation, the start-up can scale faster, attract national contracts, and create high-value local jobs - further anchoring Cheltenham's role in responding to the UK's cyber resilience requirements.
- **A farmer in the Cotswolds adopts new agri-tech tools developed in county innovation hubs.** By using soil sensors and precision irrigation, they improve soil health and resilience to climate change while reducing water and fertiliser use and costs. This not only strengthens the farm's long-term viability but also contributes to Gloucestershire's national reputation in sustainable food systems.
- **A small manufacturer in Tewkesbury trials AI-driven production planning in a regulatory sandbox, enabled by LGR.** The new system helps them cut waste, lower emissions, and respond more flexibly to supply chain pressures. Located near Ministry of Defence and defence sector supply chains, the firm boosts competitiveness and secures new contracts in low-carbon defence and aerospace markets. This demonstrates how resilience-led innovation can be scaled across advance manufacturing – the sector responsible for Gloucestershire's largest Gross Value Added (GVA) – while connecting with other resilience-led sectors, both locally and nationally.
- **A STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) student in Stroud takes part in placements within Gloucestershire's clean energy sector, working directly on projects linked to the Severn Edge site.** They gain hands-on experience that secures their future career within their own community, while local employers benefit from a pipeline of home-grown talent that supports the county's transition to net zero and enhances the energy security of the UK.

Ambition 2: Harnessing digital to tackle inequality, improve services, and drive innovation

Digital inclusion remains inconsistent across Gloucestershire. Digital access is no longer optional – it is essential to ensuring opportunity and engagement with services. Residents, especially those living in rural areas, can suffer limited access to employment opportunities, education, or care, further exacerbating the hidden

poverty in the county. Building on projects such as the county-wide DigiHubs[25], based in GP surgeries and community centres, **Gloucestershire will ensure that every community has the infrastructure, connectivity, and skills to benefit from the world that digital offers.**

By tackling digital exclusion, we can ensure that residents who struggle to access services, training, or employment are not left behind. LGR offers the opportunity to align responsibility for infrastructure and respond to diverse demand across a complex geography, ensuring the benefits of digital investment are shared fairly across all communities. This also means all can match the pace of our most advanced future-facing sectors, as we offer support for those at risk of being left behind, so that innovation moves forward inclusively. Improved digital confidence will empower residents to participate fully in their communities, access vital support, and offer increased visibility of opportunity. **Digital innovation will drive the sustainable growth agenda, creating jobs and wealth for the county.**

Example benefits:

- **An older adult in Deerhurst, a rural village in Tewkesbury, manages chronic conditions from home using virtual healthcare tools.** Through secure video consultations and remote monitoring, they reduce hospital visits. LGR can enable this by aligning NHS and council investment in digital infrastructure, so rural areas have the same access to connectivity and digital services as urban centres.
- **A young person in Coleford, a market town in the Forest of Dean, accesses digital skills bootcamps**, gaining confidence and new opportunities in cyber, coding, and creative industries.
- **Carers can use predictive care tools to anticipate needs, freeing time to focus on personal interaction.** By receiving alerts when the person they support may need intervention, they are less reliant on emergency services and more able to plan ahead. This is only possible when health and social care data are brought together, made easier by LGR through creating a single system for sharing data securely and consistently.
- **One of Gloucestershire's many micro businesses uses digital tools to reach new customers and improve their service capability**, e.g. through online ordering or remote collaboration with suppliers. With coordinated county-wide investment in digital connectivity, even the smallest firms in rural areas can compete in wider markets, driving inclusive economic growth.

[25] Delivery of Digi-hubs | Gloucestershire County Council

Ambition 3: Empowering communities through co-design and local decision-making

LGR offers Gloucestershire the opportunity to expand co-design across the county by strengthening the role of the VCFSE sector in service design and delivery. **By giving communities real influence over budgets, priorities, and data, services will be more inclusive, locally responsive, and sustainable.**

Gloucestershire has already demonstrated how effective this approach can be: carers have shaped new support pathways through the Carers Hub[26], and the Gloucestershire Gateway Trust[27] has reinvested profits from the M5 services into projects in Gloucester and Stroud that tackle poverty and improve skills. Local groups in Stroud[28] and the Forest of Dean[29] have influenced health and wellbeing initiatives through community hubs.

With 19% of our population living in the lowest national 20% for access to housing and services[30], empowering communities to shape services based on their local needs is critical to both equity and prevention. Neighbourhood Partnerships are just one example of how LGR could provide a clear framework for convening services with residents – they would sit alongside a wider set of tools to ensure community voices are embedded in decision-making. This approach is founded on building trust and ensuring outcomes are shaped not only by those closest to the challenges, but those experiencing them.

Example benefits:

- **Local residents, councillors, and health practitioners in a Neighbourhood Partnership work together to reduce social isolation in Newent, a Forest of Dean market town.** By combining professional expertise with insights from local people, the Partnership develops community-led activities and accessible support. LGR enables this by aligning funding and decision-making, so neighbourhood priorities can be resourced and embedded within wider service planning.
- **A young carer in Cheltenham is able to provide input into the development of a digital tool with schools and youth services to balance education and caring responsibilities.** The tool provides tailored reminders, wellbeing check-ups, and links to local peer support groups. Because LGR enables education, health, and social care data to be better connected, the young carer's lived experience regarding the previous systems' lack of navigability are reflected. This makes services easier to

[26] https://gloucestershirecarershub.co.uk
[27] https://gloucestershiregatewaytrust.org.uk
[28] https://cscic.org/programmes/community-hubs/
[29] www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/engagement/community-hubs/
[30] Accessibility - Transport | Inform Gloucestershire

find and use, ensuring their needs are met quickly without having to repeat their story to multiple service providers.

- **A community group in Gloucester collaborates with health providers to design culturally sensitive wellbeing services, improving uptake and trust.** By co-creating mental health support, for example, that recognises diverse cultural practices, more residents feel confident seeking help. LGR supports this by embedding the VCFSE sector within local decision-making frameworks, ensuring community voices are heard alongside statutory providers.
- **Families co-produce services in a local family hub in Tetbury, a Cotswold market town, which provides a family-friendly space.** Parents can take part in shaping early years support, parenting programmes, and wellbeing provision while their children are supported in a safe environment. This is possible because LGR brings together children's services, public health, and community development under one coordinated approach, so family hubs can act as genuine centres for co-creation and prevention.

Ambition 4: Putting wellbeing, housing, and nature recovery at the heart of growth

Wellbeing – with housing and nature recovery at its roots – will be a guiding principle in all policy and investment decisions. From affordable homes and transport to skills and public health, growth plans will be designed to reduce inequalities, improve access to green and blue spaces, and boost Gloucestershire's natural capital. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity, improving land use, and supporting nature-based solutions will strengthen resilience against climate change and create healthier environments for future generations.

Gloucestershire's natural assets also underpin a strong visitor economy. By linking tourism with wellbeing and nature recovery, communities benefit from thriving local businesses while ensuring green spaces remain accessible for residents. Aligning local priorities with Integrated Care System (ICS) prevention goals and CORE20PLUS5[31] frameworks targeting the most deprived 20% of the population (as well as groups experiencing worse-than-average outcomes), will help narrow health and wellbeing gaps across the county.

LGR would make this ambition deliverable by enabling a clear line of accountability across health, housing, and the environment. This coordinated approach can act to turn investment and service delivery into better outcomes for residents. This integration will allow decisions about new housing, green infrastructure, and public services to be planned together – ensuring that residents

[31] www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/national-healthcare-inequalities-improvement-programme/core20plus5/

have both the secure homes and healthy environments they need. In Stroud, community-led housing and green infrastructure projects have already shown how affordable homes and access to nature can be developed hand-in-hand. With devolved powers, these approaches could be embedded and scaled county-wide, linking wellbeing, housing, and nature recovery as the foundation for genuinely inclusive growth.

Example benefits:

- **In the Forest of Dean, a community-led housing scheme integrates affordable homes with woodland management and local energy generation.** Residents not only gain secure housing but also benefit from reduced fuel bills, shared green spaces, and volunteering opportunities that strengthen community ties. This model reflects the Forest's long tradition of working with its natural assets and could be replicated across Gloucestershire, where LGR enables housing, environment, and community to be planned together.
- **A family in Northleach, a Cotswold market town, regularly uses redesigned green spaces that combine play areas, biodiversity planting, and community facilities.** These spaces give children safe places to play and create opportunities for families to meet neighbours, take part in local activities, and benefit from cleaner air. With wellbeing and social connection at their core, such spaces help reduce isolation and improve health outcomes across generations.
- **A disabled resident in Minchinhampton, a semi-rural town, moves into newly built affordable housing designed with accessibility and sustainability at its core.** The home is energy-efficient, reducing bills, and is linked to inclusive transport and nearby green infrastructure, such as sensory trails and accessible walking routes. This combination gives the resident greater independence, reduces their reliance on more intensive services, and enhances their quality of life. By ensuring housing is planned together with transport and green spaces, these wellbeing outcomes become part of everyday provision rather than specialist exceptions.
- **A landowner in South Cerney, a Cotswold village, participates in a countywide nature recovery scheme that restores habitats, improves flood resilience, and generates long-term natural capital value.** By adopting regenerative practices and working in partnership with local authorities and communities, they help protect biodiversity while strengthening the resilience of nearby housing and infrastructure. Crucially, this in turn enhances residents' wellbeing through multi-faceted environmental improvements that contribute to healthier, more secure day-to-day lives. The wellbeing gains are felt both immediately – through safer,

greener environments – as well as in the longer term, as communities experience less disruption and stress from climate-related risks.

Ambition 5: Unlocking talent, skills, and housing for inclusive growth

Gloucestershire will be able to establish a countywide skills and careers pathway to support lifelong learning and inclusive economic growth. By linking education providers, industry, and employers, residents of all ages and backgrounds will have access to training, apprenticeships, and reskilling opportunities. Tourism and hospitality provide major entry routes into work for young people and career changers. In aligning training pathways with this sector, LGR can help us ensure residents can build stable futures in one of Gloucestershire's most significant industries. Affordable and secure housing will be central to this ambition, providing the stability people need to seize learning opportunities and grow with the confidence that comes from a safe, stable home.

LGR would enable this ambition by aligning housing, skills, and economic development within the same framework. Currently, responsibilities are spread across multiple agencies, making it more difficult to ensure that new homes are built where they connect to training opportunities and local employment. **Gloucestershire can create a coordinated system where homes, learning hubs, and jobs are planned together.** There are strong examples to build on: in Gloucester, the University of Gloucestershire's City Campus Development is bringing new teaching and community space into the heart of the city, while the Forwards Employment Service[32] shows how employers, colleges, and community groups can collaborate to support residents into sustainable work. With LGR, these successes can be scaled across the county, **ensuring that talent is not only retained but is skilled to face the future, knowing their own is secure.**

Example benefits:

- **A Year 12 student in Highnam explores immersive career pathways at a local skills hub**, linking them to mentors in future-focused industries, such as cyber security, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and engineering. These hubs make it easier for young people to see a future in Gloucestershire, rather than having to move away to build a career. In Gloucester, the University of Gloucestershire's new City Campus development strengthens this offer by providing teaching and community space in the heart of the city, connected to wider affordable housing and employment initiatives. Together, these projects make it easier for young people to see a future in the county rather than moving away. With LGR, this integrated approach to housing, education, and employment can be

[32] www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/disabilities/forwards-employment-service/

scaled across Gloucestershire, ensuring that all students - including those in rural areas - can access the same opportunities.

- **A mid-career learner in Winchcombe, a market town in Tewkesbury, retrains in low-carbon construction through flexible programmes**, improving their earning potential while supporting the transition to clean energy. Thanks to housing, public transport, and skills being planned together, they can study locally without facing long commutes or the insecurity of poor-quality rental housing. With stability at home, they are free to focus on building new skills and contributing to Gloucestershire's net zero economy.
- **A young mother in Cheltenham accesses a tailored learning pathway in sustainable construction and materials innovation**, supported by a family-friendly environment and counselling services at a local Family Hub. Over time, she develops expertise and becomes a mentor to others - showing how inclusive pathways strengthen both individual resilience and community cohesion. LGR makes this possible by coordinating housing, skills, and wraparound services under one framework – removing barriers so talent can both flourish and contribute.
- **A young family in Stroud secures affordable housing linked to training opportunities,** allowing them to pursue new careers without instability. Freed from the instability of high housing costs, they can take up retraining and new jobs without the stress of insecure tenancies or long journeys. This stability directly supports wellbeing and ensures Gloucestershire retains and grows its talent base by linking housing delivery with economic inclusion.

Ambition 6: Using data to transform transport and public services

LGR offers Gloucestershire the chance to bring together fragmented data from across multiple authorities and agencies. With devolved powers, this can be turned into usable intelligence that supports earlier intervention and ensures no one is left behind. This separation makes it harder to spot risks early or to design services that reflect real needs. Reorganisation would provide a framework for data use, allowing us to introduce a trusted, secure data infrastructure that can enable services to anticipate needs, respond in real time, and act preventatively.

Linking education, health, housing, transport, and social care data could improve safeguarding measures, reduce waiting times, and ensure fair provision across urban and rural areas. Open data initiatives and live mobility platforms will offer improved journey options, reduce congestion, and promote more sustainable travel choices.

The Robin demand-responsive bus service[33] shows how transport data can connect rural residents to jobs and services, but integration with housing and employment data would make it far more effective. Family hubs can link education, health, and social care data to improve safeguarding and ensure families access support at the right time. Flood management schemes in the Severn Vale already rely on environmental data to protect communities in real time. With LGR, these initiatives could be joined together, scaled across the county and embedded into **a trusted, secure data infrastructure that works for every resident.**

Example benefits:

- **Residents in flood-prone areas receive early warnings through live data platforms.** By combining real-time river levels with local emergency planning, households are given practical, trusted alerts that improve safety, reduce disruption, and protect lives. With devolved powers, these systems could be scaled across Gloucestershire to cover multiple risks, from flooding in the Severn Vale to wildfire risk in the Cotswolds.
- **A commuter in Frampton on Severn, a rural village in Stroud, uses a transport app with real-time data, reducing journey times and supporting sustainable travel.** Backed by devolved powers, the system can ensure affordable fares, reliable rural coverage, and accessible journey options. This also allows councils to use data on passenger demand and road conditions to prioritise road maintenance.
- **At a family hub in Gloucester, a family sits down with staff and views a joined-up record that brings together information from school and health services.** It shows that their child has had a recent dip in attendance and that the parents have both reported stress to their GP. The family are able to identify that they need extra learning support and access to parenting advice before the situation requires a more acute response. The hub uses the data infrastructure to coordinate the right support quickly, reducing pressure on the family and preventing escalation.
- **Farmers can access county-wide soil moisture and yield-forecasting data that helps them to adapt to dry weather conditions and protect arable production.** By bringing agricultural, environmental, and water data together under one system, it fills a current evidence gap and allows farmers to take preventative steps, boosting Gloucestershire's food security and the wider country's resilience to the impacts of climate change.

[33] www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/transport/the-robin/

Ambition in Action: Towards a Resilience-led Economy

The Golden Valley Development (GVD) is a nationally significant innovation powerhouse, **recognised by government as driving the UK's cyber and secure technology ambitions.** By bringing together industry, academia, and the public sector, GVD is advancing national security and resilience - supporting the UK's mission to embed resilience in critical supply chains infrastructure.

Anchoring Gloucestershire at the heart of the UK's resilience economy, and creating a ripple effect of prosperity across the South West and the nation, the GVD will support supply chains, jobs, and long-term competitiveness.

To unlock its full potential and deliver lasting benefits for local communities and the nation, **we are seeking Designated Area (DA) status for the GVD** - enabling Gloucestershire to retain 100% of business rates growth generated in this area, worth around £385.6m over the designation period. **This locally retained investment will accelerate infrastructure, boost investment, and drive a virtuous cycle of prosperity across the county and beyond.**

DA status means more funding for local infrastructure, skills, and public services - supporting our vision and ambitions for Gloucestershire. Nationally, it will help power UK growth, strengthen resilience, and spark prosperity and innovation across the country.

Summary

We have a bold vision for Gloucestershire - rooted in our heritage and driven by our innovation, shaped by the ambitions of our people, and designed to make every community ***smarter, greener, and fairer***. Through our six ambitions we have shown how services, places, and opportunities can be reimagined to meet the needs of today while preparing for tomorrow.

To bring this vision to life, we have developed a number of personas (see Appendix 1) that illustrate what our ambitions would mean in practice for residents and communities across Gloucestershire. These personas help ground our strategy in real experiences, making clear the tangible benefits of transformation.

The opportunities before us are clear: breakthrough innovation, inclusive digital access, thriving talent pipelines, stronger communities, wellbeing-focused growth, and data-enabled services. **Together they show how Gloucestershire can lead nationally and transform lives locally.**

We know what we need to do. LGR gives us the means to do it through simplifying structures, aligning priorities, and enabling decisions that connect ambition with delivery. With the right reform, Gloucestershire can bring its economic, social, and natural strengths together to create a future where every resident has the chance to succeed.

LGR will allow us to continue **building on what makes Gloucestershire great to create a sustainable place with thriving communities, bold ideas, and opportunities for everyone.**

Future Devolution

LGR is a key opportunity for Gloucestershire to reach its full strategic potential, locally and nationally. **As England moves towards wider regional governance, Gloucestershire is well-placed and eager to contribute.**

Our Economic Distinctiveness

Gloucestershire is notably resilient to economic shocks[34]. It has significant strengths in advanced manufacturing and engineering and food security innovation (a combined 23.7% GVA)[35] and is exceptional in the high-growth sectors that utilise emerging technologies[36]. **Our strongest sectors align closely with the priority sectors of the 2025 Industrial Strategy.** Gloucestershire's strong industrial roots in aerospace and engineering, combined with innovation driven by GCHQ, help it **outperform neighbouring areas in productivity, new business creation, and entrepreneurship**. We also host a skilled population, supported by strong universities, colleges, and research networks that have proactively reached out into regional networks.

Inherent to Gloucestershire is our natural capital. From the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean to the Severn Vale, Gloucestershire's landscapes give us the space and resources to lead on the challenges of the 21st century. As part of the Severn Estuary corridor, we can offer clean energy, sustainable food, water management, and climate adaptation. **Few places can match the combination of industrial heritage, high tech growth, and natural assets that define Gloucestershire's offer.**

Gloucestershire blends its landscapes, cultures, and economy into a unique identity that draws on west country heritage and lifestyle to inform future thinking. From the invention of the jet engine to pioneering hydrogen flights at Cotswold Airport[37]; from the Wheatstone Bridge to the Golden Valley; from being home to the invention of the lawnmower to hosting one of the deepest water research sites in the world in Tidenham[38], **our economy is a major asset for regional and national partners in the devolution context.**

Devolution is the key to realising this potential. With greater funding flexibility, joined-up services, and empowered local decision-making, **Gloucestershire can play its full role as a regional engine of growth at the crossroads of the South West, the Midlands, the South East, and Wales.**

[34] Economic Strategy Evidence base
[35] Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry, ONS
[36] Gloucestershire's Economic Strategy 2024–2034 Summary
[37] ZeroAvia completes initial Dornier 228 flight test campaign - Pilot
[38] DEEP - Engineering Wonder

Our Potential Devolution Partners

Gloucestershire is actively exploring three strategic partnerships to the north, south, and east[39]. We found each offer unique opportunities to accelerate growth and influence:

- West of England Combined Authority (WECA)
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Swindon and Oxford

Our Devolution Option Analysis

A range of metrics were assessed against economic, legislative, cultural, and implementation criteria to identify which partnership could deliver the greatest impact in line with national devolution goals.

Option 1: West of England Combined Authority (WECA)

Geography and Governance

- Existing combined authority with metro mayor which is fully compliant with the Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2025 and December 2024 Devolution White Paper.
- Combined population (Gloucestershire + WECA *with North Somerset* rises above the minimum 1.5 million threshold guidance for strategic authority formation).

Strategic Authority Alignment

- Highest degree of alignment across the English Devolution Bill's seven statutory areas of competence, particularly health and care integration, transport and infrastructure, economic development, environment, and public safety.
- Pre-existing governance, transport corridors, NHS integration, and multi-agency delivery capacity provide a rapid implementation route.

Economic Geography Alignment

- Strong alignment in advanced manufacturing, digital/cyber, green technologies, and creative industries.
- Strong worker migration pattern across the borders.
- Potential to position Gloucestershire as an agri-tech leader within a wider innovation economy, offsetting WECA's urban focus.
- Gloucestershire may become a junior partner in the highest growth R&D sectors without a clearly defined role in bringing forward its strengths (e.g. agri-tech).

WECA holds the path to the most immediately deliverable option and offers the broadest alignment with national reform priorities and fastest route to full strategic authority status.

[39] Not an exhaustive list – three options were selected according to the shared length of boundary with Gloucestershire and consideration of whether agreements had been made for bordering counties to join alternative partners.

Option 2: Swindon and Oxfordshire

Geography and Governance

- No current combined authority membership so would require LGR and mayoral combined authority formation.
- Joint population threshold met with 1.6 million combined.

Strategic Authority Alignment

- High capability in economic development, skills, and net zero, but weaker in health, care, and integrated public service reform.
- Existing regional partnerships are largely informal or nascent.

Economic Alignment

- Significant longer-term potential in R&D partnerships (AI, life sciences, clean tech).
- Synergy in advanced manufacturing and cyber, but less alignment with agri-tech and rural economy; greater focus on life sciences than securing emerging technologies in the innovation sectors.
- Lower short-term economic integration due to weaker commuting links and business interdependencies.

Swindon and Oxfordshire offer strong innovation potential for the long term but would be slower to establish full statutory competencies with less immediate integration in health and rural sectors.

Option 3: Herefordshire and Worcestershire

Geography and Governance

- No current combined authority and therefore would require LGR and mayoral combined authority formation.
- Population slightly below the threshold so may require additional partners or special consideration.

Strategic and Policy Alignment

- Medium alignment across statutory competencies with strengths in environment, rural transport, and agri-tech, but limited in digital innovation and large-scale economic growth.
- Less alignment with national reform agenda’s focus on integrated care and high-growth sectors.

Economic Alignment

- Closest match in current rural economic strengths and historical cultural context.
- Gloucestershire would likely lead on scale and innovation, but partners offer limited capacity in high-growth digital and tech sectors.

Options Analysis Summary

1. West of England Combined Authority (WECA)

- **Why**: Existing governance, metro mayor, statutory compliance, strong sectoral fit (advanced manufacturing, cyber, green tech), and clear commuting / economic flows; existing regional partnerships across arts, culture, health, and the broadest range of services of all options; similar urban / rural profile, reflecting shared challenges in housing and transport planning.
- **Risk:** Gloucestershire risks becoming a junior partner unless it defines a distinctive role (e.g. agri-tech leader completing a 'whole of tech' future economy).
- WECA provides the high-growth innovation engine, Gloucestershire complements the ecosystem with agri-tech and natural capital.

2. Herefordshire and Worcestershire

- **Why:** Close match in rural economy, heritage, and agri-tech; natural cultural legacy fit; scope for Gloucestershire to play a leading role in innovation and scaling up; slightly under population threshold, but culturally congruent and offers Gloucestershire leadership space.
- **Risk:** Limited digital / tech capacity in partners and weaker alignment with national reform priorities.
- Rooted in shared rural economy and heritage, with Gloucestershire as a natural partner to inject innovation and scale.

3. Swindon and Oxfordshire

- **Why:** Strong in R&D, life sciences, AI, and clean tech; good synergies in advanced manufacturing and cyber, but requires completely new governance; has weaker cultural alignment, and less short-term integration with Gloucestershire's rural and health economies.
- **Risk:** Longer-time horizon to deliver; innovation is research-led and urban, less aligned with Gloucestershire's wider economic identity; very few established regional partnerships.
- Offers long-term potential in global-facing R&D and science but less immediate and less place-congruent.

Gloucestershire has the assets and ambition to contribute strongly within any of the potential partnerships. WECA provides the most immediately deliverable and policy-aligned option, while the Herefordshire and Worcestershire option offers an alternative in which Gloucestershire could play a leading role. The partnership with Swindon and Oxfordshire remains a credible longer-term prospect, particularly for research-led collaboration, but is less immediately aligned to Gloucestershire's wider economic and governance priorities.

Gloucestershire's Aims for Devolution

Through LGR and further devolution, Gloucestershire can unlock the tools to drive a high-growth, resilience-focused economy and smarter services for residents.

Devolution would allow Gloucestershire to:

- **Power growth through innovation:** using devolved economic powers to create the Severn Resilience Corridor, bringing together cyber, advanced manufacturing, agri-tech, and clean energy. This will attract major private investment, generate high-value jobs, and cement Gloucestershire's role as a national growth engine.
- **Strengthen resilience for the 21st century:** with greater control over housing, health, skills, and transport, Gloucestershire can deliver joined-up solutions for climate resilience, energy security, and sustainable food systems.
- **Put data to work for residents:** a county-wide data platform, anchored in Golden Valley's cyber infrastructure could integrate transport, housing, health, and utilities in real time. This will reduce duplication, cut costs, and provide residents with more personalised, responsive services, from flood alerts to smart mobility and integrated healthcare.

Summary

Gloucestershire's strengths in advanced manufacturing, securing emerging technologies, agri-tech, and clean energy, combined with our strategic location and cultural identity, position us as a valuable partner in building a balanced and high-growth regional economy. To achieve this potential, we are now seeking active cooperation from Government and regional partners.

	WECA	**Herefordshire and Worcestershire**	**Swindon and Oxfordshire**
Governance and Deliverability	• Existing combined authority with metro mayor • Fully compliant with Devolution Bill • Immediate path to strategic authority.	• Would require new mayoral combined authority • Population below threshold, may need extra partners.	• Would require new mayoral combined authority • Threshold met but no existing structures.
Strategic Alignment	• Highest alignment across all statutory areas: health / care integration, transport, economic development,	• Medium alignment: strong in environment, rural transport, and agri-tech; weaker in digital and national reform priorities.	• Strong in economic development, skills, and net zero; weaker in health and integrated public services.

	environment, and public safety.		
Economic Synergy	• Strong overlaps: advanced manufacturing, cyber, green tech, and creative industries • Clear commuter flows • Gloucestershire could specialise in agri-tech.	• Strongest rural economy and cultural fit • Gloucestershire likely to lead innovation • Partners weaker in high-growth sectors.	• High R&D and research potential: AI, life sciences, and clean tech • Lower commuting / business interdependencies • Less rural alignment.
Risks	• Gloucestershire may be junior partner in innovation without defined agri-tech/natural capital role.	• Weak tech / digital sector capacity • Weaker alignment with national reform.	• Long time horizon • Urban R&D focus less congruent with Gloucestershire's broader identity • Weak regional partnerships.
Overall Takeaway	• Most deliverable, innovation engine, culturally and economically aligned.	• Strong cultural / rural fit • Gloucestershire can lead • Weaker on growth / reform.	• Long-term R&D potential • Least deliverable in short term • Weaker identity fit.

Table 3: Strategic partnerships options analysis summary table

Options Analysis

Our options analysis is an objective assessment of the reorganisation options being explored for Gloucestershire[40]. Each option has been assessed using ministerial criteria, supplemented by local criteria, drawing on a range of both qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered throughout this proposal's development. Additionally, challenge and consensus sessions were held with council leaders and chief executives from across the seven councils.

This analysis provides some key considerations which should inform any overall conclusions. However, in the interests of objectivity and respect for the democratic process, the analysis does not provide a concluding recommendation of a preferred option.

The options analysis presented in this proposal mirrors that submitted for the two unitary authorities option.

All the analysis undertaken in this options analysis is subject to the policy decisions of whichever new authority / authorities are established as a result of LGR in Gloucestershire. This analysis is also contingent on the outcome of the national Fair Funding Review, which remains uncertain at this stage.

This analysis assumes there are no modifications to the boundary between East and West Gloucestershire. Should boundary modifications arise, the underpinning evidence – particularly the financial case and RAG ratings – would need to be revisited.

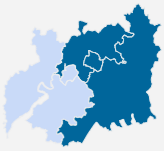
Option	Description	Geography		Population
Option 1: Single Unitary Authority (1UA)	**One new council delivering all local government services across Gloucestershire.**		Based on current **Gloucestershire County Council** boundary	**~ 659,276**
Option 2: Two Unitary Authorities (2UA – East and West)	**Two new councils: one for East Gloucestershire, one for West Gloucestershire. Each delivers all services within its area.**		**East:** currently **Cheltenham, Cotswold and Tewkesbury** districts	**~310,641**
			West: currently **Gloucester, Stroud and Forest of Dean** districts	**~348,635**

Table 4: Options analysis summary table

[40] Not including 'Greater Gloucester/Gloucester Unitary' which has not been subject to a shared process of development

Demographic and Economic Context

The following tables present a side-by-side comparison of key demographic, financial, and economic indicators for Gloucestershire as well as East and West Gloucestershire.

Population and Ageing Trends

The table below provides an overview of demographic patterns across Gloucestershire, East, and West, focusing on population size and age-related growth to inform future service planning and statutory obligations.

Measure	Glos.	East	West	Implications
Population (2024)	~659,276	~310,641	~ 348,635	The West has a larger population, which may affect baseline service volumes and statutory responsibilities.
Growth in 65+ population (2026–2030)[41]	+2.32%	+2.39%	+2.26%	Gloucestershire overall faces a challenge in relation to a population ageing faster than national averages, raising considerations around potential future supply for long-term care.
Growth in 0-19 population	Declining	Neutral	Declining	The West may see declining demand pressures on school places in the future.

Table 5: Demographic comparison

Financial Resilience and Income Base

This table compares financial indicators across the regions, offering insight into household income levels and the fiscal position of each area, to assess long-term financial sustainability.

Measure	Glos.	East	West	Implications
Gross disposable household	£23,527	£26,149	£21,191	Residents in the East have higher disposable income.

[41] Population projections, 2022, ONS

income per capita[42]				
Council debt per capita (2023/24)[43]	£819	£674	£948	The West would be created with a higher per-resident council debt burden*, potentially impacting its financial sustainability. **General fund not Housing Revenue Account (HRA)*
Net assets per individual[44]	£1,454	£1,810	£1,137	The East would hold significantly more assets per resident, offering greater long-term financial flexibility.

Table 6: Financial indicators comparison

Service Demand and Social Vulnerability

This table highlights variations in social care spending and indicators of vulnerability, helping to identify areas with greater baseline need and potential service demand.

Measure	Glos.	East	West	Implications
Adult social care spend per resident[45]	£522	£405	£629	Adult social care spend per resident would be significantly higher in the West.
Children's social care spend per resident[46]	£142	£129	£156	Children's social care spend per resident would be higher in the West.
Children in low-income families (per 100k)[47]	14,594	12,274	16,609	The West has a much higher rate of child poverty, potentially requiring it to provide more targeted early help and support.

[42] GDHI Per Capita, 2022/2023, Nomis
[43] LA Debt per capita, 2023/2024, GOV.UK
[44] Net Assets Per Capita, 2023/2024, District Councils
[45] ASC Spend per resident, 2024, Newton
[46] CSC spend per resident, 2025, Newton
[47] Children in Low Income Families per 100k, 23/24, DWP

Household benefit claim rate[48]	15.82%	13.8%	17.9%	The West has a larger proportion of residents reliant on benefits, potentially indicating higher baseline need.
Deprivation index score (higher = worse)[49]	15.1	12.7	17.2	Deprivation is significantly higher in the West, potentially driving greater demand on multiple services.

Table 7: Social care spending and indicators of vulnerability comparison

Economic Activity and Infrastructure

This table examines differences in employment, productivity and digital infrastructure, providing context for economic performance and access to opportunity.

Measure	Glos.	East	West	Implications
Job density (jobs per working-age person)[50]	0.9	1.0	0.8	The East has a more active labour market, potentially creating better access to employment and economic mobility.
Gross value added[51]	£39.0	£41.9	£35.7	Productivity is higher in the East, potentially reflecting a stronger economic base.
Business growth rate[52]	-0.1	+1.1%	–1.2%	The East has seen modest growth in its business base, while the West has experienced decline; this is likely to be localised to the Forest of Dean.
5G availability (% area covered)[53]	68.0%	58.1%	83.0%	The West outperforms the East in mobile coverage,

[48] Household benefit claim rate, 23/24, GOV.UK
[49] Deprivation, 19/20, MHCLG
[50] Job Density, 23/25, ONS
[51] GVA per hour worked, 22/23, ONS
[52] Business Growth (%), 23/24, ONS
[53] % of High Digital Connectivity, 24/25, OFCOM

				reflecting the larger rural footprint in the East.

Table 8: Employment and productivity comparison

Implications for Reorganisation

The baseline differences between East and West highlight demographic and economic imbalances that will shape the financial operating environment for either council that would be created in a two unitary authority scenario:

- A **single unitary authority (1UA) scenario** would need to manage these variations internally, redistributing resources and planning across areas with different levels of income, need, and growth.
- A **two unitary authority (2UA) scenario** would crystallise the variations between East and West, requiring each council to plan for its own financial and service challenges from vesting day, with a smaller scale of internal pooling of risk.

Criteria Analysed

This analysis is structured around nine criteria; these include six statutory criteria issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG), and three additional criteria that reflect Gloucestershire's local priorities and values (criteria 7 to 9).

Each criterion has been broken down into sub-criteria to allow structured assessment across both models. We have assessed how 1UA and 2UA would potentially perform at the point of implementation and over time.

Only those elements of the published ministerial criteria which are relevant to a RAG (red, amber, green) rating and comparative analysis in Gloucestershire are included in the tables below. In most cases we have summarised the full text of the criteria.

KEY	**MHCLG criteria**	
	Gloucestershire-specific criteria	

1	**Sensible single tier of local government**	A) Establishes a single tier of local government for the whole of the area concerned

	This criterion assesses whether the model removes two-tier governance, creates a coherent single-tier structure, and reflects a logical financial and spatial footprint.	B) Sensible economic breakdown, with a tax base which does not create undue inequalities
		C) Sensible geographic breakdown, which will help increase housing supply and meet local needs
2	**Right-sized local government** This criterion assesses whether the model is large and resilient enough to deliver effective government. It considers population size, potential for efficiency, organisational capacity, and the complexity of transition.	A) A population of 500,000 or more (unless specific local factors make this unreasonable)
		B) Supports efficiencies and value for money for council taxpayers
		C) Improves capacity and supports the council to withstand financial shocks
		D) Manageable transition costs
3	**High quality, sustainable services** This criterion assesses whether the model supports effective, long-term service delivery. It considers integration, transformation potential, and the ability to improve outcomes in complex, high-need areas.	A) Improves local government and service delivery, avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation
		B) Opportunity for public service reform including where this will lead to improved value for money
		C) Improves delivery of, or mitigates risk of negative impact on, crucial services
4	**Meets local needs** This criterion assesses whether the model responds to the needs, identities, and priorities of local communities. It considers civic identity, community variation, and responsiveness to engagement.	A) Meets local needs and is informed by local views
		B) Improves / mitigates risk to issues of local identity, cultural, and historic importance
		C) Addresses local concerns
5	**Supports devolution arrangements** This criterion tests whether the model supports Gloucestershire's ability to unlock devolution powers and funding, and whether it creates a strategic authority footprint with appropriate population scale, coherence, and alignment to regional structures	A) Helps to support devolution arrangements / unlock devolution
		B) Sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority

6	**Local engagement and empowerment** This criterion assesses whether the model can support stronger local democracy and provide practical tools for neighbourhood-level decision-making.	A) Enables stronger community engagement
		B) Delivers genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment
7	**Environmental and climate protection** This criterion assesses whether the model strengthens the council's ability to lead on climate and environmental goals.	A) Ensures the new authority / authorities have clear capabilities to deliver existing and future climate and nature plans
		B) Reflects local priorities in areas with sensitive landscapes (e.g. Forest of Dean, Cotswolds AONB)
		C) Builds on existing commitments (e.g. Fairer Greener Forest, Climate Emergency responses)
8	**Civic engagement and participative democracy** This criterion assesses whether the model provides meaningful democratic representation at community level.	A) Promotes civic engagement and strengthens participative democracy
9	**Inclusive growth and equity** This criterion assesses whether the model enables inclusive economic development, supports vulnerable residents, and maintains service levels while pursuing financial sustainability.	A) Tackles disparities in wealth, employment, and service access
		B) Prioritises vulnerable residents and community-level regeneration
		C) Ensures that financial sustainability is not achieved at the expense of service levels

Each option has been consistently assessed against these nine criteria. RAG ratings have been used to summarise alignment and are supported by detailed commentary.

Scoring Method

To support comparison between the two options, this analysis uses a structured **Red–Amber–Green (RAG) rating system**.

The RAG system provides a simple, visual way to understand how well each option aligns with each criterion and sub-criterion.

Rating	Meaning
G	Meets the criteria

A	Partially meets the criteria / could meet the criteria, with mitigations
R	Does not meet the criteria

- Ratings are applied to each **sub-criterion.**
- No weighting is applied; all criteria are treated equally.
- Each rating is accompanied by narrative commentary, drawing on qualitative and quantitative evidence, if available.

Evidence Base

This analysis applies a structured, consistent approach to assess how well each reorganisation model aligns with the nine agreed criteria.

The analysis draws on a wide evidence base, as outlined below, bringing together quantitative analysis, professional insight, and stakeholder perspectives. Evidence has been applied consistently across both models to support an impartial and transparent comparison.

Phase 1 options analysis (completed as part of the interim plan submission in March 2025)

- Developed the original RAG scoring framework used in this analysis.
- Set out the early comparison of structural options based on feasibility, financial scale, and policy alignment.
- Established baseline assumptions around governance design, service footprint, and transition cost implications.
- Informed the scoring approach and structure of commentary.

Demographic and Economic Analysis

- Provided a detailed comparison between the proposed East and West Gloucestershire councils, across:
    - Population trends and age profiles.
    - Financial resilience (e.g. council tax base, gross disposable household income (GDHI), debt levels).
    - Demand for adult and children's social care.
    - Deprivation, employment, and digital access.
    - Economic activity and infrastructure.
- Highlights the different starting points for each authority under a 2UA model, and the internal variation that a 1UA model would need to manage.
- Forms the main statistical evidence base used throughout this options analysis.

Service-level disaggregation and aggregation discussions

- Provided detailed, operational insights from service leads across core upper and lower tier services including (but not limited to): adults, children's and education, transport, revenues and benefits, housing, leisure, and parking.
- Considered issues including:
    - Shared systems and data platforms (e.g. Liquidlogic, Capita, Uniform).
    - Workforce and statutory leadership duplication.
    - Locality delivery and place-based presence.
    - Contracting, service level agreements (SLAs), and external provider arrangements.
    - Gloucestershire-specific practical and technical issues

Stakeholder engagement feedback

- Reflective of responses from partners involved in local services and governance.
- Provided insight into perceptions of:
    - Strategic leadership.
    - Democratic representation and identity.
    - Integration of housing, care, and place-based services.
- Helped assess both models against criteria related to public engagement, identity, and local responsiveness.

Overall Summary of Options Analysis

Summary of Option 1: Single Unitary Authority (1UA)

This option would replace the current two-tier council system with one single council for all of Gloucestershire's ~659,000 residents. This is a size that's been successful in other areas like North Yorkshire and meets government guidelines. Having one council means **decisions can be made more quickly and clearly** and **the county can speak with one voice** when it comes to funding, transport, and big projects.

A 1UA maximises opportunities to retain existing county-wide systems and services (like core service case management systems), which **minimises the cost and disruption associated with splitting things up and any potential duplication.** This is especially important for services like adults' social care (ASC), children's social care, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and safeguarding, where **keeping teams and systems together helps protect and maximise service continuity for the most vulnerable people across the county.**

Local services would still be shaped around communities, in line with the proposed locality arrangements for Gloucestershire. This includes local partnerships and

boards, budgets that are managed locally, and retaining local identity through ward names, events, and branding.

There are differences between the east and west of the county, e.g. in income levels, spending on adult social care, and levels of deprivation. With 1UA, **financial resources are pooled and can be shared and targeted where they're needed most**, increasing overall financial resilience (noting there are still unknowns around the dedicated schools grant deficit and fair funding review which impact all LGR options being considered).

The main risk is around ensuring that local voices are heard from the start – this can be managed by setting up strong local governance early on.

Summary of Option 2: Two Unitary Authorities (2UA)

The 2UA model **prioritises local visibility, civic identity, and flexibility** by creating two councils based on existing district clusters: East (~310k) and West (~348k). Smaller footprints (in comparison with a 1UA) may make members and officers seem more accessible, which some stakeholders, especially parish councils, may see as a strength.

However, the model introduces significant **duplication and disaggregation challenges**. Systems like Liquidlogic, SAP, and Capita One would need to be split or reprocured; safeguarding boards, SEND services, and commissioning frameworks would require parallel governance. Service leads warned this could increase cost, slow transformation, and risk divergence in quality or access. The fire and rescue service in a 2UA model would be legally required to disaggregate from local authority structures and finances, creating additional cost and risk.

The West's higher demand (particularly in relation to social care services) and lower income could constrain its investment capacity without sustained external funding and there may be concerns around longer-term financial sustainability for the West UA (with current estimates projecting a c.£21.9m deficit on day one).

Like the 1UA, local services would still be shaped around communities, in line with the proposed locality arrangements. This includes local partnerships and boards, budgets that are managed locally, and keeping local identity through ward names, events, and branding.

Comparative (RAG) scoring summary by **main criteria**

Criteria	1UA	2UA
1. Sensible single tier of	• Creates a single tier of local government.	• Creates a single tier of local government.

local government	• Enables pooled resources and redistribution to address potential imbalances countywide, e.g. in homelessness and housing supply. • Aligns with existing partner boundaries.	• Similar tax bases across both UAs but potential fiscal disparities in LA debt (£ per capita (23/24) of £948 in West compared to £674 in East) and service cost (ASC spend per resident of £405 in East vs £629 in West).
2. Right-sized local government	• Exceeds MHCLG expected population threshold of 500,000 (1UA population is ~659,000). • Economies of scale across a single larger UA. • Improved capacity and resilience (financial and workforce). • Lower transition costs (one-off costs ~£21.3 million).	• Meets viability threshold of 300k but below 500k (East: ~315,349, West: ~354,031). • Reduced duplication across lower tier services; duplication of upper tier services. • Opportunities to put in place targeted shared service arrangements. • Higher transition costs (with two programmes, one-off cost ~£30.1 million).
3. High quality, sustainable services	• Maintains integrated ASC, CSC, and public health. • Innovation opportunities at scale. • Protects multi-agency safeguarding and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) arrangements.	• May fragment countywide services which could cause challenges with quality and cost of service delivery e.g. ASC, CSC, public health etc. • Fire and rescue will need to move to a non-local authority governance, financial, and service arrangement (i.e. the creation of an independent fire and rescue authority), which will incur additional costs (estimated to be c.£2.8m net total additional pressure for year one) and may increase risk of sustainable service provision.
4. Meets local needs	• Local stakeholder support for retaining single voice and shared infrastructure. • Concerns around merging distinct local identities. • Perception of overcentralisation, which can be	• Builds on existing district boundaries. • Retains a sense of place identity for the two largest urban centres (Cheltenham and Gloucester) but could risk alienating other more rural areas.

	managed with continued place-based delivery.	• Risks financial imbalance in West which could compromise ability to meet local needs.
5. Supports devolution arrangements	• Simplifies engagement with partners. • Increased scale and negotiating influence. • Meets 1.5m Combined Authority (CA) population benchmarks.	• Allows tailored devolution asks. • Each UA could join different CAs. • Some scenarios risk falling below 1.5m population benchmark.
6. Local engagement and empowerment	• Can deliver countywide engagement structures. • Embeds neighbourhood partnerships consistently. • Needs deliberate design to avoid remoteness.	• Smaller footprints could improve councillor visibility. • As for 1UA, effective engagement depends on deliberate design.
7. Environmental and climate protection	• Countywide environmental plans, but with the ability to still retain tailored, local strategies where needed. • Unified stewardship of landscapes. • Scales up local climate initiatives.	• Ability to still retain tailored, local strategies where needed. • Retain joint governance for shared assets.
8. Civic engagement and participative democracy	• Scales up digital tools and participatory decision-making countywide. • Risk of democratic deficit.	• Two smaller councils could feel more accessible, with closer member-resident link in comparison with a 1UA. • Risk of democratic deficit.
9. Inclusive growth and equity	• Increased countywide resilience to drive growth and equity. • Unified regeneration. • Consolidation savings can be reinvested back into front line service delivery.	• Potential risk or difficult decisions needed in the West if current demand and cost trajectories for ASC continue.

Summary of Options Appraisal Against Criteria and Sub-Criteria

This section sets out a summary view of the options appraisal against the six MHCLG criteria and three additional local context criteria and sub-criteria, with ratings in RAG format providing a simple, visual way to understand how well each

option aligns with each criterion and sub-criterion. A more detailed description against each sub-criteria can be found in Appendix 5: Detailed Options Analysis.

When assessing each option against the MHCLG criteria, we note that the potential impact of the government's fair funding review remains unknown. This creates a degree of uncertainty for both options, as future funding allocations could materially affect relative financial sustainability and capacity. As a result, no definitive assessment of fair funding implications has been included within the criteria analysis for either the 1UA or 2UA option.

This options analysis has been prepared based on the current Gloucestershire boundaries. No boundary changes have been proposed or modelled at this stage. Any suggested boundary modification could significantly alter population totals and financial profiles, which in turn would affect assessment against several criteria and may change the RAG ratings presented.

Comparative (RAG) Scoring Summary by **Main Criteria and Sub-Criteria**

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
1. Sensible single tier of local government	A) Establishes a single tier of local government for the whole of the area concerned	**G**	• Removes two-tier structure and creates one accountable body.	**G**	• Removes two-tier structure and creates two accountable bodies in a single tier.
	B) Sensible economic breakdown, with a tax base which does not create undue inequalities	**G**	• Allows pooled resources and supports appropriate redistribution from East to West.	**A**	• 2024 tax base (band D equivalents after council tax support) suggest similar tax bases across both authorities (49% in the West and 51% in the East) with clear sectoral priorities to drive economic growth within each UA. • However, there are potential fiscal disparities in LA debt (£ per capita (23/24) of £948 in West compared to £674 in East) and service costs, particularly in ASC (spend per resident of £405 in the East vs £629 in the West).
	C) Sensible geographic breakdown, which will help increase housing	**G**	• Aligns with existing partner geographies e.g. NHS, ICB, police etc and enables strategic planning to address disparities in housing needs and land supply across different parts of the county (five-year housing supply	**A**	• Misalignment of boundaries with key partners incl. the ICB, police, and fire and rescue. • Variations in homelessness (higher in the West at 0.21% vs 0.11% in the East) and

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
	supply and meet local needs		target is 4.97 years for East and 3.83 years for West, with a countywide shortfall of 4.37 years).		housing land supply (lower in the West at 3.83 vs 4.97 in East). This could result in more demand for housing in the West with less supply to meet this efficiently within the new UA borders. • Average house prices illustrate that the private housing market faces greater challenges in the West, where values are lower (e.g. Gloucester £225,000; Forest of Dean £291,000) compared to the East (e.g. Cotswolds £419,000; Cheltenham £324,000), reducing profit margins and making it less likely that the private sector will deliver sufficient supply without public intervention.
2. Right-sized local government	A) A population of 500,000 or more (unless specific local factors make this unreasonable)	**G**	• Serves ~659,000 people, meeting MHCLG's expected population threshold of 500,000.	**A**	• Both councils exceed 300,000 (minimum viability threshold is met) but fall below the MHCLG preferred 500,000 (East: ~315,349, West: ~354,031).
	B) Supports efficiencies and value for money for council taxpayers	**G**	• Opportunities for economies of scale e.g. across smaller specialist contracts for services such as cyber and asbestos and	**A**	• Reduced duplication of lower tier services and improved coordination between areas such as transport, housing, and regeneration.

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			increased market influence to enable market management. • Delivery of potential net revenue savings from reorganisation of ~£21.1m per annum.		• However, duplication of countywide service infrastructure e.g. two statutory officers for CSC, two core systems for CSC etc will add in additional costs. • Delivery of potential net revenue savings from reorganisation of ~£10.7m per annum (split as ~ £4.9m for the East, and ~ £5.8m for the West).
	C) Improves capacity and supports the council to withstand financial shocks	**G**	• Enables pooling of specialist professional resource to allow for flexible deployment across the county. • Improves financial resilience to manage imbalances in demand and cost between different areas in the county. • Services like ASC and CSC are preserved in their current state with senior capacity maintained and increased workforce resilience. • Current financial analysis indicates that a 1UA for Gloucestershire would be established with a balanced budget on day one. This assumes the full delivery of unidentified savings required by all seven councils between now and vesting day (1	**A**	• Opportunities to continue operating shared service arrangements in a targeted way to drive efficiencies and provide an increased number of senior officers, potentially resulting in increased capacity. • However, potential significant financial burdens for the West in relation to ASC (around the demand and cost of working age adult placements). • Current financial analysis indicates that the East council in a 2UA scenario would be established with a day one general fund surplus of ~ £21.9m. Whilst a West council would be established with a day one general fund deficit of ~ £21.9m. This assumes the full delivery of unidentified

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			April 2028) and does not fully account for the impact of the fair funding review (subject to further detail from government).		savings required by all seven councils between now and vesting day (1 April 2028) and does not fully account for the impact of the fair funding review (subject to further detail from government).
	D) Manageable transition costs	**G**	• Requires creation of only one new authority and legal structure, minimising transition costs - estimated to be ~£21.3m. (Based on the assumption of a continuing authority). • This includes lower costs of systems migration e.g. no need to split out or duplicate existing countywide systems such as Liquidlogic; lower costs of statutory senior officer roles as only one set of roles is required; lower costs of setting up two separate implementation portfolios to manage transition etc.	**A**	• Higher transition costs as governance and activities would need to be undertaken twice – currently estimated at ~ £30.1m. • Specific examples of additional costs incurred include the recruitment of two sets of statutory officer roles, the increased costs of disaggregation of core county wide services and systems, the costs of setting up two shadow authority structures.
3. High quality, sustainable services	A) Improves local government and service delivery, avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	**G**	• Preserves current integrated delivery in ASC, CSC, transport, and public health. • Also results in minimal disruption to current multi-agency partnership arrangements. • There may be challenges in delivering quality services across such a diverse	**A**	• Opportunities to potentially strengthen local partnerships with organisations within each area. • Services that require aggregation will have a simpler journey as East / West will each aggregate from three districts into one.

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			geography, but continued strong locality working can help to mitigate this. • This involves the aggregation of six councils into 1UA, which is likely to be complex and costly e.g. alignment of different policies etc.		• However, a 2UA will result in the likely disaggregation of core countywide services including ASC, CSC, education, transport, public health, trading standards, and libraries which could result in financial viability considerations (e.g. in ASC given the imbalance in demand and cost) as well as variations in service delivery and offer (e.g. in relation to public health services). • Under the provisions in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, fire and rescue will need to move to non-local authority governance, financial, and service arrangement (i.e. the creation of an independent fire and rescue authority), which will incur additional net costs (estimated to be c.£2.8m additional pressures on day one for the new councils) and may increase risk to sustainable service provision.
	B) Opportunity for public service reform, including instances where this will lead to	**G**	• A larger organisation will have increased scale, resilience, and influence in working with local and national partners, driving longer-term improvements including the creation of a single trusted front door for	**A**	• Enables each council to innovate locally and make targeted investments in line with local priorities with greater agility and easier implementation, but at a potentially

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
	improved value for money		residents, a single data platform to drive prevention and early intervention, and the ability to innovate at scale quickly. • For example, in areas like health and social care, a single larger organisation is likely to have a stronger voice and influence as part of the ICB in comparison with smaller organisations.		reduced scale compared to countywide delivery.
	C) Improves delivery of, or mitigates risk to, negative impact on crucial services	**G**	• Allows flexible resource allocation across the county, directing investment to areas of highest demand such as ASC and CSC in the West. • Consistent service standards for countywide functions. • Preserves MASH arrangements and avoids artificial borders that could disrupt education and care placements.	**A**	• Disaggregating core services such as education, SEND, admissions, and safeguarding systems risks disrupting end-to-end care pathways, hospital discharge, and home-to-school transport.
4. Meets local needs	A) Meets local needs and is informed by local views	**A**	• Findings from local engagement undertaken with Gloucestershire residents in July 2025 indicated that 205 out of 225 residents (who had a view on local government structures) preferred a 1UA for Gloucestershire.	**A**	• Findings from local engagement undertaken with Gloucestershire residents indicated that 14 out of 225 residents (who had a view on local government structures) preferred a 2UA model. However, concerns were raised in broader qualitative

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			• Parts of the county's strategic partner base (NHS, police, business networks) and the VCFSE emphasised that a single accountable body could also simplify engagement and reduce duplication across multiple districts. However, some parish councils and VCFSE groups raised concerns that this needs to be supported by robust locality governance so that a 1UA does not feel more distant, especially in rural areas. • The 1UA model reflects existing countywide delivery of ASC, CSC, public health and transport, noting that service leads supported retaining local operational footprints even under this arrangement.		commentary around fairness, division, and efficiency, with references to "creating a rich side and a poor side of the county". • Concerns were raised around large urban centres within each unitary dominating focus and resources, potentially leading to rural areas receiving a lower standard of service. • Risks include fragmentation where communities span boundaries or rely on countywide networks (e.g. education, safeguarding, housing). • Parts of the VCFSE warned that splitting the county may marginalise rural transition areas such as the Severn Vale and North Cotswolds.
	B) Improves / mitigates risk to issues of local identity, cultural and historic importance	**A**	• Civic identity kept through 267 parish councils, new city / town councils for Gloucester and Cheltenham, and use of local names and branding. • Neighbourhood partnerships (30k–50k population) bring decision-making closer to communities and build on existing local networks.	**A**	• Aligns with current district geographies. • Equalities impact assessment (EqIA) analysis shows differing community profiles: East combines Cheltenham's urban diversity with older rural areas, while West combines Gloucester's ethnic diversity with rural Forest of Dean and Stroud communities.

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			• Area-based practice in ASC / CSC and precedents from other unitaries show local visibility can be maintained under a 1UA model. • Local engagement with residents raised concerns that a unitary authority may not recognise the individual places that have their own unique identity. For example, residents spoken to at the Coleford Music Festival wanted to maintain the identity of the Forest of Dean as a unique place.		• However, several stakeholders noted that smaller authorities don't necessarily directly correlate with improved community engagement – the underlying structures and design are crucial to success. • Findings from local engagement with residents also highlighted that it could be difficult to create local identities for each unitary that do not revolve around the largest towns which would exclude other areas.
	C) Addresses local concerns	**A**	• Risk of overcentralisation can be mitigated by strong locality governance and retaining local delivery (e.g. social work teams). • A 1UA enables countywide planning to address inequalities (e.g. child poverty, which is higher in West) while flexibly allocating resources by place. • Unified capital and housing functions allow targeted investment in local priorities, such as brownfield regeneration in the West and transport access in the East.	**A**	• The West faces greater cost pressures due to higher deprivation (indices of deprivation - East: 12.71, West: 17.16); higher ASC costs per resident (East: £405, West: £629); and higher claimant rates (East: 13.79%, West: 17.87%). • Cross-boundary issues (e.g. housing, transport, tech corridors, flood risk) require joint working, limiting full localisation. • Unified capital and housing functions allow targeted investment in local priorities, from brownfield regeneration in the West to transport access in the East.

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
5. Supports devolution arrangements	A) Helps to support devolution arrangements / unlock devolution	**G**	• Gives Gloucestershire a single, unified voice in national negotiations. • Streamlined governance and one point of entry improve clarity for partners and enhance the county's profile when securing investment and funding. • Unified leadership supports countywide priorities such as housing, infrastructure, skills, and transport, while preserving links to both the South West and West Midlands regional partnerships.	**A**	• No single voice for Gloucestershire overall which could weaken influence in negotiations but there may be improved opportunities for each authority to tailor devolution asks based on distinct priorities. However, there is limited evidence to support this.

	B) Sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	**G**	• Population sizes for potential combined authority options being considered for Gloucestershire just about meet the minimum 1.5m benchmark set by government as illustrated by the combined population estimates below:
			  ○ Gloucestershire + WECA Core: 1.6m
			  ○ Gloucestershire + WECA (incl. North Somerset): 1.81m
			  ○ Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire: 1.45m (falls a little short of the 1.5m threshold).
				G	• Opportunities for each UA to join potentially different combined authorities due to potential political divergence.
					• Two smaller Gloucestershire authorities would cause concerns around meeting the minimum 1.5m benchmark in all potential combined authority scenarios, e.g. Herefordshire and Worcestershire have a combined population of c.806,000 so if only one of the Gloucestershire authorities was to form a combined authority with these two areas, this would fall short of the minimum

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			○ Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire + Swindon: 1.63m • However, concerns were noted around the relative size of a single Gloucestershire unitary authority in comparison with other partners in a combined authority. For example, in the case of a WECA option, Gloucestershire would be the largest partner in WECA, with a population of c. 659,276, compared to Bristol's c.472,400, South Gloucestershire's c.290,400 and Bath and North East Somerset's c.193,400 (population figures based on ONS 2021 census). This could potentially make a single unitary less appealing for other partners.		1.5 million threshold (at a maximum, it would be c.1.2m). • In terms of relative size of two smaller Gloucestershire authorities compared with potential partners, this may be more palatable. The populations of c.300,000-350,000 for Gloucestershire would not be significantly higher than potential partners, particularly in the case of a WECA option.
6. Local engagement and empowerment	A) Enables stronger community engagement	**G**	• A 1UA removes districts but can create countywide frameworks for neighbourhood partnerships, reducing duplication and clarifying responsibilities. • Effective engagement depends on deliberate design; partners stressed the need to "build in real localism" to avoid perceptions of distance.	**G**	• Smaller footprints could improve councillor visibility and allow warding and committees to reflect local settlement patterns. • Effective engagement depends on deliberate design; partners stressed the need to "build in real localism" to avoid perceptions of distance.

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			• The 1UA model generates the largest potential reorganisation savings (c.£21.1m annual net savings), creating capacity to invest in local forums co-designed with partners including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), ICB, and the VCS Alliance.		• Service leads stressed that effective engagement depends on design, resources, and authority, not size alone.
	B) Delivers genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment	**G**	• A 1UA can formalise locality governance through neighbourhood partnerships and area committees, co-designed with communities and partners – noting it may be difficult on such a large footprint (OPCC, ICB, VCS Alliance). • Existing hubs and parish clusters can be aligned to locality areas, ensuring services like ASC, CSC, and planning remain close to residents, while using shared systems and standards countywide. • Concerns have been raised that removing levels of government risks democratic deficit.	**G**	• A 1UA can formalise locality governance through neighbourhood partnerships and area committees, co-designed with communities and partners – noting it may be difficult on such a large footprint (OPCC, ICB, VCS Alliance). • Concerns have been raised that removing levels of government risks democratic deficit.
7. Environmen	A) Ensures the new authority has /	**G**	• Countywide plans and partnerships on climate, nature recovery, and flood risk (e.g.	**G**	• Strategic collaboration could continue through Climate Leadership

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
tal and climate protection	authorities have clear capabilities to deliver existing and future climate and nature plans		Climate Strategy, Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) role) continue seamlessly under a 1UA. • Scale enables coordinated budgets, specialist teams, and single ownership of assessments and bids, strengthening capacity for investment and delivery. • Neighbourhood partnerships embed environmental priorities locally, supporting community-led climate and nature actions.		Gloucestershire, but duplication of plans and scrutiny would add cost. • Requires countywide coordination on cross-boundary issues (which can continue to build on the success of partnerships such as Climate Leadership Gloucestershire). • The smaller scale of two unitary authorities should not have an adverse impact on the effectiveness.
	B) Reflects local priorities in areas with sensitive landscapes (e.g. Forest of Dean, Cotswolds AONB).	**G**	• Maintains single local plan, LNRS, and biodiversity net gain framework, avoiding fragmented policies across natural assets and landscapes. • Supports countywide coordination of infrastructure, flood schemes, and biodiversity corridors while retaining local tailoring through the proposed locality arrangements. • Provides consistent planning approach on issues like nutrient neutrality, with parish and community networks shaping local priorities.	**G**	• Local initiatives such as Cheltenham's Net Zero Plan and Fairer Greener Forest could be advanced under separate leadership.

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
	C) Builds on existing commitments (e.g. "Fairer Greener Forest", Climate Emergency responses).	G	• Local climate programmes (e.g. Fairer Greener Forest, Stroud Climate Action Network (CAN), Cheltenham net zero) can continue with countywide support, funding and systems. • A 1UA enables one climate plan, shared datasets, and a single scrutiny framework to align priorities and track delivery. • Some partners highlighted through engagement that 1UA simplifies collaboration, supporting targeted investment in rural, urban, and flood-risk communities.	G	• Two councils could retain and develop existing local climate plans, keeping accountability close to members and communities. • Local ownership may strengthen engagement, but alignment is needed on countywide priorities like emissions, transport decarbonisation, and biodiversity.
8. Civic engagement and participative democracy	A) Promotes civic engagement and strengthens participative democracy	A	• Countywide engagement tools and resident panels can be delivered at scale, avoiding duplication across districts. • A single framework protects equal access to participation for both rural parishes and urban neighbourhoods. • Builds on local co-design pilots and VCFSE partnerships, enabling grassroots leadership within a countywide democratic structure.	A	• Both authorities would be able to develop civic engagement strategies suited to their geographies and communities. • Smaller councils could feel more accessible to residents, with closer member–resident links. • Given LGR will reduce the number of elected councillors and create larger electoral divisions, this will increase the number of residents each councillor

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			• Given LGR will reduce the number of elected councillors and create larger electoral divisions, this will increase the number of residents each councillor represents. This could risk a democratic deficit.		represents. This could risk a democratic deficit.
9. Inclusive growth and equity	A) Ability to tackle disparities in wealth setting up one unitary authority or two unitary authorities	**G**	• A 1UA enables countywide planning and pooled resources to tackle disparities, targeting regeneration in areas with lower GDHI, job density, and higher deprivation (notably in the West). • Avoids postcode inequality by ensuring consistent access to services and funding across the county. • Strengthens Gloucestershire's case for levelling up and national investment by presenting one accountable body.	**A**	• Lack of countywide redistribution may leave the West struggling with higher deprivation (East: 12.71, West: 17.16) and demand pressures (e.g. ASC costs per resident East: £405, West: £629 and Adults with no qualifications East: 13,375 per 100,000, West: 16,169 per 100,000). • Risks include divergence in neighbourhood regeneration and reduced ability to deliver countywide programmes to close equalities gaps.
	B) Prioritises vulnerable residents and community-level regeneration	**G**	• Shared datasets enable consistent targeting of unmet need (e.g. higher child poverty rates in the West). • Countywide safeguarding boards and integrated commissioning are retained, while services continue to deliver locally	**G**	• The West may face difficulty funding high-need regeneration without redistribution, exposing resource and commissioning gaps. However, funding may become more readily available to the West as their relative deprivation would no longer be

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			through hubs, schools, and VCSFE partners. • A 1UA simplifies cross-cutting delivery (e.g. mental health, housing, substance misuse) and links neighbourhood action plans to countywide priorities.		hidden by the averages of the West and East combined.
	C) Ability to balance financial sustainability with service levels	**A**	• Consolidation of contracts, systems, and infrastructure delivers savings in back-office functions, allowing reinvestment in frontline and preventative services. • A single commissioning function strengthens market position in areas such as ASC and SEND, reducing fragmentation and securing better value. • Countywide reserves and income provide flexibility to sustain high-cost services and manage financial risk across the whole area. • Countywide dedicated schools grant (DSG) deficit projected to reach ~£234m by vesting day (1 April 2028). If statutory override is not maintained or an alternative solution implemented, then both a 1UA and 2UA would face significant financial risks.	**A**	• Each authority would have its own independent medium term financial strategy (MTFS) and budgets which can be aligned with local service priorities. • The West faces higher ASC demand and costs (ASC costs per resident East: £405, West: £629) and CSC costs (CSC costs per resident East: £129, West: £156), creating greater budget pressure without access to countywide reserves or subsidy. • Countywide DSG deficit projected to reach ~£234m by vesting day (1 April 2028). If statutory override is not maintained or an alternative solution implemented, then both a 1UA and 2UA would face significant financial risks. • The impact of the fair funding is currently unknown, presenting further financial

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA	2UA (East / West)
		• The impact of the fair funding review is currently, presenting further financial uncertainty to both 1UA and 2UA scenarios.	uncertainty to both 1UA and 2UA scenarios.

The New Council: Future Operating Model

LGR is a chance to reshape how councils in Gloucestershire work. To deliver better, more sustainable services and tackle inequalities, **a clear and consistent future operating model (FOM) is essential.**

This section outlines how the new council could engage with residents, collaborate with partners, and operate internally. While the final model will be decided by future council leaders, this proposal offers **a framework to support long-term resilience, local decision-making, and community-focused service delivery.**

Our Opportunity to Modernise

Gloucestershire is in a unique position – ready to harness its strengths whilst fundamentally transforming to address some its challenges, ultimately improving outcomes and delivery of high-quality services for all residents, businesses, and staff.

Through LGR, the new council can take advantage of:

- **Simplified access to services making it easier for residents to get the help they need** without having to be passed between councils.
- **A strategic approach to prevention and integration** across social care, public health, environmental health, leisure, housing, and other services. Given Gloucestershire's higher than average ageing population, this approach is key to future demand management and financial sustainability.
- **Opportunities to partner with local organisations.** Gloucestershire already has great foundations to build on – like our place-based family and youth hubs across the county and the Ow Bist Community Hub[54] in Cinderford. Ow Bist is a great example due to its co-designed ethos; the community named the building and shaped its offer, which blends council, health, and VCFSE services.
- Accelerated opportunities for transformation enabled by **shared intelligence and predictive analytics**. Housing and homelessness are an example of how a more integrated operating model can enable more evidence-driven and predictive responses for vulnerable people.
- **Fresh impetus for broader public service reform across Gloucestershire** to address service modernisation, integration, prevention, and demand pressures**.**

[54] www.fvaf.org.uk/owbist

Our Design Principles

We've set out clear design principles to guide every decision behind our FOM:

- **Values-led:** everything we do will be rooted in clear values and led by outcomes – **doing the right thing for the people of Gloucestershire.**

- **People at the heart:** we're here for all our people, businesses, and communities – everyone is equally valued. We design with people, not for the, **building relationships rooted in listening, trust, transparency, and inclusivity.** Our ambition is to create places and services that actively support wellbeing and happiness, helping everyone to thrive.

- **Locality-focused:** our commitment to localities means **real place-based working, genuine co-production, and enabling community-led delivery.** One size won't fit all, and we will support different places in different ways.

- **Online by default and accessible for all:** our strategic 'online by default' culture maximises the impact of technology, simplifying and automating our processes, with alternative provision where it is desired or needed, so that **nobody is left behind**. And as we innovate, we stay mindful of the environmental and ethical impact of our digital choices.

- **Collective ownership:** we'll drive collective ownership throughout the new council with a **'one-team ethos'**. This empowers service leads, managers, and staff to make smart, local decisions and adapt quickly to what our communities need most.

- **Partnerships with purpose:** our **partnership working will be purposeful** to make a positive difference to our communities and achieve shared goals. Every delivery model is shaped by what works best for each place, not by a one-size-fits-all approach.

- **Intelligence led decision-making:** we will harness evidence to spot things early, be proactive, influence strategy, and drive meaningful change, using data and insights to improve service delivery and ways of working.

- **A great place to work:** we'll value, train, and care for an agile and resilient workforce, building clear career pathways and enabling development of specialist service experts, multi-skilled individuals, and those that want to move between service areas. We champion **a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects our communities**, promoting equality, equity, and belonging for all.

Key Components of our FOM

With our design principles as our foundation, we're clear about what this means in practice.

Two-way engagement and a first point of contact for residents, businesses, and the community

- Fostering participation and co-creation with neighbourhoods and other communities to encourage genuine partnership working and empowerment; exploring investment in community assets, libraries, and outreach to support place-based access and digital inclusion.
- Wherever possible, ensuring that services feel consistent and connected, powered by shared customer data, especially for those with complex or multiple needs.
- Blending digital self-service and effective triage (enabled by AI, including voice and chat automation) to free up our people to provide higher value, personal services.
- Utilising resident and community demand data and insights to feed neighbourhood and community support, commissioning, and corporate planning, which will allow the council to use data to drive decisions and improvements.

Bringing together frontline and place-based service delivery for residents, businesses, and communities

- High-risk, regulated, and a range of other services are likely to stay in-house (or potentially even be brought in house) to protect quality, value, and flexibility.
- A workforce that blends specialist staff, who understand the technical nuance and risks of frontline services, with flexible, multi-skilled staff, who can provide challenge and strong leadership.
- Visible and responsive services in local areas through place-based forums and outreach which adapts to diverse populations and cultural needs.
- A seamless flow of contact, triage, and resolution into operational teams – with clear service standards and safeguarded pathways for urgent or high-risk cases.

Commissioning in-house specialist capabilities associated with services the council acquires externally

- Strategic commissioning capabilities to link insight, market knowledge, service needs, and outcomes (aligned to the corporate strategy and community needs).
- Lead with intelligence – using demand, neighbourhoods, and supply insights to drive every decision so that they are outcomes-focused and needs-based.
- Joint working with partners built on trust and shared goals (not necessarily always full-service integration), enabled by strong governance and clear exit strategies.
- An ethos of continuous review and improvement, making sure services remain resident-focused and outcome-driven, encouraging maximum value for money.

Note: An initial view of potential delivery models for core service areas (i.e. commissioned, shared services, in-house) is set out in Appendix 6: Proposed Service Delivery Models (noting that ultimately the final decisions on these will be for the new authority).

Strategic enablement: driving the council's strategic direction, transformation agenda, and operational excellence

The new council will need a strategic enablement capability to lead direction, retain decision-making sovereignty, and deliver on its political and strategic priorities. This will help drive:

- Coordination of corporate strategy, transformation, and financial performance to ensure alignment and accountability across the council.
- A robust business partnering model turning strategy into action. Central teams will manage systems, standards, and high-volume transactions, with business partners embedded within or alongside directorates.
- Insight and performance information will flow both ways between services and strategic leadership, enabling real-time learning, smarter resource use, and targeted interventions.
- Investment in the right tools, skills, and culture, pairing data with human judgement and local context to ensure decisions are ethical, inclusive, and effective.
- Outcome-driven performance management – using insight to monitor progress, drive change, and enable services to reach their full potential for residents.

The New Council: Workforce

The workforce approach builds directly on the strategic ambitions proposed in the FOM. The new council's FOM provides an opportunity to reimagine what it means to work for our council and to invest in continuing to develop **a diverse, valued, and multi-skilled workforce that represents, and is best placed to service, Gloucestershire's residents and communities.**

By reshaping how we attract, develop, and empower staff, we unlock **greater mobility, clearer career pathways, and the chance to embed a culture of innovation and continuous improvement** across services.

Gloucestershire's Workforce Challenges

Our workforce is talented and dedicated, but we're not immune to the pressures facing local government. LGR is our chance to tackle these challenges head-on and build a workforce that's resilient, inclusive, and future-ready.

- **Recruitment and retention**: stability is impacted by competition for talent, especially in social care, education, and technical roles. To attract and keep the best, we need to offer more than just a job. Flexible working is increasingly expected, and career pathways could better reflect diverse progression routes.
- **Diversity and representation:** there are gaps in workforce diversity, with underrepresentation in some roles and areas. Promoting Gloucestershire's strengths more widely can help attract a broader range of talent.
- **Wellbeing and change fatigue:** staff are under pressure, particularly in middle management and specialist roles. A stronger focus on wellbeing and open communication can help build a culture that embraces change and supports growth, ready for what comes next.
- **Skills for the future:** rapid technological change means we must invest in digital and data skills across all roles. Updating job structures and expanding access to learning will help build a confident, adaptable workforce ready to lead transformation.

Unlocking New Opportunities for Our Workforce

LGR provides a unique moment to reshape how our councils engage, support, and develop their workforces. By aligning people strategies with the broader transformation agenda, we can unlock new potential and build a future-ready organisation.

Through LGR the council can:

- **Reset organisational culture** by embedding inclusive values, energising teams, and empowering staff to shape services. This fresh start unites

colleagues through adoption of new behaviours, attracts new talent, and creates real ownership and pride, across every corner of Gloucestershire. By putting wellbeing and resilience at the centre, we'll tackle change fatigue and build a workforce that's more connected, motivated, and driven by a shared mission.

- **Strengthen recruitment and retention** by reducing internal competition for talent, enabling more flexible resource sharing, and creating clearer pathways for retraining and upskilling. Structural changes, such as refining spans of control and smarter job design, can improve efficiency and clarity - especially important in high-demand areas like social care, education, planning, and technical services. LGR will allow our council to become a more attractive employer, offering rewarding careers and development opportunities.

- **Build skills and capability** by investing in digital literacy, data competence, and shared training – raising standards and opening-up new career routes. We'll close skills gaps in areas like AI, development operations, data analysis, and data engineering, competing with the private sector and positioning the council as a forward-thinking employer, ready to meet future challenges with confidence. And by sharing these skills with wider partners and the community, we'll boost employment prospects and deliver real social value across Gloucestershire.

- **Support diverse career pathways** by recognising the value of both specialists and generalists and creating structures that reward horizontal and vertical progression equally. Through investing in specialist skills – like commissioning, contract management, market shaping, and quality assurance – we'll help staff feel more valued for their unique strengths and open up fulfilling career journeys across the organisation.

- **Promote workforce diversity and representation** by setting the standard for an inclusive workplace. Addressing persistent gaps in representation and removing cultural and structural barriers in recruitment and progression, we'll build a workforce that better reflects the communities it serves, and where everyone can thrive.

Gloucestershire's Workforce Priorities

Through collaboration across all seven councils, we've identified opportunities to shape a workforce that can deliver on Gloucestershire's bold vision and ambitions:

1. **Create a 'fresh start' for the new organisational culture, marking the opportunity to reset organisational identity and behaviours following reform, creating a more inclusive and energising environment.**
LGR offers a valuable opportunity to reset organisational culture. It's a chance to reaffirm shared values, refresh our identity, and foster a more dynamic, inclusive workplace. By moving beyond legacy behaviours and empowering staff to shape the new culture, we'll boost morale, strengthen engagement, and inspire pride in our future.
2. **Accelerate digital confidence and capability, reflecting the commitment to equip staff with digital skills and tools.**
We're embedding digital, data and technology (DDaT) at the core of the new council, backed by real investment in upskilling our people so that they have the tools and support they need to thrive. By expanding graduate schemes and digital apprenticeships, we'll build a workforce that's digitally confident, ready to innovate, and equipped to deliver modern, responsive public services.
3. **Design inclusive career pathways, reflecting the commitment to support both specialist and generalist progression by creating flexible, transparent career routes that value diverse skills and aspirations.**
We're committed to clear, flexible career pathways that let both specialists and generalists thrive, without being pushed into unsuitable management roles. Current structures often lack the flexibility to support dual career tracks, which can limit the development of specialist expertise. By valuing every route equally, supporting career exploration, and being transparent about role expectations, we unlock talent at every level. And for regulated professions, such as S151 officers, we'll keep the depth and accreditation that excellence requires.
4. **Championing diversity of thought and inclusive behaviours, highlighting the importance of embedding equity and inclusion in recruitment, leadership, and everyday practice.**
LGR is our platform to embed inclusive practices and celebrate diversity of thought at every level. We're tackling underrepresentation head-on, making sure all staff feel seen, heard, and valued. Our priorities include inclusive recruitment, diverse leadership pipelines, and open dialogue across teams. By championing different

perspectives and lived experiences, we'll strengthen decision-making, build community trust, and create a workforce that truly reflects the population it serves.
5. Building leadership capability – referring to the qualities, skills, and support needed for leaders to guide teams effectively through change and deliver high-quality services
Strong leadership is key to navigating change and delivering high-quality services. LGR creates valuable opportunities to grow leadership at every level. Through shared training, mentoring, and clear development pathways, the council can support leadership growth while defining the qualities needed for the future. By investing in our leaders, we'll boost confidence, enhance engagement, and equip managers to lead with clarity, empathy, and purpose – amplifying the strengths already thriving across our teams.
6. Creating an anchor institution for the wellbeing of our communities
The 2021 Gloucestershire Director of Public Health's annual report "Sources of Strength"[55] described how 'anchor organisations' can support community health and wellbeing and help tackle inequalities in their places. Anchor organisations like the new unitary council will take direct action in areas like employment policies, procurement, buildings, the environment, and place-shaping – leveraging our assets and influence for local benefit. As one of Gloucestershire's largest employers, we'll lead by example.
7. Supporting staff who may not continue in the new unitary council
LGR is also about looking after our people. For those not transitioning into new roles within the new organisation, we'll offer tailored support – including CV writing, interview preparation, and access to redeployment resources – so that everyone feels respected, empowered, and ready for their next step. This compassionate approach values individual contributions and helps maintain a positive organisational culture throughout the change.

[55] www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/nb5dugc1/dph-report-2021-sources-of-strength.pdf

The New Council: Digital, Data and Technology

Designing a Digitally-Enabled Organisation for Gloucestershire

Since the announcement of LGR, we've worked with the Local Government Association (LGA) and other councils who've already navigated this process to understand the realistic opportunities and learn from their experiences in digital, data and technology (DDaT) transformation. This collaborative approach has enabled us to identify opportunities, challenges, and best practices, ensuring that our DDaT aspirations are informed by real-world experience and aligned with the government's digital blueprint[56].

Putting residents and communities first is at the core of our DDaT approach. We're designing digital services that work for everyone – whatever their age, ability, or access to technology. While we're investing in DDaT to improve outcomes and experiences, we recognise that not everyone can or wants to access services online. We'll continue to offer alternative ways to get support and information, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Our DDaT vision is to **transform the experience of local public services**, designing an organisation truly fit for the digital age: innovative, efficient, and built to meet the expectations and needs of our local people, communities, and staff.

By uniting all seven councils, we can simplify and standardise services, so every resident enjoys a consistently good experience – no matter where they live or what service they use. This means **easier access, less confusion, and no need to repeat information or navigate multiple systems.** It allows us to focus resources where they are needed most, respond quickly, and deliver joined-up, reliable support. Ultimately, we're building a council that is more efficient, more responsive, and better able to meet the needs of our communities.

What Do We Mean by Digital, Data, and Technology?

Digital: we're creating an empowered and user-centred culture – investing in the right skills and tools to deliver seamless, end-to-end online services that people choose to use because they're simple and effective.

Data: we'll use data strategically and ethically to drive smarter decisions and deliver personalised support. At the heart of our data use will be secure and ethical data sharing, improving interoperability across systems, and using insights to redesign services around real need.

Technology: our approach is robust, secure, and flexible – from cloud and low-code to open-source tools and responsible use of AI. We'll deliver resilient,

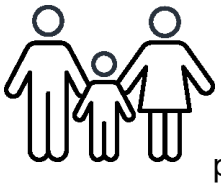
[56] www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-blueprint-for-modern-digital-government

scalable systems that support innovation and work together effortlessly, so every experience feels joined-up and intuitive.

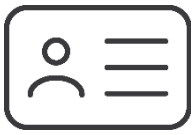
What Difference Will Designing a Digitally Enabled Organisation Make?



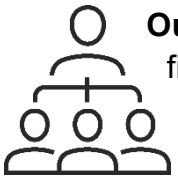
Our residents and businesses across Gloucestershire will access services that are consistent, proactive, accessible, and responsive – joined-up across the council and its partners. By using data smartly (where it makes sense to rather than 'just because'), we'll deliver the right support at the right time, cutting out repetition and confusion. Whether its online, by phone, via email, or face-to-face, everyone gets the same reliable service. And because digital exclusion is real, we're committed to making sure that everyone – regardless of how they choose to engage – can access the support and services they need.



Our communities will have more opportunities than ever to shape services and share their views. Digital platforms will make it easier to access data, share views, respond to consultations, and work in partnership with us – building fairness, trust, and real empowerment. This means communities are enabled to respond to local issues themselves, as well as target support and resources where they are needed most, strengthening local resilience.



Our staff will have the right tools and connected systems, working in a culture that champions learning and collaboration. Routine tasks will be automated, freeing up time for complex work and collaboration within and outside the organisation. We'll trust our staff to experiment, adapt, and grow, supporting them every step of the way to build new skills.



Our leadership will have real-time, high-quality insights at their fingertips, enabling confident, informed decisions. With LGR unlocking joined-up data, we'll see across systems, anticipate future needs, and target resources where they'll have the greatest impact.



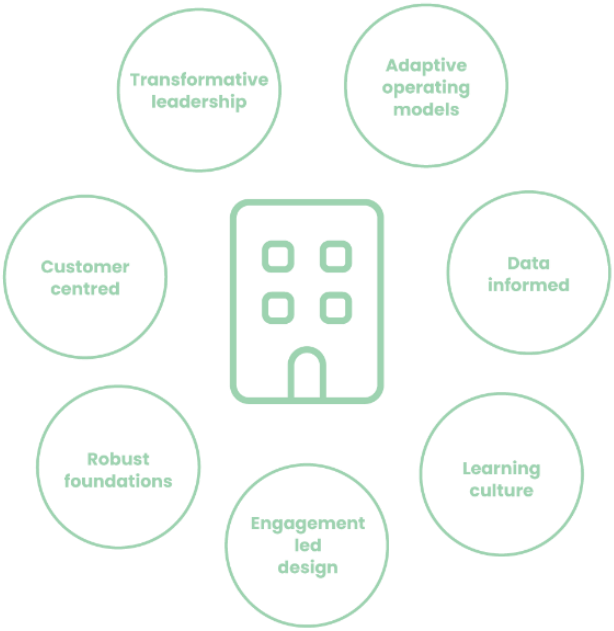
Our new unitary authority will be better equipped to manage demand, streamline processes, and evolve services in innovative ways. By harnessing digital and data capabilities, we'll break away from traditional models of local government service delivery, enabling more targeted support and adaptive operating models. We're committed to becoming an

employer of choice: attracting and retaining talented people by fostering a modern, inclusive, purpose-driven workplace where staff feel empowered to make a real difference.

Our partners will benefit from shared platforms, ethically aligned data, and collaborative delivery, making it easier to work across organisational boundaries. We'll reduce duplication, remove barriers, and create seamless experiences for people using services across different agencies.

Strategic Components of Our Approach

DDaT sits at the heart of Gloucestershire's transformation. We've identified seven key areas that will help us turn our ambition into action – each focused on delivering better outcomes for residents, communities, and businesses.



Transformative leadership

Our leadership will encourage bold innovation – **challenging the status quo** and championing joined-up services across teams, organisations, and sectors. Leaders will foster a culture where experimentation is encouraged, help remove barriers, and use data to make informed decisions. They'll empower staff to 'build, test, learn', embracing continuous improvement over perfection at the first iteration. They'll ask the right questions, equip staff with the tools to answer them, and act confidently on what data reveals.

Adaptive operating model

We'll adopt reusable common components wherever possible, ensuring data portability and a consistent user experience across services.

All services will be online by default (with alternative channels available), underpinned by a single digital process regardless of contact channel. We'll remove unnecessary hand-offs, reduce duplication, and make it simpler and quicker for residents to get what they need. By joining forces with partners across the public and voluntary sectors, we'll deliver a simple and consistent experience across the whole system.

Data-informed decisions

Traditionally, local government has faced challenges with fragmented datasets – both within and between organisations – making early intervention difficult. LGR offers a real opportunity to break down these silos, joining up services and data to enable earlier intervention, faster responses, and more effective prevention. **Evidence-based decision making and investment in analytics, predictive modelling, and AI will better equip us to anticipate demand and drive continuous improvement.**

Robust data governance is non-negotiable. We'll use information safely, securely, and ethically, joining up across services and with partners when there is consent and clear purpose. Clear principles and accountability will guide how we use AI and data, building trust and delivering value responsibly.

Our new unitary authority will enable the implementation of a joined-up predictive analytics platform across adult and children's services, education, housing, and health. By pooling data that used to be locked in districts and county silos, the system will help identify early warning signs of safeguarding risks – such as school absence, housing instability, or repeat A&E visits – and trigger coordinated interventions when needed. In our MASH, for example, we'll enable real-time data sharing across agencies, standardised data formats and dashboards, predictive analysis to identify risk earlier, standardisation of risk thresholds, and automation of routine processes (e.g. triage and referrals).

Customer-centred services

Customer experience and our approach to digital must go hand-in-hand.

Our aim is to deliver intuitive, accessible, and consistently high-quality online services for all residents and customers, putting them at the heart of our service design. One phone number. One website. An integrated digital front door – incorporating tools like live chat and chatbots for 24/7 availability. With smart digital tools and AI, we'll track progress on cases, keep people updated, and

resolve issues faster, freeing up our staff to focus on supporting people with more complex needs.

We'll build public trust through transparency – open dashboards showing our performance, reliability, and commitment to high standards. By connecting information across services, we'll build a fuller picture of our communities' needs and respond with care.

User-centred design and continuous improvement will be our standard. We will test new services and features with real users, gather feedback, and keep improving, so that what we deliver is always intuitive, accessible, and genuinely useful. This will help us to identify and address issues early, refine our services, and make sure our services work for everyone.

Learning culture

We're creating a culture where **curiosity is celebrated, change is embraced, and learning never stops.** We'll blend the best of our existing strengths with our appetite for more experimentation, collaboration, and continuous learning.

We'll learn from the best – partnering with national initiatives like the LGA and the Government Digital Service to improve digital consistency across the sector and drawing inspiration from places that have already led the way, like Greater Manchester and Data Mill North. We'll bring together the council, NHS, universities, technology start-ups, and other partners to pilot bold new ideas and turn innovation into action.

We'll invest in digital skills at every level, including digital apprenticeships, to **build a workforce that can deliver and sustain transformation.**

Listening to our residents and stakeholders

To build online services that are truly inclusive and genuinely responsive to our residents' expectations and needs, we must actively listen to them and recognise the digital exclusion challenges across the county.

Our digital engagement approach will support Gloucestershire's residents and communities to easily provide feedback, join resident panels, and co-design services. Aligned to our proposed locality arrangements, we'll make appropriate data and insights available so that our communities are empowered to shape solutions to local concerns and issues. By teaming up with partners like the VCSFE and parish councils, we'll boost digital skills and deliver meaningful digital engagement.

We'll use data and digital platforms to tailor engagement by location, interest, or demographics. **Robust feedback loops, co-design practices, and transparency will improve inclusive service delivery and build trust with our residents.**

And we're committed to true accessibility. If digital isn't an option, we'll meet people where they are – by phone, in person, or through trusted local partners.

Regardless of the contact channel, the process and experience must feel consistent, joined up, and fair, **ensuring that no one is left behind in our digital transformation.**

Robust infrastructure

The success of the new council will fundamentally rely on robust and dependable technology foundations. We'll ensure our infrastructure, devices, applications, and data are up-to-date, secure, resilient, and dependable.

We'll move to the cloud-based platforms where it makes sense. But we won't just simply replace legacy systems in the cloud – **we'll seize every chance to transform services, using flexible, open-source solutions to promote transparency, efficiency, and innovation.**

Every investment in our infrastructure will be futureproof: cyber-secure, sustainable, and built to last. We'll set clear design principles to prioritise standardisation and interoperability. Environmental sustainability will be a key consideration, ensuring our technology decisions support the council's broader climate and carbon reduction commitments.

We'll equip teams with the right digital tools – like low-code platforms – to design, test, and launch new solutions at speed, scale, and lower cost. We'll tackle 'shadow IT' – where tools, apps, or systems are procured without the approval of the central DDaT service – to ensure every technology decision is strategic, centralised, and fully aligned with our DDaT ambitions.

Our DDaT investments must go beyond devices and platforms to include connectivity. While most of Gloucestershire already enjoys superfast broadband, we'll close the gaps, especially in rural and digitally excluded areas. As a unitary council, we'll be better placed to coordinate infrastructure investment, work with national programmes, and ensure that all communities, regardless of geography, can benefit from modern, reliable, and inclusive digital services.

Summary

Designing a digitally enabled council for Gloucestershire isn't just bold, it's essential. **We're laying the foundations for a modern, responsive, and inclusive organisation.**

The risk of not embedding a clear digital strategy and robust DDaT foundations from day one is real. Without it, we risk building on fragmented systems, outdated processes, and inconsistent data – driving up costs, slowing progress, and limiting our ability to innovate, collaborate, and meet rising expectations.

Our case studies (Appendix 2) already show how **digital is improving outcomes** across the county, streamlining services, and supporting those who need us most. But the real opportunity lies ahead: working together to deliver consistent, high-quality outcomes for everyone who lives, works, or visits Gloucestershire.

As we move through the phases of LGR, our strategy will balance innovation with stability. We'll embed customer focus from the outset and set a clear roadmap for future transformation.

Ultimately, our DDaT ambitions will enable us to become a proactive council that delivers meaningful outcomes. Our new council will feel modern, human, and trustworthy – **designed around the people we serve and powered by the best of digital, technology, and data insight.**

The New Council: Democratic Arrangements

We're creating a single, unified council with a bold vision for Gloucestershire. One that speaks with one voice, champions the whole county, and delivers for every resident.

Local members will be strong representatives and true community leaders, deeply connected to local priorities and aspirations, clearly accountable for services, and powerful convenors who bring people and partners together to deliver real impact.

Bringing together the county council and district councils into one unitary authority will simplify local government, making it easier for residents to engage with the council, with local members at the heart of that relationship.

Right now, electoral arrangements across seven councils mean that every year sees a council election in at least one part of the county. **A single council means coherent leadership, long-term planning, and a stronger, more consistent voice for Gloucestershire.**

Council	Number of Councillors	Electoral cycle	Next election
Gloucestershire County Council	55	All out every 4 years	May 2029
Cheltenham Borough Council	40	Elected in halves every 2 years	May 2026 May 2028
Cotswold District Council	34	All out every 4 years	May 2027
Forest of Dean District Council	38	All out every 4 years	May 2027
Gloucester City Council	39	All out every 4 years	May 2028
Stroud District Council	51	All out every 4 years	May 2028
Tewkesbury Borough Council	38	All out every 4 years	May 2027
Total	295		

Table 9: Current electoral arrangements

A single unitary council will simplify local democracy, reduce councillor numbers, and create a more stable political landscape for Gloucestershire. But this isn't about centralisation - it's about strengthening local voices.

We're committed to **enhancing democracy**, not diluting it. Local members will be empowered to lead, listen, and act, backed by a council culture that puts communities first.

The new council will start with **110 members**, with each current county division electing two councillors. This builds on a recent boundary review, ensuring **fair representation** without delay or disruption. Existing district ward boundaries aren't

fit for purpose; unequal elector ratios and inconsistent structures (single-, double-, and triple-member wards) make them unworkable for a modern, unified council.

A streamlined council of 110 members - one for every 4,477 electors - matches the average for similar unitary authorities, avoids the need for an immediate boundary review, and ensures:

- **Capacity to lead through transition,** while staying closely connected to communities.
- **Representation across large, rural divisions** with multiple parishes.
- **Clear democratic accountability from day one**, with councillors who are visible, accessible, and responsive representatives of their communities.

In time, a boundary review will be requested, which may in turn reduce the council to around 90 members (approximately 5,472 electors per member), moving to smaller, single-member divisions for clearer public accountability.

A new unitary council would result in an **initial reduction of 185 councillors**, followed by a **further reduction of 20 councillors within a few years,** striking a balance between a simpler, more effective system and strong local representation.

Our governance will be built on four core principles:

- A clear, unified voice for Gloucestershire
- Seamless collaboration across the public sector
- Strong transparency and accountability
- Community needs at the heart of every decision.

We're designing a modern, responsive council - one that leads with clarity, collaborates with purpose, and puts communities at the heart of everything it does.

We'll deliver this through:

- **Strong, visible leadership** from a proactive Leader and Cabinet, fully engaged in shaping Gloucestershire's role in the future Combined Authority.
- **Engaged, flexible scrutiny** that brings together all political groups - and where needed, external voices - to shape policy and hold decisions to account. We will use creative, constructive approaches to scrutiny, working at both a strategic and a local level to make sure we're meeting the needs of our communities.
- **Proud civic leadership**, preserving the heritage and ceremonial roles of Gloucester and Cheltenham, while strengthening county-wide identity through the Chair of the council and ties with the Lord Lieutenancy.
- **Local decision-making** power through area planning committees with real powers over planning and other place-based matters.
- **Neighbourhood Partnerships** that reflect real communities and local priorities, shaping services, guiding funding, and driving community-led development.
- **A stronger role for Town and Parish Councils**, backed by a jointly owned charter and new opportunities to take on devolved powers, tailored to each council's appetite and capacity.

- **Real opportunities for children and young people** to share their views and help shape the decisions that affect them.
- **A culture of participation**, with co-production and engagement embedded in how we work, reaching every community, including those in non-parished areas.

The New Council: Empowering Gloucestershire – Our New Locality Arrangements

Unitarisation provides us with a unique opportunity to **rewire the connections between places, people, and organisations**. Since the English Devolution White Paper was issued, Gloucestershire's seven councils have worked together to **reimagine our system, with local places at its heart.** The result is a proposal to unlock the strengths in our community organisations, in our diverse places, and above all, in the people of Gloucestershire.

Our council leaders are united in a desire to shift the extent and quality of community empowerment. We want to take the best of our smaller scale and localised good practices, delivered by councils and key partners, and scale them up - making it central to how we work as a new council.

Grounding our approach in evidence

We've worked closely with local associations and organisations to understand what truly empowers communities and to map the strengths of our current system. We've drawn on insights from over 20 unitary councils with area-based arrangements and conducted a review of national best practice. Our early conclusions were clear: given the scale and diversity of a unitary Gloucestershire, **a neighbourhood approach is essential** for our future accountability, effectiveness, and cohesion.

Among many learning points, the following stand out:

- **Trust and consistency matter:** Too often, new unitary councils have struggled to deliver the locality promises set out in their proposals, risking trust, especially with parishes and the VCFSE sector. Our approach puts **long-term relationships and trust at the heart of everything we do.**

- **A whole council priority:** Neighbourhood arrangements are not an 'add-on'. To deliver prevention, participation, and wellbeing, good practice cannot be confined to a neighbourhood model. **Leadership, culture, and structure must be joined up and focused on empowering communities.**

- **Community development drives real change:** Unitary councils have made strides on using area-based arrangements to act on visible economic and environmental issues, but many have found tackling health, inequalities, and social challenges at the neighbourhood level has been tougher. By **applying resources and focus to community development**, working together with the VCFSE and NHS, we will unlock better outcomes. In our model, the role of public health is central - bridging the priorities and capacities of health and local government systems.

- **Area-based approaches build stronger communities:** The evidence is clear: when councils work across sectors and issues, communities thrive. But a top-down, overly formal approach stifles innovation and inclusivity.

We're committed to test-and-learn, and genuine engagement in ways that make sense to people - making sure every resident feels included.

These learning points have been crucial in shaping our model and proposals**.**

Our current locality models

Neighbourhood approaches are already woven into the fabric of local services, delivered by councils and partners at various geographic scales. As current district boundaries become less relevant, our focus shifts from serving broad populations of 100,000+, to local communities of 20,000 - 50,000. **It's about putting people at the centre - organising around natural communities and driving real change where it matters most.**

The Gloucestershire Place Pyramid

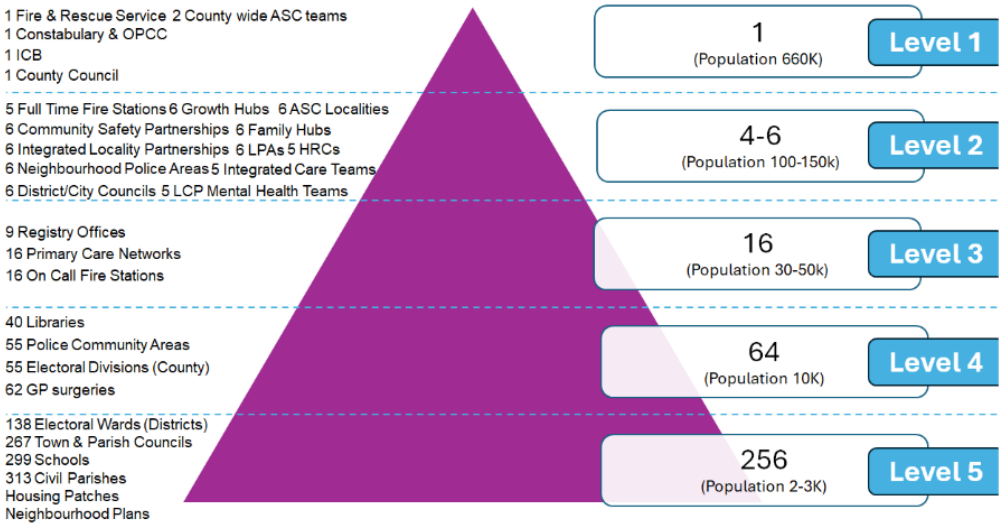


Diagram 1: Gloucestershire's current locality approaches

Across our seven councils and partners, we see a rich diversity of approaches – each driving positive change in its own way:

- **Stroud's community hub approach:** born during the pandemic, but now evolved into a dynamic partnership - bringing together local voluntary organisations, parishes, and housing providers to tackle social isolation and health and wellbeing
- **Integrated Locality Partnerships (ILPs):** led by the NHS, uniting health and other partners at a local level, currently based on district footprints
- The wealth of **community-centred regeneration and economic initiatives**, including the award-winning Gloucester Forum and the Golden Valley development in Cheltenham – proof that **local ambition delivers real results**
- **The Forest of Dean's innovative partnership** between the district council and Forest Voluntary Action Forum has developed a dynamic approach to youth services and more
- The recent successful launch of **Gloucestershire's** Family Hubs and associated Family Hub Networks. Organised in five locations across the county, with an emphasis on wider outreach. Partners include the

Gloucestershire Gateway Trust which has developed a neighbourhood and community led approach to supporting children and families

- The area-based **community development approach pioneered in Tewkesbury** and closely tied to the rapid housing and business growth in the area
- Cotswold District Council's active approach in its unique geography supports 115 parish and town councils, with the annual **'Cotswold Parish and Town Summit'** as a showcase for local leadership and collaboration.

We know that great practice already exists in Gloucestershire – but much of it needs to be scaled up and shared across boundaries.

Neighbourhood Partnerships: A new way of engaging and delivering

We're proposing a new system of Neighbourhood Partnerships[57]. Each partnership will have the freedom to set its own agenda and priorities, **rooted in what matters to local people.** Their scope is broad by design – giving every place the space to shape its own future. The five key roles each partnership will perform are set out below:

Core roles for Neighbourhood Partnerships	
Engagement and empowerment	Each neighbourhood will build on existing great work to get local residents and organisations involved. **Neighbourhoods will be the go-to forum for the council and other agencies to listen, consult, and make sure actions are relevant and responsive to local needs.**
Community development	Neighbourhoods will be backed by real resources to drive community development. Working with public health, and other expert capacities, community development will play a key role in **tackling inequalities and amplifying the voices of those too often unheard**. Neighbourhoods will work closely with the VCFSE sector to shape and provide this function.
Service access and delivery	Each neighbourhood will map local services, data, assets, and capacity. **All council services will work together with neighbourhoods**, with many having a visible, accountable presence at the local level. How different services are involved will naturally vary.
Funding and decision-making	Neighbourhood Partnerships will have a main committee made up of local councillors and non-voting members from local organisations. Neighbourhoods will get **funding and staff resources to deliver** on its priorities. Committees will set their own work programmes, decide how resources are used, and make decisions on local priorities. They'll be accountable to

[57] 'Neighbourhood Partnerships' would fulfil the role of 'Neighbourhood Area Committees' set out in the current Devolution Bill

Core roles for Neighbourhood Partnerships	
	local people, shape council work on the ground, and play a key role in the planning system.
Prevention and Wellbeing	**Neighbourhood structures aren't a *'nice to have'* – they're essential**. Connected communities achieve better outcomes, from early years and health to democracy and community safety. We'll put data and evidence at the centre of neighbourhood working, powered by our public health and performance capabilities. Neighbourhoods, whilst setting their own priorities, will have **a duty to focus on prevention in everything they do.**

Table 10: The core roles for Neighbourhood Partnerships

We've built these core roles by listening to the views and experience of councillors from all seven councils. At a recent all member webinar, councillors ranked the key roles for Neighbourhood Partnerships in order of importance – and the results are clear. Service accountability, residents voice, health and wellbeing, community development, and joined up working between the council, parishes, and partners all came out on top. This will continue to be tested with local people and organisations.



Diagram 2: Results from all member webinar ranking exercise

The size and shape of our Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhood size and boundaries won't be drawn in isolation – they'll be shaped by thorough consultation. Our research suggests each neighbourhood needs to be big enough for the council and partners to focus resources, but small enough to reflect a natural community. Most will be made up of a main town and its surrounding villages, or a recognisable neighbourhood within a major town or city. We're suggesting populations of 20,000 - 50,000, with options set out within the consultation process. The result will be between 15 and 25 Neighbourhood Partnerships for Gloucestershire.

We're proposing the current county electoral divisions as the main 'building blocks' of neighbourhoods. But boundaries aren't set in stone - this will form part of the consultation and some adjustments will be needed to better reflect natural communities. Neighbourhood committees will be composed of between four and ten local councillors (depending on size), in addition to co-optees.

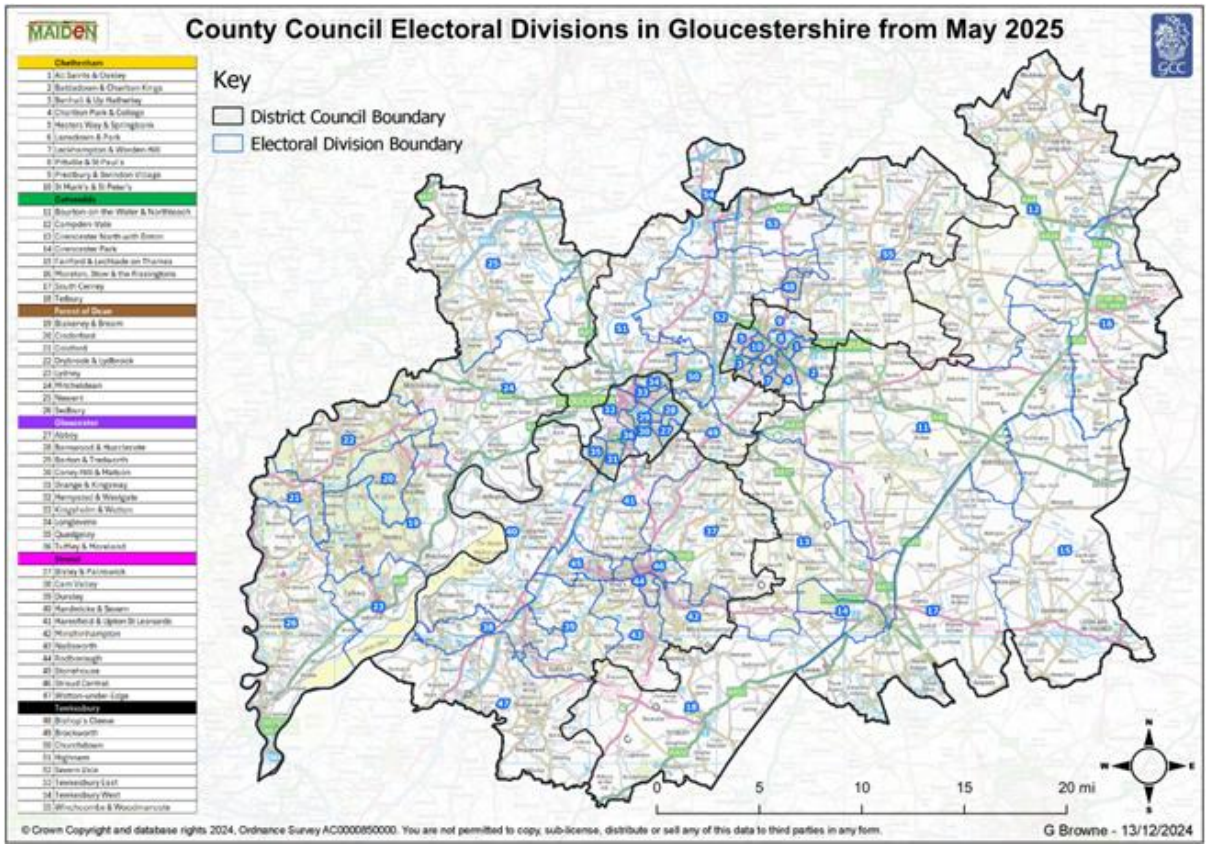


Diagram 3: the current county electoral divisions

Our adaptive and flexible approach

Not everything the council does will fit neatly into our structure of Neighbourhood Partnerships. We would expect the shadow authority to consider area-based Development Control committees on a larger scale than Neighbourhood Partnerships. But **Neighbourhood Partnerships will still play a vital planning role** - acting as consultees in a future *Statement of Community Involvement* and, where it makes sense and is wanted locally, in the development of *Neighbourhood Plans*.

Investing in Neighbourhoods

An expert team will be built around our Neighbourhood Partnerships:

- **Chair of the Neighbourhood Partnership**: An elected councillor, nominated by councillors in the neighbourhood
- **Neighbourhood Partnership manager**: Together with the chair, this role will form a crucial leadership partnership in making the neighbourhood work successfully
- **A council neighbourhoods team**: Officers assigned to each neighbourhood. A mix of practically focused managers, town and parish liaison officers, and community development specialists
- **Departmental council officers:** Located in family hubs, housing patches, planning, public health, or social care, these officers will have a strong relationship with neighbourhoods
- **VCFSE:** The VCFSE sector will play a crucial role in the grass roots work for each neighbourhood, some potentially working with the council in managing and facilitating a whole neighbourhood, or providing expertise in community development
- **Partner organisations:** Health, fire and rescue, police, schools, and registered housing providers will also play a vital part. Over time, we expect to see stronger alignment of partner boundaries with that of our Neighbourhood Partnerships
- **Performance team**: Data and evidence specialists will be assigned to neighbourhoods to help identify insights and needs, and track progress
- **Public Health:** Professional oversight and support, ensuring Neighbourhoods use data, policy, and evidence to maximum effect.
- **Director-level officer champions:** Each neighbourhood will be assigned a director-level officer champion to support leadership and delivery
- **Services**: Every external-facing council service will develop a neighbourhood offer, ensuring the approach runs through everything we do
- **Budgets:** We anticipate providing a budget for each neighbourhood to fund projects and activities. We also want neighbourhoods to have real influence on other funding streams, both from council departments such as highways and transport, and as part of central government bids.

Every neighbourhood will have its own context, needs, and ambitions. Whilst all will get a baseline support offer, the new council, with partners, will focus on addressing inequalities, some of which will be more prominent for particular neighbourhoods.

Enabling the VCFSE to achieve more

To strengthen our commitment to residents and Gloucestershire's 4,600 VCFSE organisations, **we'll create a Civil Society Covenant with the Gloucestershire VCSE Alliance**. This Covenant, backed by a clear action plan, will set out how local government and the VCFSE will work together for stronger communities. A governance body of councillors and VCFSE representatives could be formed during the Shadow period.

Making the role of local councillor more effective and accountable

Unitarisation means fewer councillors covering more service areas, bigger geographies, and more electors. **Neighbourhoods provide the crucial local member role with greater structure, capacity, and convening authority.** Neighbourhoods bring partners around the table, helping councillors address issues collectively and with expert support. This joined-up approach reduces duplication and supports meaningful two-way engagement between elected members, residents, and organisations.

Working with local councils (parishes and towns)

Gloucestershire's 267 parish and town councils are a vital part of our communities – and LGR will have a real impact on them. **Parish and town councils are an essential, vibrant part of our communities**, and we see their development as a vital ingredient in our unitary future. The lesson from elsewhere is that where trust and respect between principal councils and local councils break down, opportunities are missed and outcomes suffer.

We'll work with the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC) and the Gloucestershire Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) to **develop a new charter**. A draft will go to the shadow authority for adoption, setting out clear rights, responsibilities, and governance arrangements to maximise collaboration and two-way communications. **This charter will be the foundation for strong, effective partnership between principal authorities and local councils.**

Neighbourhood Partnership will be a linchpin for locality working - and town and parish councils have a valuable role to play in these structures.

As the county's major urban areas, we expect **special consideration by the new council will be given to parishing Gloucester and Cheltenham**. Each has major historical and future importance for Gloucestershire, and parishing will help protect their identity and drive momentum. Subject to consultation, we expect community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment to be strengthened by the good governance through parishes that cover most of each urban area. In Gloucester, this could mean a single large parish (city) arrangement, potentially excluding the existing parish of Quedgeley. In Cheltenham, options include a single town council or a federated parish model, combining existing parished and unparished areas. These new arrangements would hold some of the key cultural, civic, and public realm responsibilities, and play a major part in boosting the visitor economy.

Beyond Gloucester and Cheltenham, many parishes are eager to develop their offer. We'll work positively with these parishes to maximise value for local people and places, keeping value for money in mind**. There will be equal opportunities for larger areas (like Cheltenham and Gloucester) and smaller towns or parishes to take on services and assets.** The new council will keep a close eye on overall council tax levels, including parish precepts. Any new parishing, or extension of parish responsibilities, will be a matter for the new principal council to consider and subject to Community Governance Reviews.

We support recent Ministerial statements that have made clear the differences between parish and neighbourhood roles. Strong parish arrangements are vital, but they don't replace the need for a neighbourhood offer anywhere in Gloucestershire. We have valuable local capacity in our towns and parishes, and so we see their involvement in neighbourhoods as important. We celebrate the diversity in the parish offers across Gloucestershire as a reflection of what local people want and need in their communities.

Implementation

Seven activities will shape our work over the pre-shadow period, and are built into our implementation roadmap:

1. **Formal consultation on Neighbourhood Partnerships:**

We'll deliver a **formal consultation on Neighbourhood Partnerships** in the shadow authority period, enabling implementation in Year 1 of the new unitary council. We'll test our thinking through early engagement in the pre-shadow period. Our engagement and consultation will include:

- Neighbourhood Partnership geographies and boundaries
- Core roles and responsibilities
- Local priorities, services, and needs
- Alignment with partner organisations on approaches and geographies
- How Neighbourhood Partnerships may evolve over time
- The support, capacity, and resources needed to make them work (bearing in mind financial constraints).

2. **Civil Society Covenant:**

During the pre-shadow period, we'll co-design a Civil Society Covenant with the VCSE Alliance and partners, with a draft covenant ready for the shadow authority to consider and consult on in readiness for Year 1 of the new council.

3. **Local Councils Charter**

Working with GAPTC and SLCC, we'll develop a draft charter and action plan for the shadow authority to consult on. It is anticipated the charter will be governed by a body of councillors and local council representatives. The seven principal councils will also work together in the pre-shadow period to ensure clear, consistent communications and policies are in place for working with local councils.

4. **Parishing Cheltenham and Gloucester:**

In partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucester City Council, and the parish associations, we'll develop a model for how parishing can support the continued **identity, good governance, and regeneration / growth in our major urban areas**. Decisions on the precise form of proposals and consultation process will rest with the new council.

5. **Service planning:**

We'll consult with all county and district services in the pre-shadow period to shape how they'll work with neighbourhoods - feeding into service planning for the new council and establishing a clear **'services and assets offer'** for each area.

6. **Policy development:**

A range of **policy development work** will ensure:

- Neighbourhood approaches are supported by good evidence
- Frameworks and models are established for different types of activity (such as community development, project funding, and neighbourhood action plans)
- Robust neighbourhood governance
- Neighbourhood level data and data insight tools are developed

7. **Partner integration:**

We'll work together with all our statutory partners to integrate our proposals with their frameworks and priorities. **Our neighbourhood structure will provide a powerful channel for partners to engage with communities**. We share the excitement and interest in how the NHS 10 Year Plan will translate into action in Gloucestershire, particularly regarding proposals for a 'Neighbourhood Health Service' and its emphasis on prevention. We will continue to work closely with our health partners and others to ensure the local geographies and approaches we use are aligned in the best interests of Gloucestershire's residents.

The Financial Case for a Single Unitary for Gloucestershire

The financial cases for both the 1UA and the 2UA options have been developed together, using the same financial model, assumptions, calculations, and governance.

Leaders, Chief Executives, and Section 151 officers from across all Gloucestershire councils have worked together to develop, scrutinise, and sign off all key inputs, assumptions, and outputs. This joint approach means both financial cases are robust, transparent, and carry a high level of local assurance.

The financial case for the **1UA proposal** is set out in four stages:

1. **Financial case summary**
2. **Day one financial position[58]:** This is the starting baseline in terms of potential income and expenditure that the new council would inherit
3. **Reorganisation costs and benefits:** The financial impact of the structural changes that are likely as a result of LGR, including:
    a. One-off transition costs e.g. for data and systems migration or implementation management
    b. Recurring reorganisation savings e.g. in relation to service consolidation
4. **Transformation benefits:** Savings as a result of fundamental changes to ways of working e.g. digitisation, automation, changes to ways of working, investment in prevention, or procurement.

Our financial case assumes that Gloucestershire County Council is designated within the LGR Structural Changes Order as a continuing authority. This approach will allow unnecessary costs and effort to be avoided, but is intended to have no impact on the change opportunity all current councils agree will be a major factor in delivering the 1UA proposal in the best interests of the people of Gloucestershire.

Overall financial case summary

The table below sets out the key headlines for the 1UA proposal.

Potential day one financial position (c. 1st April 2028)	
Total income	£851.4m
Total expenditure	£851.4m
Net position	£0.0m

[58] The analysis takes account of the likely impact of the outcome of the Government's *Fair Funding Review 2.0 consultation*. Local assumptions, supported by the latest *Pixel* model available (*Pixel LGR Disaggregation Model August 2025 v1.2*), have been made in relation to Fair Funding. The projected financial positions will therefore need to be updated once national funding allocations are confirmed in the forthcoming Local Government Finance Settlement.

Reorganisation Costs and Benefits	
Gross annual reorganisation savings	£21.1m
Ongoing annual disaggregation costs	£0.0m
Net annual savings	£21.1m
One-off transition costs	-£21.3m
Payback period	2.0 years
Cumulative net saving after 5 years	£58.7m
Cumulative net saving after 10 years	£164.0m
Transformation benefits	
Recurring annual transformation savings fully delivered by year 5 – **Base**	£16.0m
Recurring annual transformation savings fully delivered by year 5 – **Stretch**	£26.2m

Table 11: Headlines from 1UA financial case

Note: Values preceded by a '–' symbol indicate a deficit.

Potential day one financial position (the starting baseline)

One day one, the 1UA authority would inherit a balanced budget, with both income and expenditure set at £851.4m. This position has been prepared on the basis that the seven councils will take any action required to achieve a balanced budget over the period leading to the anticipated Vesting Day of 1 April 2028.

Potential day one financial position (c. 1st April 2028)	
Total income	£851.4m
Total expenditure	£851.4m
Net position	**£0.0m**

Table 12: 1UA day one financial position

Total income: This figure aggregates council tax, retained business rates, and government grants, providing a simplified revenue base for service delivery. The Fair Funding Review is expected to reduce the overall level of resources for Gloucestershire and therefore, total income projections from 2025 MTFS have been adjusted downwards at the time of writing. However, these numbers are likely to change further following the 2026/27 Local Government Finance Settlement in December 2025.

Total expenditure: This figure consolidates the full range of service responsibilities currently delivered across both county and district councils, including the county council's projection of £486m spend by 2028/29 on both adult and children's services.

Note: The source data for income and expenditure is based on each council's individual MTFS and each council has applied their own local assumptions on how to achieve balanced budgets over the four-year period to 2028/2029 e.g. in relation to how reserves are deployed.

In addition to the total income and expenditure position, it is also important to consider what the new council will likely inherit on its balance sheet in terms of assets and long-term liabilities:

- **Assets:** 1UA would inherit long term assets with a total value of £4.4 billion on Vesting Day. This figure reflects the combined current long-term assets with planned capital expenditure to 2028/29. The portfolio comprises assets such as property, investments, and heritage assets, in addition to Housing Revenue Account assets.
- **Long-term Liabilities:** 1UA 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.

The DSG deficit is a material factor in the financial outlook for Gloucestershire. The most recent MTFS projects that the DSG deficit will rise from £76 million at the end of March 2025 to more than £100 million by March 2026. By 2028/29, the cumulative deficit is forecast to exceed £200 million.

At present, the statutory override allows councils to hold DSG deficits "off balance sheet". However, this override is due to end in March 2028. If no new national policy is introduced, councils across the country would be required to absorb these deficits within their core budgets, creating a significant risk to financial stability.

For Gloucestershire, this means the DSG position must be kept under close review, with the statutory override and national reforms determining the future treatment of the deficit and ongoing cost of service provision.

Reorganisation costs and benefits

Moving to a unitary model creates a clear set of costs and benefits. These arise directly from consolidating seven councils into a single authority. The financial analysis brings these costs and benefits together to show the savings that can be achieved, the costs of implementation, and the overall net impact.

Estimated savings, disaggregation costs and transition costs of LGR in Gloucestershire

	Annual gross saving	Additional Annual Costs	Net annual saving	One off transition costs	Payback Period	Cumulative net saving after 5 years	Cumulative net saving after 10 years
1UA	£21.1m	£0.0m	£21.1m	-£21.3m	2.0 years	£58.7m	£164.0m

Table 13: Summary of 1UA estimated reorganisation costs and benefits

The 1UA proposal is projected to deliver annual gross savings of £21.1 million with one-off transition costs of £21.3 million. This results in a payback period of just two years (noting that the annual reorganisation savings are phased and not all fully delivered in year 1).

Savings drivers

Key drivers for savings are as follows:

- **Democratic streamlining –** Through reducing the number of councillors (from 295 to 110) and frequency of elections, savings of c.£0.9m per annum can be achieved e.g. from reduced member allowances and election costs.

- **Workforce rationalisation -** Consolidating senior leadership teams and streamlining back office functions such as finance, HR, ICT, and customer contact result in workforce savings (as these are likely to be positions and teams which are duplicated across all seven councils).

- **Third party procurement and contract consolidation –** Opportunities to aggregate procurement, renegotiate contract terms, and standardise specifications will reduce cost and complexity. In financial terms, a single authority could be expected to deliver annual third party savings equivalent to approximately 1.5% of its addressable third party spend.

- **Property rationalisation -** Currently both county and district councils operate buildings that serve overlapping functions in the same localities. A single UA allows for rationalisation of this estate, with duplicated sites removed and more efficient use made of shared service centres. In financial terms, a single authority could be expected to deliver annual property savings equivalent to approximately 12%.

One off transition costs

Establishing a new authority requires significant upfront investment covering the full programme of standing up new governance and operational structures; ICT integration and migration; development of a new legal and constitutional framework; public consultation; branding; communications; and programme management. For a single UA, this is estimated to cost c.£21.3m.

These costs are based on assuming that the Reorganisation Order would name Gloucestershire County Council as a Continuing Authority.

Type of transition cost	**Estimated cost (£)**
Redundancy	4,033,000
External comms, branding and implementation	366,000
External transition, design and implementation support	4,700,000
Internal programme management	2,200,000
Creating the new council	700,000
Contingency	5,500,000
Organisation closedown	400,000
Public consultation	274,500
ICT costs	2,800,000
Shadow costs	311,100
Total	**21,285,000**

Table 14: Estimated transition costs for 1UA

Transformation benefits

Reorganisation can deliver structural savings, but the greater opportunity lies in the subsequent transformation that can take place. This means using the scale of a new authority or authorities to modernise services, redesign ways of working, and create efficiencies beyond what structural change alone can achieve.

Financial analysis has identified five main categories where transformation savings are realistic and quantifiable. For each category, we have tested two scenarios for transformation:

- **Base case:** Assumes cautious delivery of savings in line with past performance across Gloucestershire's councils. The base case is

deliberately conservative and ensures that assumptions remain credible and deliverable without requiring major change programmes.

- **Stretch case:** assumes sustained investment in digital and organisational redesign, drawing on best practice from other unitaries. Including a stretch case is important as it demonstrates the potential prize available if early reorganisation savings are reinvested into transformation.

Category	Base %	Stretch %	Rationale
Front office staff	6%	12%	Workforce rationalisation through the structural impact of LGR accounts for savings that can be made through removing duplication. However, potential opportunities through utilising the potential of AI, automation, and channel shift will reduce the demand on customer contact centres.
Service delivery staff	3%	6%	Transformation can strengthen demand management, early intervention, and integrated pathways particularly in services like adults and children's services. Service redesign and new operating models will also unlock additional opportunities e.g. through digital, process redesign etc.
Back office staff	7%	9%	Consolidating support functions such as HR, finance, payroll, and ICT enables investment in shared systems and automation. This creates opportunities for streamlined processes and reduces overheads.
Third party spend	2.5%	3.75%	Unified procurement and contract management can deliver efficiencies by aggregating contracts, renegotiating supplier terms, and redesigning commissioning arrangements. However, savings targets are cautious overall recognising Gloucestershire councils already include procurement savings in their MTFSs, leaving limited headroom.
Income (sales, fees and charges / commercial)	1.3%	2.1%	Transformation also includes growth in fees and charges, commercial activity, and investment in economic development. This builds on the county's strengths in advanced manufacturing, cyber, and green technology, and on planned growth initiatives such as the Golden Valley and Severn Edge projects. Overall targets are conservative given volatility and underperformance in past income forecasts.

Table 15: Estimated transformation savings for 1UA

Transformation savings are not expected to be immediate. They are profiled to phase in gradually as programmes are implemented. The model assumes full delivery by **Year 5,** with the savings per annum expected by this point set out in the table below.

Transformation savings	Base case	Stretch case
Savings per annum by Year 5	£16.0m	£26.2m

Table 16: Total transformation savings in £ terms for a 1UA

Options for funding LGR and enabling transformation

Delivering the 1UA option requires significant upfront investment with estimated transition costs of reorganisation of £21.3m.

There are several options for funding these costs:

- **Reserves -** Councils hold reserves that are not earmarked that can be applied to one-off expenditure. These provide an immediate source of funding without adding to ongoing revenue pressures.
- **Capitalisation Direction -** Subject to government approval, some costs could be treated as capital rather than revenue. This option, known as capitalisation, has been used in previous reorganisations to reduce pressure on the revenue budget. It applies to costs such as redundancy and ICT integration.
- **Government Support -** Additional funding may also be provided by central government. This could be in the form of transitional grant support, flexibility in financial rules, or early devolution funding. Engagement with the government will be required as proposals are developed.
- **Reinvestment Principle -** Early reorganisation savings can be ring-fenced and reinvested in transformation. This ensures that efficiencies are not absorbed by service pressures but are used to fund programmes in digital, automation, and service redesign. By doing this, initial savings are recycled to create larger recurring benefits in later years.
- **Benefits Compounding -** Investment in transformation compounds over time. For example, reinvesting a portion of early savings into digital customer platforms reduces front office demand, delivering recurring efficiencies by year five. Similar reinvestment in automation and AI can reduce back office and service delivery costs.

Council Tax Alignment (CTA)

Council tax is a major source of income for any new authority. When seven councils with different council tax rates are merged into a new authority, these rates must be aligned. The way this is done affects both residents and the financial

resilience of the new council. It is also a fiscal lever that can be used to balance out net operating deficits or provide funding to invest in service improvements or resident priorities.

Approach to Council Tax Alignment

To inform decision making, detailed modelling has been undertaken to show how different alignment options would affect what residents are required to pay in the future. The modelling uses the 2024 council tax base as the starting point, net of local council tax support, and applies the councils' own projections to forecast growth in the tax base inclusive of the collection rate. Future Band D rates are assumed to increase annually by 4.99% for county and unitary councils and 2.99% for district councils up to Vesting Day in April 2028, consistent with current MHCLG guidance. From Vesting Day onwards, a new unitary authority rate is assumed to increase at 4.99% per year.

The methodology compares projected receipts under alignment with a baseline of what each council would have collected if they continued independently. The difference between these two scenarios represents the additional income gained or foregone through alignment.

Alignment Options

The analysis models a main scenario using the weighted average where rates align to an average Band D calculated across the county, weighted by the tax base. This is the option chosen in most recent local government reorganisations.

Each option can be implemented in one year or phased over several years, with the statutory maximum alignment period set at seven years. The period over which council tax is aligned is an important decision. A longer alignment period of up to seven years minimises the immediate impacts on residents by phasing changes gradually. However, aligning earlier allows the new authority to secure additional income more quickly, providing funding for services. Earlier alignment also avoids the perception of unfairness, where residents in some areas continue to pay higher rates for longer while receiving the same services.

Summary of potential impact

Council Tax Alignment alters Band D charges across districts because current rates differ. The scale of change depends on which alignment option is chosen and whether this is implemented in one year or phased over several years.

Under the **weighted average** option for a 1UA in one year, Band D households in Cheltenham, Gloucester, the Forest of Dean, and Stroud would see reductions in their bills, ranging from £5 to £41 per year. In contrast, Band D households in Cotswold and Tewkesbury would see increases of £57 and £62 respectively.

Current District	Aligned Band D rate (£)	Change in Band D rate (£)	% change in Band D Rate
Cheltenham	2,170.38	-37.01	-1.68%
Cotswold	2,170.38	57.20	2.71%
Tewkesbury	2,170.38	62.17	2.95%
Gloucester	2,170.38	-32.05	-1.46%
Forest of Dean	2,170.38	-5.01	-0.23%
Stroud	2,170.38	-41.40	-1.87%

Table 17: Weighted average council tax alignment in one year in a 1UA

Note: A '–' sign in front of the number and green text indicates a reduction for residents in their bills.

Engagement to Discover and Improve

Our engagement approach has been shaped by the guidance within the invitation to submit proposals: it's been rooted in genuine discovery and learning, not campaigning for any particular outcome. This focus on open engagement has been enabled by:

- **Unified, option-neutral engagement:** We agreed that both the single unitary and East / West two unitary options would be developed side-by-side, without using the collective engagement activity to campaign or advocate for preferences
- **Strong political leadership:** Gloucestershire's Leaders set the tone – driving a shared engagement plan across councils
- **Clear accountability:** A lead Chief Executive was appointed to oversee all communications and engagement activity
- **Joint working:** Every council played an active role through a joint communications and engagement workstream
- **Prioritised investment:** We prioritised MHCLG LGR funding to support joint engagement activities.

These early actions, underpinned by a clear sense of purpose, enabled us to deliver a wide range of non-partisan engagement activities – each designed to listen, learn, and feed real insights back into the development of our proposals.

Our key engagement activity

Our joint engagement activity from March 2025 – September 2025 is summarised in the table below:

Engagement type	Key activities
Public	• Option-neutral Future Gloucestershire microsite[59] presenting clear, factual information • Online survey, designed to discover values, concerns and ambitions of local people (3,112 completed surveys, including 1,480 open-text responses) • In-person community events, enabling over 500 one-to-one conversations (12 events in total, two in each district) • Two county-wide public webinars • Information leaflets and display banners (used principally at council offices and community events) • Regular social media information updates and paid advertising for wider promotion of the survey.

[59] https://futuregloucestershire.org.uk

Engagement type	Key activities
Stakeholders	• Over 40 stakeholder interviews (almost all with multiple attendees) encompassing statutory partners, VCFSE organisations, and key businesses and business associations. Interviews focused on issues of importance and concern in relation to LGR and Devolution • A leadership conference was held to develop common ambitions, involving key partners in statutory services, business, and civil society in Gloucestershire.
Place	• Engagement webinar for VCFSE (hosted by Gloucestershire VCS Alliance) with over 100 attendees • Engagement webinar for Town and Parish Councils hosted by GAPTC with over 100 attendees • Representation on Place Model workstream from NHS (ICB and providers), GAPTC, OPCC, SLCC, and VCS Alliance.
Staff	• Regular LGR staff communications and briefings • Senior officers from principal councils represented on all LGR workstreams, with different Chief Executives acting to lead and chair • Specialist service officers engaged in structured, cross-council aggregation and disaggregation workshops.
Council members	• Interactive all-member webinars • FAQs and other written briefings • Bespoke briefing and democratic processes delivered by individual councils.
MPs[60]	• Gloucestershire County Council Leader and Chief Executive monthly engagement with Gloucestershire MPs • Other district ad hoc engagement with local MPs
Other	• In addition to Place (above), workstreams conducted bespoke engagement as relevant. For example, the Vision and Ambition workstream conducted a range of briefings with senior district leaders to develop an understanding of place-based perspectives.

[60] At their meeting on 9 October 2025, Principal Authority Leaders agreed that Gloucestershire councils would jointly engage with local MPs to objectively gather their views on the published proposals, informing both councils and Ministers.

Additional reports

The online survey and in-person community events were co-designed and facilitated by an external specialist engagement organisation, *Cratus*. Their independent report can be found in Appendix 3.

The county council-led stakeholder interview exercise was conducted using consistent open questions. A short report detailing the key themes, together with information about the stakeholders engaged, can be found in Appendix 4. Following these interviews, some stakeholders chose to write to the county council offering views. Where appropriate, this correspondence is also appended.

Our learning and insights

Our learning themes synthesise the responses from a variety of methods and types used. As far as possible, we have avoided significant focus in this proposal on feedback on the relative merits of structural options, since the primary aim of engagement was to discover common concerns and ambitions of local people and organisations. However, some of this data, from the public survey and stakeholder interviews is shown for transparency. It should not be read as representative data on the preferences of the public and partners.

Three big themes have emerged:

1. Belonging in Gloucestershire
2. Service improvement
3. Vulnerable people and communities

Theme 1: Belonging in Gloucestershire

Our engagement revealed something powerful: people in Gloucestershire feel a strong sense of belonging - whether that's to a village, an estate, a district, or the county as a whole. Local identity runs deep, and it's clear that "home" means different things to different people.

This insight is crucial. It shows that the new council must enable participation and engagement at every level - recognising and supporting the many overlapping communities that make Gloucestershire unique.

Key actions to shape our proposals: Belonging in Gloucestershire (Theme 1)	
Place Model	Proposals for our locality arrangements have avoided prematurely drawing 'lines on maps'. We will deliver a carefully designed engagement and consultation process to develop the spatial scale, competency, and differentiation (by Place) of our Neighbourhood Partnerships. This commitment is reflected in our implementation roadmap.

Future Operating Model (FOM)	The differentiation of Gloucestershire's places is recognised in both the design principles and key features of the Future Operating Model. We have reflected place and identity strongly in engagement, commissioning, and service delivery features.

Theme 2: Service Improvement and Efficiency

Our survey captured a wealth of feedback on council services. Most areas scored well, with the majority of residents rating services as 'good' or 'very good'. However, roads, pavements, and streetlights stood out as clear concerns - mirroring national trends, where dissatisfaction with highways is common.

When asked what should shape future council services, 'community' - meaning representation, voice, and engagement - was the top priority. 'Transport' (including public transport, road maintenance, and connectivity) also featured strongly.

Stakeholder interviews reinforced this theme, highlighting the need for simpler, more efficient services and better integration with partners.

The message is clear: while there are specific areas to address, any improvement must be rooted in local context and connectivity - making sure services work for people and places across Gloucestershire.

Key actions to shape our proposals: Service Improvement and Efficiency (Theme 2)	
Vision and Ambition	Our vision and ambition includes a specific focus on the use of data to transform transport and wider public services. The feedback we have received on public transport in particular has assisted with shaping this ambition. Our vision and ambition also reflects the excitement and energy in the Gloucestershire business community to drive growth. We pay particular attention to the economic opportunities in Gloucestershire, and the desire to use LGR to accelerate our trajectory of breakthrough innovation in economic clusters, such as cyber, clean energy, and agri-tech.
Future Operating Model (FOM)	Our strategic enablement feature within the FOM is specifically designed to create capacity and capability to drive improvement and transformation.
Place and FOM	Our neighbourhood model is linked to service delivery within the FOM, with a proposed specification to tailor on a locality basis, addressing some of the feedback about different satisfaction and experience in different parts of Gloucestershire.
Financial Case	Our financial case shows our desire not simply to reorganise, but to transform. We will reinvest structural and transformation savings into services that people want to see improve. The council will feel local and responsive but be powered by scale and efficiency for the benefit of everyone.

Theme 3: Vulnerable people and communities

A key theme from our engagement with partners was the opportunity for the new council to do more for Gloucestershire's most vulnerable people and communities.

- **Community development and local engagement must be front and centre.**
- **There's real appetite for public sector reform.** From the emerging Neighbourhood Health Service to new powers for neighbourhood working, they see LGR as a chance to join up regeneration, health, and community development - especially where VCFSE organisations are already leading the way.
- **Tackling deep-rooted inequalities is essential.** We know there are sharp divides between urban and rural areas, and that data and lived experience is important to drive local action and smarter service design.

Respondents have made it clear that LGR offers a huge opportunity to address these challenges and opportunities.

Key actions to shape our proposals: Vulnerable people and communities (Theme 3)	
Vision and Ambition	Our vision makes it clear that we want to use LGR to spark a transformation in community empowerment. We can be closer to communities and people than before, e.g. utilising better and more widely the 'hub' approach to delivering preventive, community-led activity, as well as more tailored services for vulnerable people, families, and communities. We are also clear in our vision that we will more consciously link with partners on wellbeing, housing, climate action, and nature recovery – feedback is showing these are connected issues for local people.
Data, Digital and Technology (DDaT)	Our proposals are clear there are major opportunities to use DDaT to drive better environments, interventions, and services for vulnerable people. We have set out a bold ambition to develop a joined-up predictive analytics platform across adult and children's services, education, housing, and health.
Place	Our place research has revealed a wealth of current good practice in evidenced-based community development. We have hard-wired into our neighbourhood proposals a focus on community development, supported by data insight, the skills of our public health team, and dedicated staff and other resources.

Feedback on structural options

Both the survey and the partnership interviews provided feedback on structural options. This feedback is not based on a statistically reliable sample and it was not the purpose of either exercise. We expect the forthcoming Ministerial consultation to provide clearer data and information on local preferences for structural options. This exercise will be conducted once local people and organisations have had the benefit of considering proposals. The survey feedback is as follows:

A total of 225 respondents (7%) gave active preferences in open text responses concerning which unitary council option they would prefer from the three proposed at the time of survey. Of these, 205 preferred a single unitary council governing the whole county, 14 preferred the East/West option, and three preferred the Greater Gloucester option. Three people said they preferred two councils without specifying which option.

Implementation Roadmap

We've developed an implementation plan that sets out how Gloucestershire will move from submission of this proposal to Vesting Day and beyond. It's how we'll guarantee residents continue to access the support they need, safeguard statutory services, and lay the robust foundations for ambitious, ongoing transformation.

Whilst we continue to sharpen the details and map out specific activities, this section sets out our initial considerations and phases of activity. The key programmes set out in this section are likely to evolve over time as the national and local context and priorities change.

Our roadmap assumes that Gloucestershire County Council is designated within the LGR Structural Changes Order as a continuing authority. This approach will allow unnecessary costs and effort to be avoided, but is intended to have no impact on the change opportunity all current councils agree will be a major factor in delivering the 1UA proposal in the best interests of the people of Gloucestershire.

Framing our approach

Experience from previous LGR programmes highlights several factors that are critical to success for Gloucestershire:

- **Clarity of purpose:** a shared understanding amongst all organisations involved helps maintain momentum and alignment during planning and delivery, which will need to be undertaken collaboratively across all councils involved.
- **Early planning and mobilisation:** Early proactive planning (beginning before any MHCLG decision) is critical to manage delivery and improve implementation outcomes.
- **Robust portfolio and programme management:** LGR is complex and high stakes. We'll need a strong portfolio approach, with defined programmes, clear responsibilities, and the right resources in place to govern and manage delivery at pace.
- **Early appointment of senior leadership:** Recruiting into key posts such as the Chief Executive, S151 Officer, and Monitoring Officer early to provide leadership and stability.
- **Engagement and transparency:** Early, ongoing, and open communications is essential. Keeping staff, members, residents, and suppliers updated builds trust, enables proactive management of key risks, and provides confidence and reassurance to stakeholders.

Working together

All councils in Gloucestershire have agreed how they will work together in the run-up to MHCLG's decision and during the shadow period, ensuring that staff, members, partners, and residents remain confident in the process. Our shared principles are as follows:

Continue to involve all our staff proactively: we'll continue to keep staff from all councils actively involved in co-designing our journey to Vesting Day – drawing on their collective expertise to lead, design, and manage key LGR programmes.

Remain aligned around our shared future vision: we will stay focused on our shared vision for the new council and make the most of our collective strengths.

Open and honest communication and collaboration: We will continue to be transparent about activities, challenges, and decisions - with no hidden agendas - and commit to working in partnership across all seven councils.

Aligned decision-making and transitional support: As Vesting Day approaches, we'll agree practically how significant financial and other decisions are made across each council, and how we'll support each other – so that every council delivers on its existing plans and commitments. The transition programme will include a draft shadow constitution, a combined MTFS, a risk register, and a costed investment strategy to guide transition.

Invest in core skills: We'll need the right people in the right roles. That means bringing together not just technical specialists, but also standout leaders in programme management, procurement, change, and digital transformation. We'll harness strengths already in our councils – and invest in new talent and capacity wherever its needed – to make sure Gloucestershire's transition is expertly led from day one.

Roadmap to Vesting Day

The roadmap to Vesting Day is structured across five clear phases aligned with indicative timelines, based on MHCLG guidance.

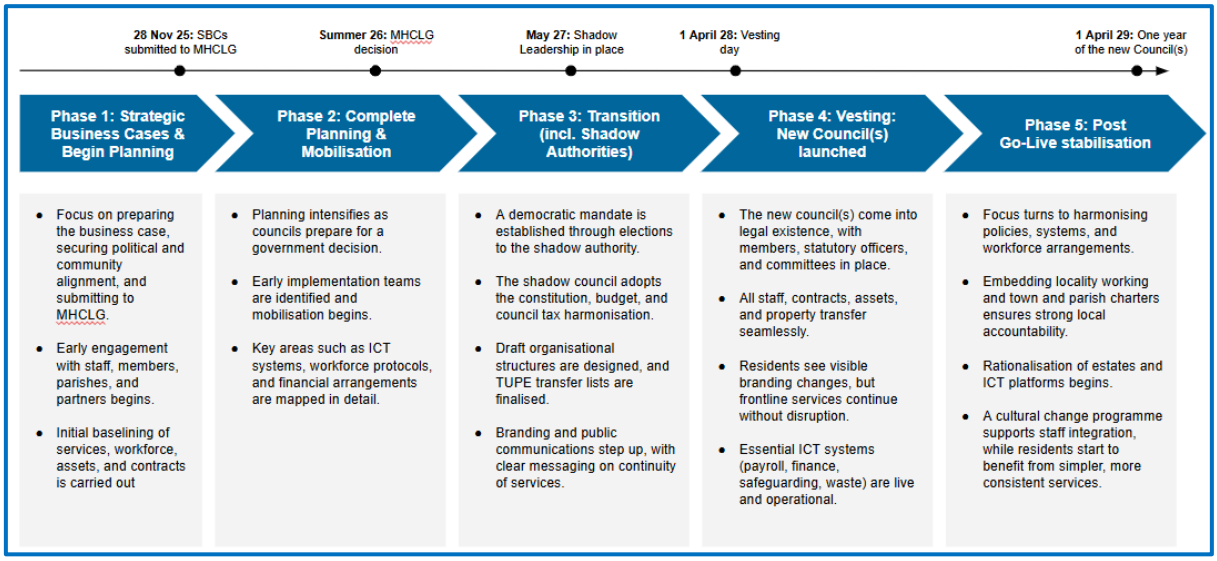


Diagram 4: roadmap to Vesting Day

High-Level Activities by Phase

Phase 1 – Strategic business cases (SBCs) and begin planning (to Nov 2025)

In this phase of work, councils focus on preparing and submitting the SBCs and starting to undertake preparatory baselining of key infrastructure across all seven councils (including workforce, assets, finances, policies, contracts etc). Continued engagement with staff, members, towns and parish councils, and partners ensures early buy in and alignment, which is critical for the coming months.

Some of the core activities in this phase will include:

- All seven councils in Gloucestershire will finalise and submit a SBC to MHCLG by 28 November 2025 (setting out all options for LGR that are under consideration)
- Each council will start to gather baseline data on current services, strategic risks, establishment data, assets, contracts, and vacancies to work towards a consistent baseline across all seven councils
- The joint LGR portfolio and programme management capability will be designed, setting out key roles, role profiles, and capabilities required including an overall LGR Portfolio Director
- A more detailed transition and implementation plan will be developed in line with the five key phases of activity
- Staff will start to be invited to join core LGR programmes (e.g. secondments etc) to support detailed planning and delivery work
- Councils will engage with town and parish councils to co-design a town and parish charter and initial governance approach.

Phase 2 – Complete planning and mobilisation (Nov 2025 – Summer 2026)

Detailed planning will continue to take place while awaiting MHCLG's decision, particularly preparatory work which would be required irrespective of which option is chosen. The full LGR portfolio, including core programmes, will be mobilised, with staff in place to lead and deliver activities. This phase is crucial to ensuring alignment and clarity on how transition will be managed so that activities can progress at pace immediately after a decision is made.

Some of the core activities in this phase will include:

- Portfolio management capability in place and actively running
- All core LGR programmes stood up with staff in place (either from existing councils or through external support being brought in where required)
- Detailed planning will be completed in readiness for MHCLG's decision, including timelines for key decisions such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) selection and resident contact channels on Vesting Day
- All seven councils will focus on cleaning data to get it into a consistent and complete format across areas such as staff (aligning with finances), contracts, systems, assets, strategic risks, existing policy frameworks etc. This will enable the development of a consistent Gloucestershire wide baseline of core infrastructure, service delivery, and risks, which will need to be managed by the new council
- Implementation of Section 24 controls, as needed, to make sure significant financial decisions and contractual commitments made by the current councils do not adversely impact the new council
- Development of options and policies for managing the HR implications of staffing changes, covering vacancy management, joint approaches to recruitment, redeployment approaches, senior staff implications, pay and grading harmonisation, and benefits harmonisation
- Discussions with trade unions on managing the HR approaches to ensure early and proactive involvement and challenge
- Development of a detailed communication and engagement plan (internal and external)
- Continued staff and partner engagement through communications and co-design opportunities to consider service aggregation and delivery model opportunities
- Starting to create a shadow authority decision log, including areas such as the new council's budget, council tax, and policy requirements

- Early engagement with suppliers to consider any potential implications of contract novation and other key supplier issues
- Draft design of neighbourhood governance, form, and function.

Phase 3 – Transition (Summer 2026 – March 2028)

Councillors will be elected to a shadow authority who will lead the transition - making important decisions on how the new council will be governed and funded, and how council tax will be set. Behind the scenes, preparations will focus on getting staff, IT systems, buildings, contracts, and locality arrangements ready for Vesting Day. Communications and branding will help residents understand the changes and feel confident about what's coming.

Some of the core activities in this phase will include:

- Elections will be held (likely in May 2027) for a shadow authority which will, in turn, appoint key officers, approve the new constitution, set the budget, and decide how council tax will be aligned across areas
- Final TUPE staff transfer lists will be confirmed, and draft organisational structures will be developed and shared. Staff will begin to be recruited, trained, and sent letters confirming their roles, pay, and work locations
- The shadow authority will also agree on the new council's values, branding, and communications plan
- Detailed service transition planning and service operating models will take shape, with aggregation and disaggregation implications
- Pay dates and staff benefits will be standardised in agreement with trade unions to ensure consistency before Vesting Day (critical for equal pay considerations)
- Senior leadership positions will be appointed, including Chief Executive, S151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, and other key statutory roles such as Director of Adults Social Care (DASS)
- Asset and property registers will be updated, and health, safety, and compliance responsibilities clearly assigned
- Policies for transferring community assets and services will be developed (working alongside town and parish councils and the VCFSE)
- Engagement with suppliers will agree and formalise any contractual changes including termination, novation, and extensions
- Detailed design will progress for the key contact channels that residents will use on day one

- Neighbourhood Partnerships will be designed, costed, and implementation underway
- A Town and Parish Councils Charter and a Civil Society Covenant will be finalised, neighbourhood forums designed, and public-facing branding and communications stepped up, including the development of a new website for the new council
- The council's future operating model will be agreed, supported by a corporate plan that aligns services with strategic goals
- Financial support schemes like council tax and business rate relief will be aligned to ensure equity for residents
- Payroll arrangements for staff will be established
- The shadow authority will review and sign off the MTFS, investment plan, financial chart of accounts, and savings plans.

Phase 4 – Vesting: new council launched (1 April 2028)

All current councils legally cease to exist on 31st March 2028 (subject to decisions on continuing authority status for the county council). Staff, contracts, assets, and systems transfer to the new council. Essential services continue without disruption for residents. Residents will see new branding but experience continuity in delivery of services.

Some of the core activities in this phase will include:

- The existing councils will formally cease, with all staff, functions, assets, property, and contracts legally transferred to the new authority
- TUPE transfers will be completed, payroll will run without disruption, senior staff savings will be realised, and members will take up their roles under the new constitution with committee structures operational from day one
- All critical ICT systems - ERP, payroll, planning, ASC, CSC, safeguarding, waste, and the new electoral system will be live and stable (it is not anticipated that all systems will be aggregated / disaggregated on day one)
- Neighbourhood Partnerships will be live
- Staff will receive a new email address, but the majority will still be working on the same ICT hardware (laptops, phones etc) and from the same office locations on day one
- New phone numbers and email addresses for residents to contact the new council will be live, with redirects in place on legacy contact channels

- New branding will be rolled out on tax bills, vehicles, uniforms, and signage to signal visible change and reassure residents the new council is up and running
- Opening balance sheets will be agreed and predecessor accounts closed and audited
- Senior staff changes, including role realignment, redundancies, and benefits will be realised
- A high-profile public launch campaign will be delivered on day one and the immediate period thereafter to make sure there is appropriate awareness amongst residents, partners, and businesses.

Phase 5 – Post go-live stabilisation (April 2028 onwards)

In this phase of the programme, the focus shifts to aligning policies, systems, and workforce arrangements, embedding new ways of working, and delivering against the transformation opportunities identified to enable long-term design and delivery of the identified benefits.

Some of the core activities in this phase will include:

- Fees and charges will be harmonised through a single register
- Ongoing change management programme to embed new organisational values and behaviours, supported by engagement and communications with staff, partners, and residents
- Development and implementation of more detailed organisational structures (likely in a phased manner, aligned with service transition plans)
- ICT systems will be consolidated and rationalised over time, with cyber security and data governance strengthened
- Procurement policies will be harmonised and guided by a new supplier strategy, while estate rationalisation continues
- Customer service standards will be embedded consistently across services, supported by a FOM action backlog that drives harmonisation and redesign beyond day one
- Continued communications and engagement with all stakeholders including residents, partners, members, and staff.

Managing Delivery: Portfolio Structure

To oversee, manage, and deliver these transition and implementation activities, we will set up a robust portfolio and programme management structure.

Wherever possible, we would resource capacity and capability from across the seven councils by repurposing existing resources. There are likely to be certain capabilities or points during the five stages of the roadmap where we may need to bring in additional external capacity or capability to drive delivery at the pace required.



Diagram 5: LGR Portfolio Programmes

The scope of these 12 programmes could include:

Programme	Description
Communications, Engagement and Branding	• Internal and external communications and engagement strategies for partners, residents, staff, councillors • Design and agreement of new branding • Public launch campaign • Monitoring effectiveness of communications with feedback loops to other programmes to act on sentiment and feedback.
Governance and Legal	• Design and adoption of the new constitution and governance structure • Leading the legal establishment of the shadow authority, including oversight of elections • Developing and embedding scrutiny arrangements • Legal transfer of functions and statutory responsibilities from predecessor councils • Policy oversight, ensuring that critical policies are in place for day one and that no decisions are taken that undermine continuity

Programme	Description
	• Legal assurance for implementation decisions and considerations, including service specific considerations such as transfers of assets and contracts.
Finance and Risk	• New financial structures and chart of accounts • MTFS, annual budget, and statement of accounts • Implementation of Section 24 controls • Managing and delivering council tax harmonisation policies • Opening balance sheet and closure/audits of predecessor accounts • Development and management of the strategic risk register.
Performance	• Developing performance frameworks to measure delivery of the transition and implementation portfolio • Establishing metrics to track service continuity, staff engagement, ICT readiness, and financial stability • Management of the benefits realisation framework.
Property and Assets	• Property and asset implications, including rationalisation opportunities, development of asset and estate strategy, and investment properties • Consolidated asset and property register • Ensuring health and safety responsibilities for all property and assets are clearly assigned • Supporting the transfer of ownership of all land, buildings, and property rights from predecessor councils • Delivering against the estate rationalisation programme ambitions.

Programme	Description
Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT)	• Ensuring all critical ICT systems are operational on day one, including ERP, payroll, safeguarding, and operational service systems • Design, procurement, and implementation of a new ERP system • A new email address for all staff on day one • Ensuring legacy systems can integrate or run in parallel where required • Longer-term system harmonisation and embedding of cyber security and data governance practices • Developing and delivering against data migration requirements from predecessor councils, with a focus on security and GDPR compliance.
Customer Contact	• Designing the customer journey for the new council, agreeing the balance between online by default and other forms of access and engagement. • Establishing clear customer contact points for Vesting Day, including phone numbers, websites, and email addresses • Ensuring legacy contact channels redirect residents seamlessly to new channels • Embedding consistent customer service standards across all services during the stabilisation period.
Development of the FOM (incl. service redesigns)	• FOM blueprints and implementation plans for the new council • Where needed, supporting specific services (e.g. leisure) to manage aggregation/disaggregation implications and consider operating model choices.
People and Culture (incl. OD)	• Baselining workforce structures and establishments across all current councils • Redeployment and recruitment processes

Programme	Description
	• TUPE transfers • Harmonisation of pay dates and benefits in negotiation with trade unions • Staff engagement programme, including opportunities for staff to join LGR programmes and co-design services • Cultural change projects to embed new organisational values, identity, and ways of working.
Neighbourhoods and Communities	• Design, consultation, and implementation of Neighbourhood Partnerships including elements which relate to Neighbourhood Area Committee legislation • Policies for parish asset and service transfers • Towns and parishes engagement • VCFSE engagement • Town and Parish Charter and Civil Society Covenant • Community engagement (non-geographic), including corporate and service approaches to resident and stakeholder engagement and participation
Devolution	• Political and strategic engagement with senior leaders on long-term devolution options • Planning for potential strategic authority over the medium/long term.
Procurement, Contracts and Commercials	• Baselining of all contracts and external spend across all seven councils • Identification of key contracts for novation and engagement with suppliers • Harmonisation of procurement policies

Programme	Description
	• Exploring further opportunities for commercialisation, joint arrangements, and income generation.

Table 18: the proposed scope of each LGR programme

Portfolio and Programme Management

A Portfolio and Programme Management team will be established to oversee, coordinate, and manage delivery of the implementation roadmap - anticipated to be in place until at least March 2029.

The team is likely to consist of a range of programme, transformation, and change roles, and will be at the heart of managing the overall transition and implementation portfolio. This includes:

- Detailed planning and management of progress
- Enabling consistency across all LGR programmes
- Supporting the overall governance arrangements of the portfolio
- Providing regular progress reporting and internal assurance
- Developing and delivering the benefits realisation plan
- Working closely with the programmes in the portfolio, including in managing risks and interdependencies.

Managing strategic risks

There will be a range of strategic, operational, and service level risks associated with transition and implementation. Strategic risks will likely include:

Risk	Potential Mitigation
Potential delay in Vesting Day timelines nationally - There is a risk that changes or slippage in the agreed national timelines for the LGR process will undermine our ability to plan and sequence key activities effectively. This could lead to misalignment across programmes,	Establish clear checkpoints both with MHCLG representatives and locally to monitor timelines and make sure there is early notification of any potential delays or changes in national timelines particularly around Vesting Day.

Risk	Potential Mitigation
reduced stakeholder confidence, and delays in achieving critical milestones.	
Scale and complexity of change - The level of change involved for all seven councils is significant (e.g. changes to how residents are engaged, policies, processes, organisational structures, leadership and culture, new services being delivered etc) and needs to be delivered and managed in very short timescales.	• Develop a detailed transition and implementation plan which enables a smooth transition (as far as possible) • Implement a robust portfolio and programme management capability as soon as possible to help manage and drive change, including managing interdependencies and risks.
Capacity and capability to support transition and implementation - There is a risk that we struggle to bring in the right capacity and capability to drive delivery alongside maintaining BAU service delivery for our residents and communities.	• Identify early the key resources required to enable successful delivery, including any subject matter experts. Engage with other councils who have been through LGR to identify resourcing needs • The seven councils to consider where existing resources can be redeployed or reprioritised to support transition and implementation, including opportunities for secondments into the LGR portfolio • Set aside specific funding as part of the overall transition investment to bring in additional external support where needed and support backfill arrangements.
Maintaining service continuity – Most service areas will be impacted by LGR and will need to be involved	• Prioritise the principle of being 'safe and legal' on day one, with

Risk	Potential Mitigation
in supporting the portfolio (including service transition planning). There is a risk that service performance or continuity could be adversely impacted during transition or immediately post Vesting Day.	no resident experiencing a worse service than they do currently • Develop a prioritised service transition plan to manage the transition and transformation in a phased manner • Form early working groups for core service areas (across all seven councils) to undertake detailed transition planning - making sure any considerations for maintaining operational service continuity can be managed e.g. systems access.
Financial sustainability - There is a risk that the transition budget is insufficient to cover unexpected or unforeseen circumstances or that the savings that have been identified cannot be delivered.	• Contingency has been built into the transition costs to account for unexpected circumstances • A clear benefits realisation framework will be established to track and manage benefits delivery • The portfolio and programme management capability will be responsible for making sure there is a tight grip on all costs and benefits associated with LGR, so any financial risks can be proactively identified and mitigated.
Alignment with key stakeholders - There is a risk that key stakeholders including staff, partners, members etc are not aligned with the vision for the new council or experience change	• Establish early a clear communications and engagement strategy for all stakeholders and agree key messages for each group at different stages of the implementation

Risk	Potential Mitigation
fatigue from the level of change and disruption they are going through.	• Involve stakeholders early on to help co-produce plans • Dedicated change management resource to help embed the change successfully • Investment in leadership and managerial development so that they are equipped to support staff and engage with partners.

Table 19: strategic risks and mitigations

Managing the Aggregation of Services

Bringing seven councils together is a major undertaking - and keeping services running smoothly for residents is our top priority. **Aggregation means uniting services, systems, and teams into a single structure, unlocking better coordination, less duplication, and more consistent delivery across Gloucestershire.**

We'll manage the challenges and opportunities presented from aggregation by:

- **Enabling services to lead design:** The people who know services best will shape how delivery changes - ensuring practical solutions and continuity for residents
- **Managing existing shared service and wholly owned company arrangements:** Shared services like Ubico, One Legal, and Publica already show the power - and complexity - of joint working. Where aggregation is straightforward, we'll keep it simple; where it's more complex, we'll manage the transition carefully, including TUPE and out-of-county partners, such as West Oxfordshire District Council
- **Considering data and system aggregation:** Consolidating IT and data platforms will drive savings (likely in later years) and consistency, but we know it takes careful planning and upfront investment
- **Keeping services local:** Even as we aggregate, we're committed to place-based delivery - tailoring services to local needs and making Neighbourhood Partnerships central to our approach

- **Strengthening our workforce:** Aggregation lets us pool talent, invest in skills, and create new career pathways - especially in high-demand areas like cyber, data analytics, and surveying
- **Driving prevention through integration:** By bringing together district and county services, like public health, housing, leisure, and planning, we can drive improved outcomes for residents, such as tackling the wider determinants of health at greater scale.

Appendix 1: Vision and Ambition 'Personas'

CHARLIE'S BIO	
	Charlie is a 15-year-old student living in Parkend. His area has limited public transport and he feels disconnected from school and community life. His school engagement is low, and he is often absent or disengaged in class. With limited access to youth facilities, Charlie spends most of his time online, often unsupervised.
DESIRES	**CHALLENGES**
Charlie is digitally curious and likes learning and connecting with people online.	Emotional isolation, lack of trust in adults, feels invisible in the community, vulnerable to online radicalisation and has limited access to safe youth spaces.

BRINGING OUR VISION AND AMBITION TO LIFE

- ✓ By co-creating services that work for everyone, Charlie gains access to safe, inclusive digital and physical spaces shaped by young people like him.
- ✓ Digital services connect him to mentors and wellbeing resources, reducing isolation and offering healthy alternatives to unsupervised online use.
- ✓ Collaboration between community groups, schools and digital platforms helps rebuild Charlie's trust and sense of belonging.

TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR AMBITIONS

- Driving Breakthrough Innovation for National Resilience: Forest of Dean becomes a pilot site for 'Project Beacon', an initiative using AI-powered early intervention tools, leveraging expertise from the Golden Valley Cyber Hub in Cheltenham These tools spot early signs of disengagement and connect young people like Charlie to trusted mentors and support networks. Workshops, both in-person and online, build digital resilience across the county in partnership with schools, the police and industry.
- Creating Together: Inspired by Project Beacon, Charlie becomes involved with the Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF). Working alongside community groups and local mentors, he helps design online platforms that promote resilience and peer support, as well as new youth activities that reflect what young people actually want. This gives Charlie a stronger sense of belonging, builds his confidence and ensures services are responsive to the needs of all generations.

THE V**ARMA** FAMILY'S BIO



Priya (34 years old) and Arjun (33 years old) live in rented housing in Cheltenham with their young son, Ravi (9 years old) who has additional learning needs. Like many families in the town, they are balancing work, caring responsibilities and the rising cost of housing.

DESIRES	CHALLENGES
Priya and Arjun are eager to retrain to another industry to better financially support the family. Ravi enjoys music and building things.	The family struggles with insecure housing, long assessment wait times and navigating the education, health and social care services. Priya and Arjun feel stuck in low-paid work and torn between caregiving responsibilities and pursuing career opportunities. Meanwhile, Ravi feels behind in school due to overstimulating environments and a lack of tailored learning approaches.

BRINGING OUR VISION AND AMBITION TO LIFE

- ✓ By co-creating services that work for everyone, Arjun and Priya can help shape flexible training and SEND support that fits their family's real needs.
- ✓ Using digital inclusion initiatives, Ravi has access to secure, joined-up learning tools that support his education needs both in and out of the classroom, and give his parents visibility of his progress.
- ✓ Through linking housing skills and innovation locally, Arjun and Priya can take up retraining opportunities without moving away or compromising Ravi's care

TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR AMBITIONS

- Using Data to Transform Transport & Services: Integrated data systems link Ravi's SEND support, the family's housing needs, and the parent's retraining. Because services communicate, the social care professionals are able to provide the Patels with proactive care. It is through this better data integration that Arjun and Priya are offered a suitable retraining programme through the Talent for Life initiative.
- Unlocking Talent, Skills & Housing for Inclusive Growth: Through linking housing, skills and innovation locally, Arjun and Priya can retrain in secure jobs while knowing Ravi's care and education are supported close to home. This gives Ravi access to new learning opportunities from tailored digital tools to his family's attendance at 'taster days' in local industries, helping him discover his own future pathway.
- Driving Breakthrough Innovation for National Resilience: Ravi discovers a passion for advanced manufacturing through hands-on activities at local skills hubs. With access to mentoring, modern equipment and real-world projects linked to clean energy and sustainable production, he is able to see how his interests connect to solving national challenges. As he grows up, these opportunities give him the skills and confidence to pursue a career in advanced manufacturing, contributing directly to Gloucestershire's role in building resilience for the United Kingdom.

MARGARET'S BIO	
	Margaret (82 years old) lives alone in a small flat in Gloucester City. She has limited mobility and digital literacy, and no nearby family. Before retirement, she used to work in a garden centre where she enjoyed advising customers on garden needs.
DESIRES	**CHALLENGES**
Margaret has a strong desire to be a part of the community and is willing to engage if supported.	While public transport is available, she finds it difficult to navigate without support and feels overwhelmed by the pace of digital change. This makes it hard to access services or stay socially connected. She feels forgotten by the fast-changing world around her. She wants to remain in her own home for as long as possible and her family need assurance that she can be safe and cared for.

BRINGING OUR VISION AND AMBITION TO LIFE

- ✓ Co-designed neighbourhood and health services reflect Margaret's needs and preferences, restoring her dignity and independence.
- ✓ Digital inclusion initiatives supported through LGR, give Margaret the confidence to use online health services and stay socially connected.
- ✓ Local community groups and health providers collaborate to bring companionship and tailored wellbeing support directly into her neighbourhood, reducing isolation.

TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR AMBITIONS

- Putting Wellbeing, Housing & Nature Recovery at the Heart of Growth: Every policy and service in Gloucestershire is shaped by a wellbeing-first approach, ensuring Margaret's needs are central. From transport to housing, decisions prioritise her dignity and independence helping her remain at home and part of her community. Over time, this creates a fairer community where ageing is fully supported.
- Empowering Communities through Co-Design & Local Decision Making: Margaret contributes her experience to a local Neighbourhood Partnership, shaping age-friendly housing ideas and intergenerational community projects. This gives her a place in the community while ensuring older residents' voices are embedded in local decision-making.
- Using Data to Transform Transport & Public Services: Trusted, real-time data links Margaret's health, housing and care needs, ensuring services coordinate seamlessly. Her GP and social care team receive the same up-to-date information, avoiding duplication and preventing issues from escalating. Her family also gets reassurance through regular wellbeing updates.

EMILY'S BIO



Emily (26) lives in Cirencester. She works part-time in admin and has caring responsibilities for her family. She is passionate about sustainability and wants to pursue a career in the field without leaving her district. However, she's not sure if that is possible within Gloucestershire. From her knowledge, she feels she needs to move to other areas like Bristol and London to access the opportunities she is looking for, an option not available to her

DESIRES	CHALLENGES
Emily wants to find flexible, on-the-job training opportunities that offers career mobility, alongside care support for her father so she doesn't have to compromise on her ambitions.	Emily struggles to find local green skills programmes that are flexible, adaptable to her schedule and will help secure her a job in the industry. She feels torn between her caregiving responsibilities and her aspirations.

BRINGING OUR VISION AND AMBITION TO LIFE

- ✓ Breakthrough innovation in clean energy and climate technologies creates local career pathways that allow Emily to stay close to her family while contributing to a globally significant sector.
- ✓ Collaboration across transport and training clusters connects her to opportunities in Stroud and Severn Edge.
- ✓ Digital tools support remote learning and flexible work, helping her balance ambition with caregiving.

TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR AMBITIONS

- Unlocking Talent, Skills & Housing for Inclusive Growth: Emily accesses flexible, online training tailored to her caregiving schedule, gaining credentials in clean energy. This allows her to build a local career in sustainability without sacrificing her family responsibilities whilst also connecting Emily to high potential sectors across the whole of Gloucestershire.
- Harnessing Digital to Tackle Inequality: Digital inclusion projects mean Emily can use high-quality online learning platforms and remote working hubs in the Cotswolds, supported by affordable transport to training centres for in-person learning.
- Driving Breakthrough Innovation for National Resilience. By linking into Gloucestershire's growing clean energy sector, Emily gains placements and mentoring that tie her personal goals to the county's contribution to net zero and energy security. Within a decade, she leads a flagship initiative promoting green fuel and zero-carbon mobility for visitors to the Cotswolds AONB.
- E**mpowering Communities through Co-Design and Local Decision Making:** Emily connects with peer support groups through local Family Hubs, finding access to wellbeing and respite care support. This provides visibility of a pathway for Emily to achieve her career goals and care for her loved ones.

RACHEL'S BIO



Rachel is in her mid-30s and lives in Bussage with her two children. She commutes daily to Bristol for her job in marketing. The journey is long and expensive, with poor rail connections. She spends hours in traffic and pays high parking fees in Bristol. She's considering remote work or relocating but loves her home and community in Stroud.

DESIRES	CHALLENGES
More time with family and friends, affordable and direct commuting options, local work flexibility. She hopes to grow her career, ideally without having to relocate.	Whether rail or car, Rachel's commute has caused her stress. She feels like she has little to no time to enjoy life during the weekdays. Her mother is currently helping with school pick-up but has expressed a desire to relocate outside of Stroud.

BRINGING OUR VISION AND AMBITION TO LIFE

- ✓ By shaping local transport priorities through local community forums, Rachel has a voice in decisions that directly affect her daily life. .
- ✓ Improved connectivity enables hybrid working, reducing the need for Rachel to commute daily.
- ✓ Smart mobility platforms give Rachel real-time journey planning, reliable timetables and targeted pothole repairs that make her routes safer and quicker.

TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR AMBITIONS

- Using Data to Transform Transport & Public Services: Strategic partnerships underpinned by employee migration data make the case for improvement in regional connections. This reduces costs and journey times for Rachel. Smart data systems also prioritise road maintenance and pothole repair, making daily travel safer and more reliable. Together, these improvements give Rachael a quicker, more affordable commute and more family time all while ensuring she can progress in her career.
- P**utting Wellbeing, Housing & Nature Recovery at the Heart of Growth**: Transport and housing are planned with wellbeing in mind. Rachel benefits from community facilities linked to commuting routes, making family and work easier to combine.
- Harnessing Digital to Tackle Inequality, Improve Services and Drive Innovation: Rachel uses digital platforms to plan hybrid working and smarter travel, helping her stay rooted in Stroud while keeping access to regional career opportunities in the sectors where she has the most skills.

DARREN'S BIO



Darren (52 years old) lives in Bishops Cleeve. Darren has been working hard to overcome addiction and is determined to build a new life. He wants to work and contribute more to his community but faces stigma and limited access to tailored employment support. He's proud of his recovery and seeks meaningful ways to stay on track and help others.

DESIRES	CHALLENGES
Darren wants a stable employment that can enable him to be financially independent. Inspired by the support he has received from health and social care professionals, he wants to contribute and give back to those in need.	Darren feels socially isolated and is conscious of being judged by others. He has yet to find a stable job in Tewkesbury that will give him financial security, causing him stress, which he fears may cause him to relapse.

BRINGING OUR VISION AND AMBITION TO LIFE

- ✓ Integrated services mean Darren can access recovery, housing advice and employment support in one place, removing the barriers he previously faced navigating separate systems.
- ✓ Local employers and VCFSE partners offer supported routes into meaningful work, helping Darren rebuild confidence while contributing to his community.
- ✓ Digital tools track Darren's progress and connect him to peer networks, reinforcing his recovery and helping him sustain long-term stability

TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR AMBITIONS

- Putting Wellbeing, Housing & Nature Recovery at the Heart of Growth: Darren accesses a new joined-up wellbeing and employment hub model that integrates housing advice, health support and training opportunities under one roof. Unlike existing services, the hub is embedded in local housing and regeneration projects, giving Darren stability in his home environment as well as tailored pathways into work. This integration reduces the stigma he's faced in fragmented systems and helps maintain recovery.
- Empowering Communities through Co-Design and Local Decision Making: Darren helps co-design recovery-to-employment programmes with local employers and VCFSE partners in Tewkesbury. His lived experience is treated as expertise, shaping more inclusive pathways that others in recovery can access. Over time, Darren takes on a mentoring role, feeding into decision-making that improves services county-wide and strengthens trust between residents and providers.
- Unlocking Talent, Skills & Housing for Inclusive Growth: Darren joins a reskilling programme linked to local employers, with wraparound housing and wellbeing support. He starts with part-time work at a social enterprise in Bishop's Cleeve, progresses into a supervisory role and ultimately secures a qualification that allows him to mentor others. By linking employment with social support, Darren's recovery is reinforced while also contributing to Gloucestershire's inclusive growth.

Appendix 2: Digital, Data, and Technology Case Studies

Digital, data, and technology (DDaT) are already transforming services across Gloucestershire – making them smarter, faster, and more joined-up. These examples show how a customer-centred, data-informed approach improves outcomes, reduces avoidable demand, and enables proactive service delivery.

Right now, delivery varies by council. But applied across a single council, our DDaT approach unlocks consistent, high-quality services for everyone – wherever they live.

Case study 1:

Customer experience

Streamlining and opening up data through AI (Tewkesbury BC)

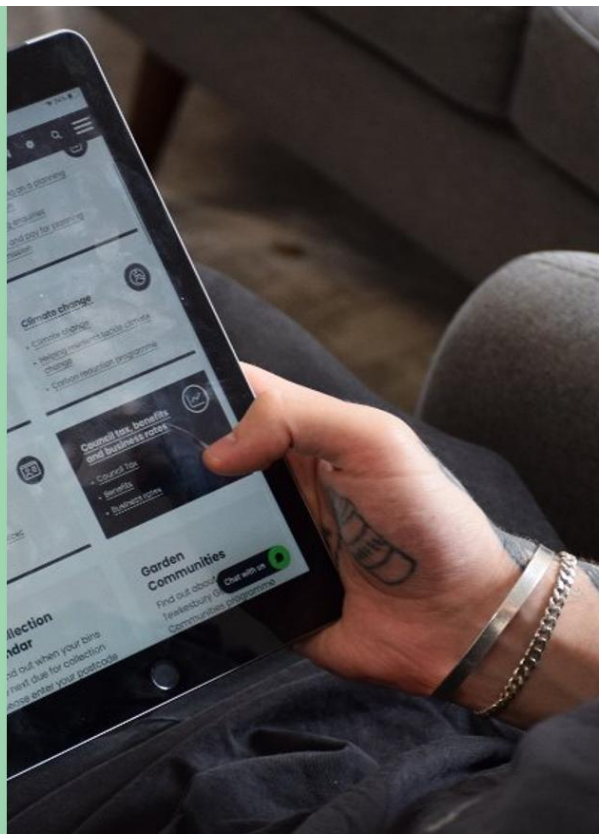
AI is redefining our customers' experience over the phone and online - there's no longer a need to navigate a lot of webpages or a maze of phone options (or to sit waiting on hold).

The customer types their issue into a responsive AI-driven chatbot online or speaks through a Large Language Model assistant over the phone (with a single phone number for all issues). If the issue is particularly complex, the customer seamlessly passes through to a human advisor who already knows why they're calling. If the teams are particularly busy, a simple call-back option is offered.

Residents are less frustrated, receive support quicker and have more confidence in contacting the council when they need help.

Real-time dashboards mean teams manage demand dynamically, and seamless integration into the council's digital platform means that customer contact can trigger automatic workflows depending on what they're contacting about.

50%	38%	17%
reduction in wait times in 6 months	shift to online services in 6 months	decrease in abandoned calls in 6 months





Case study 2:

AI virtual care

Helping vulnerable residents live in their own homes for as long as possible (Gloucestershire CC)

Innovative AI-powered virtual care will help transform how social care is delivered. Using smart plugs, motion sensors and other remote devices installed in residents' homes to monitor daily activity and wellbeing.

Devices feed data into a technology-enabled care system (recently procured by Gloucestershire CC), which uses AI to detect changes in behaviour that may signal a health concern.

The proactive approach allows care teams to intervene early – before a crisis occurs. In Sutton, this has led to around 25 residents per month being supported by community response service, avoiding ambulance callouts and hospital admissions.

The technology supports residents to live independently for longer, with the reassurance that help is available 24/7. It also eases pressure on overstretched adult social care services.

Case study 3:

Bulky waste

Reducing demand by keeping customers updated (Tewkesbury BC)

Bulky waste bookings take place through an intuitive online booking system – no need to call or visit (although that option is available).

The online experience is really enjoyable. Information is clear and there's a basket for items to be added, and an integrated payment system – nowhere close to the traditional clunky online local gov experience. Residents get to choose a collection date that suits them from a calendar of availability.

Through automated communications, residents are kept informed at every stage of the process - from booking confirmations to collection updates. These messages, delivered via email and text, are clearly branded and consistent with the council's digital identity.

Live data integration allows collection crews to update the system in real time, enabling customer services to respond swiftly to any queries.

Similar proactive approaches will be used for missed bin reports, planning applications and many other services.

In six months:

60%	70%	261%
collections booked online	of items now recycled	rise in income





Case study 4:

Open Digital Planning

MHCLG-funded programme to improve planning online (Gloucester City and Tewkesbury BC)

MHCLG's Open Digital Planning is transforming the planning service through systems that reduce invalid applications, improves customer experience and streamlines internal processes.

Plan X uses spatial data to assess site-specific constraints and guides users online through a tailored, question-based journey. This empowers applicants to self-serve, reducing calls to the council and improving the quality of submissions.

Through further development the system will integrate with Idox Uniform, enabling applications to be submitted directly and automatically populate back-office systems.

Gloucester City is also part of Back Office Planning System (BOPS), which is being developed with planning officers to improve the planning process - their input will help shape the system ensuring it meets the needs of planning officers and reduces the double handling and outdated processes in legacy back office systems.

- **Plan X:** Avg 113 visits per week for 'do I need planning permission?' tool (Glos City and Tewks BC).
- **BOPS:** 20% reduction in householder application processing time (Glos City).
- **Plan X:** Ratings of 'excellent' and 'good'.

Case study 5:

Flooding

Using spatial data to protect vulnerable residents (Tewkesbury BC)

A data-informed approach helps keep flood-risk communities and vulnerable residents safe.

With the introduction of a new digital system in ArcGIS, we can capture information quickly and accurately. Integrating satellite imagery with other datasets (such as the EA river gauge imagery and rainfall) means we can create predictive models of flood extent and impact.

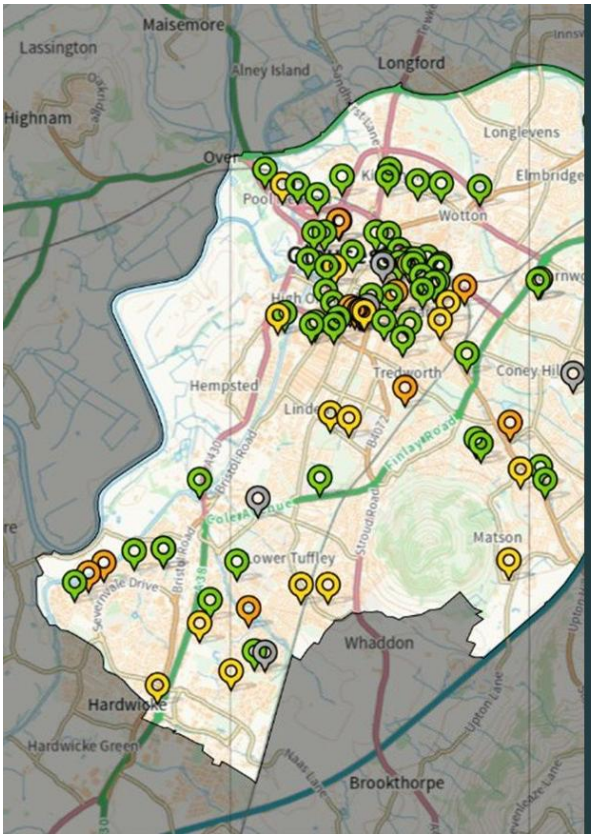
We know what different river levels mean on the ground, and mapped data will show where to direct support, such as:

- Where sandbags and rest centres are best located
- Which householders require targeted alerts and information
- Which vulnerable residents need welfare checks

This approach isn't just about reacting, but about being proactive in supporting at-risk communities.

LGR will enhance this approach even further by enabling a unified, cross-county view of flood risk and response. It allows for the consolidation of data sources from county and district councils, streamlined decision-making, and coordinated deployment of resources - ensuring that support reaches the right places faster and more effectively.





Case study 6:

Fix My Street

Fix My Street, a simple, map-based tool, lets residents report issues like potholes, fly-tipping, and broken streetlights via the web or mobile app.

Users drop a pin, add details and photos, and the report is sent directly to the right team—whether that's the City Council, UBICO, or the County Council.

The system links with in-cab tech, asset layers, and back-office systems to ensure accurate routing and real-time updates for crews. A public map shows reported issues and progress, improving transparency and removing the need for users to understand council responsibilities.

This streamlines service delivery, reduces call volumes, and improves the quality of reports across multiple authorities.

- City council: Average time to resolve issues dropped from **5.25 days** (previous process) to **1.25 days** with FixMyStreet and Alloy integration.
- GCC and city council: Of 198 city council cases reported to the county's FixMyStreet, **100% were automatically routed** to the city council **without any manual intervention.**
- GCC: **60% of highways issues** now reported through FixMyStreet – an increase of 20% on old process.

Case study 7: CoPilot

Gloucestershire CC: Average hours saved per week on different activities using M365 Copilot



Future Gloucestershire
Digital, Data and Technology workstream

Hours saved per week based on feedback received from 127 users

Appendix 3: Public Engagement Report (Cratus)

Cratus group

We're more than an agency.
We're change makers.

Gloucestershire Local Government Reorganisation Public Engagement

August 2025

cratus.co.uk

Executive Summary

Between July and August 2025, Cratus Group engaged residents and stakeholders across Gloucestershire to gather views on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The programme combined 12 in-person events, two countywide webinars, and a countywide survey which in total generated more than 3,100 responses. A dedicated microsite and multi-channel campaign ensured broad reach across all six districts, though younger residents were notably under-represented.

Residents expressed a strong sense of belonging to their communities, with green spaces, safety, and access to essentials like buses and GPs ranked as the most important local priorities. Council services such as rubbish and recycling, libraries, and parks were generally well regarded, while roads, pavements, buses, and aspects of social care received lower satisfaction ratings. Respondents experience of engaging with councillors and/or council officers was relatively positive.

When considering the future of local government, most respondents prioritised making services better and ensuring council tax is well spent over issues of identity or representation. Community identity, transport infrastructure, housing, and environmental protection were the most commonly prioritised themes in the additional written feedback. Many residents are wary of change, as shown in the written feedback and noted in our conversations. In terms of those who gave a preference as to which model they felt would work best, a single countywide unitary was by far the most supported option. The East/West split and 'Greater Gloucester' model were widely opposed, with concerns about fairness, division, and efficiency.

The next stage of communication should focus on reassurance: showing that local voices and identities will not be lost, underlining the financial and service benefits of change, and clarifying how the new system will work in practice. Simplification of council responsibilities is a persuasive message, but trust will depend on continued engagement and transparency throughout the process.

Introduction

This report summarises the engagement activity undertaken by Cratus Group in Summer 2025 on behalf of Gloucestershire councils around the future of local government in the county and sets out an analysis of the feedback received.

Please note that throughout this report, for brevity, we use the term 'district' to refer to city, borough and district councils in Gloucestershire. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole figure for neatness.

Background and context

The Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) community engagement programme in Gloucestershire was initiated to gather views from residents, stakeholders, and partner organisations on the future shape and priorities of local government in the county. This work forms an early stage in the process of developing proposals for submission to Government in November 2025.

The aim was to engage communities across all six districts, ensuring that a broad range of voices contributed to the discussion. Importantly, this engagement did not ask people to choose between fixed options or vote on pre-defined models. This will be the focus of formal Government consultation during the early part of next year. Instead, it invited open conversation about the principles, priorities and values that matter most to people in Gloucestershire.

By building understanding and listening to what communities have said they want and need, the engagement sought to generate insights that will help inform decision-making later in the year. The process was designed to be transparent, inclusive and accessible, ensuring that residents could help inform the county's future governance arrangements.

Objectives

- To inform residents about the context for potential changes to local government in Gloucestershire and the reasons for exploring these changes.
- To understand people's priorities, values and concerns in relation to the organisation of local government and the services it provides.
- To engage as widely as possible across all districts, reaching communities in both urban and rural areas.
- To gather insight that can be used to support councils in the development of proposals for submission to Government in November 2025.

Methodology

The engagement was undertaken using a hybrid approach, combining online and face-to-face engagement to ensure broad coverage and accessibility.

We followed the principle of 'going where the people are', integrating with existing community events and venues to reach a diverse cross-section of residents, while also providing digital channels for those who preferred to take part online.

In person engagement included a set of materials summarising the changes and signposting to the survey.

Survey

A county-wide survey was the central element of our public engagement. Hosted on Gloucestershire County Council's Engagement HQ platform, and developed with input from all seven councils, the survey included a blend of closed and open questions. This approach allowed for both quick responses and more detailed commentary.

- The survey was open to the public from **1 July to 8 August 2025**.
- The full list of questions is available in Appendix 1.

Engagement and demographics

We achieved high levels of engagement, with over 3,000 responses received. The demographic reach was also strong, with the distribution across most categories closely aligning with the general demographic makeup of the county of Gloucestershire, with the caveat that women were slightly over-represented (53% vs 51% in the 2021 Census) and the respondents skewed slightly older than the general population (33% over-65 vs 22% in 2021 Census). This suggests a broad range of residents chose to participate.

It is important to note that a digital survey of this nature is a self-selecting process rather than a representative poll. This means that people chose to engage with the survey, whether they found it online via social media or council content, or participated in person with a member of our team. Unlike a representative poll, we did not actively contact individuals with the aim of reaching a

statistically significant and truly representative sample of the county's or districts' populations. This was not feasible within the project's scope, budget, or timeframe.

Despite not being a statistically representative poll, we are confident that the feedback is robust and highly useful. The high level of engagement and the broadly representative nature of the respondents' demographics mean that the data provides clear and valuable trends. This feedback is therefore a reliable resource for councils as they develop local government reorganisation (LGR) options.

Note: While the data aligns broadly with 2021 Census data for the county, this has not been assessed at a District level so we cannot assert that the views expressed are representative of individual Districts.

The survey achieved good, useful results at a fraction of the cost and time a full-scale representative poll would have required, proving to be an effective and efficient engagement tool within the project's constraints.

Microsite

A dedicated microsite – www.futuregloucestershire.gov.uk – was created to provide background information on LGR, answer frequently asked questions, and list details of upcoming engagement events and webinars. It also provided a direct link to the survey, ensuring a single point of access for the public.

Outreach and marketing

To maximise reach, the survey and microsite were promoted through a range of channels:

Elected members and council officers
Councillors and officers received information to share with their networks, including a set of informational banners and flyers provided for each district council. Staff across district councils and partner organisations were reached through newsletters and intranet posts.

Gloucestershire County Council officers attended the parish and town council AGM in July to share information.

Residents and community networks
Social media activity included both organic and paid campaigns. Paid advertising targeted postcodes with lower response rates during the final two weeks of the engagement.

Posts were shared by each council's communications team via Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn and Nextdoor, alongside digital newsletters, community bulletins and business mailing lists. Flyers were also sent to libraries and other council owned buildings across the county.

Events and webinars
In-person engagement took place at two existing community events in each of the six districts, and two online webinars were held to enable countywide participation. All activities were designed to ensure residents could access clear information, ask questions, and provide feedback in a way that suited their needs.

Engagement summary

As a result of online promotion, 12 in-person events (two per district) and 2 online webinars with countywide attendance, 3,112 survey responses and 1,480 written comments to open-text questions, providing rich qualitative insight, were received.

Events brought conversations into the heart of communities – from busy market towns to rural villages, whilst the online offer ensured residents could take part at any time. This mix of formats generated a balanced evidence base: hard data from the survey for statistical analysis, and detailed personal perspectives from written feedback.

Engagement findings

Events

The 12 events are detailed in the following section, with approximate figures for the engagement at each.

Teams attending the events had flyers to hand out, pull-up banners at the stands, and activities to attract people's attention.

People attending the events were encouraged to complete the survey, but discussions also provided useful insights into opinions on council services. Key findings are summarised below. People were encouraged to take flyers home, both as a reminder to fill out the survey themselves and to share with family, friends and neighbours, as we emphasised the desire to reach as many residents as possible.

Stroud Show

Saturday, 12 July – Stroud district

~ 15 Surveys ~ 40 conversations ~ 70 leaflets handed out

The audience was largely local to Stroud, and local councillors and district leadership were also in attendance. Many people felt that the local voice would be lost under LGR reforms, and they weren't supportive of change. However, many acknowledged that the different levels of local government now were confusing.

Quite a few specifically mentioned that they liked their Parish Councils. Residents complained about the lack of buses and public transport. A few discussed personal council issues.

Gloucester Quays Shopping Centre Pop-up

Saturday, 12 July – Gloucester City district

~ 8 Surveys ~ 50 conversations ~ 30 leaflets handed out

Feedback varied from disinterested to well-informed. Some attendees reported themselves as being from Gloucester, and identifying as such, but actually living within Stroud or Tewkesbury council areas.

There was some concern that unitary councils would not recognise the individual places that have their own unique identity under current arrangements. There was also a concern that any authority which contained Gloucester would have their resources diverted to the city. More broadly, there was a limited understanding of the difference between the levels of government and some disinterest in how services are delivered.

Coleford Music Festival

Sunday, 13 July – Forest of Dean district

~ 4 Surveys ~ 25 conversations ~ 15 leaflets handed out

Conversations tended to focus on very local issues including the role of Town and Parish Councils, noting that the Coleford Town precept had gone up dramatically in recent years. All residents spoken to wanted to maintain the identity of the Forest of Dean as a unique place and were not supportive of any option to become a unitary council.

Some councillors had been to the parish event on the 12th and were keen to understand more about what other authorities were doing elsewhere in the country. There was some feedback that the northern part of the Forest of Dean faces toward Herefordshire and could benefit from becoming part of that authority.

Moreton-in-Marsh Market

Tuesday, 15 July – Cotswold district

~ 21 Surveys ~ 25 conversations ~ 36 leaflets handed out

The busy market had a large tourist presence, making it harder to reach local residents. To counter this, the team engaged stallholders and shop staff directly. This approach ensured meaningful conversations with those living and working in the area.

Generally, there was a lack of trust of Cotswold District Council, partly due to the market stall holders themselves not having a positive experience when dealing with council officers. Aside from this, one of the biggest issues facing local people seemed to be with buses as some routes are being reduced or stopped altogether.

Regarding LGR, most were not aware this was happening but once explained, understood the reasons for the changes. Most were pleased with the idea it could lead to more effective and efficient councils.

Lydney Community Day

Saturday 19 July – Forest of Dean district

~ 2 Surveys ~ 45 conversations ~ 30 leaflets handed out

Feedback reflected concerns that the Forest of Dean is already overlooked for investment and that Lydney, on the edge of the district, is even more marginalised. Local transport limitations and dependence on cars were raised.

The 'Greater Gloucester City' model was criticised as exclusionary. Residents feared that roads and services would be deprioritised in favour of higher-traffic areas. A young carer noted potential benefits if services became more joined-up.

Councillors expressed opposition to reorganisation, with some arguing the county/district system should remain. Other comments touched on roadworks coordination, declining community events, and the importance of youth engagement.

Churchdown Summer Fun Day

Saturday, 19 July – Tewkesbury district

~ 1 Survey ~ 25 conversations ~ 15 leaflets handed out

Residents voiced concerns about historic boundary and naming issues, stressing Churchdown's distinct identity from Gloucester and Tewkesbury. Some frustration was expressed that the process was not consulting on whether reorganisation should happen at all.

The general sentiment was that change felt imposed and unnecessary, though residents still engaged with engagement materials. Issues raised included access to waste facilities and representation.

Cirencester Town Centre Pop-up

Sunday, 20 July – Cotswold district

~ 5 Surveys ~ 20 conversations ~ 15 leaflets handed out

Engagement included younger shop workers and local business owners. Leaflets were displayed in shops and community spaces.

Residents asked about potential combined authorities and whether reorganisation was required by national government. Concerns were raised about losing local identity, confusion over service responsibilities, and how planning could adapt to different topographical needs.

Tewkesbury Market

Wednesday, 23 July - Tewkesbury district

~ 35 Surveys ~ 40 conversations ~ 10 leaflets handed out

Residents valued Tewkesbury's historic identity and stressed the importance of a localised response to flooding. While many saw opportunities for improved efficiency under reorganisation, concerns were voiced about differences between districts such as the Cotswolds and Gloucester and what this would mean if the local authority areas were combined.

Gloucester City Centre Pop-up

Friday, 25 July – Gloucester City district

~ 30 Surveys ~ 50+ conversations ~ 10 leaflets handed out

This high-footfall location enabled engagement with a broad mix of residents. Safety, cleanliness, and homelessness in the city centre were key concerns, particularly from younger respondents.

Issues raised included a shortage of affordable housing, the use of hotels for temporary accommodation, and the pressures of migration on housing. Calls for more youth facilities, investment in health services, and stronger support for tourism were common themes.

Greenways Fun Day

Saturday, 26 July – Stroud district

~ 10 Surveys ~ 40+ conversations ~ 6 leaflets handed out

Residents voiced concerns about east–west divisions in the county creating inequalities. They called for prioritisation of affordable homes for young people and better responses to anti-social behaviour.

As a busy, family-friendly event, it was harder to focus people on doing the survey then and there but there was a lot of interest and people took photos of the materials and/or scanned the QR code to follow up later.

Cheltenham Town Centre Pop-up

Saturday, 2 August – Cheltenham district

~ 36 Surveys ~ 40+ conversations ~ 33 leaflets handed out

Engagement was steady throughout the day, with neutral or positive views towards reorganisation in the majority. Issues raised included concerns over council tax, immigration, potholes, and buses.

Awareness of local councillors was generally low, and most had not contacted council departments in recent years. Some raised issues with local SEN support.

No Child Left Behind Festival

Wednesday, 6 August - Cheltenham district

~ 37 Surveys ~ 30+ conversations ~ 22 leaflets handed out

The family-focused event drew strong engagement. Activities at the stand encouraged conversations with parents and carers.

Recurring issues included poor road and street maintenance, lack of awareness of councillors, and concern that a county-wide unitary would erase local identity. Some welcomed the idea of area forums to retain local voices.

Webinars

Two webinars took place, on 5 and 6 August, one held during the working day and the other during the evening, allowing for different people's schedules. Both events were advertised across social media channels by all the councils. A recording of the presentation was then hosted on the www.futuregloucestershire.co.uk website for those who could not attend.

The main sentiment from the Q&A portion of the webinar was requests for more details on exactly how the process will work, from questions about which council buildings will be kept to details on how departments will be organised and who will be responsible for policies.

The structure of local government beyond district and county level was raised, with several queries about how the potential combined authorities and mayoral areas will be organised, and on the other side, how this will affect Town and Parish Councils. It became clear that attendees had heard rumours about how both could work, including the concern that parishes will be given further responsibilities without more resources.

We learned that residents will need reassurance throughout the process. People were concerned about things like how council housing will work, whether libraries will be affected, whether staff are at risk of losing their jobs, and where council offices will be.

Also, a couple of comments concerned future updates, while attendees were happy to hear that the details were still not finalised, they were keen to hear the results of the survey and details as they emerge – so Gloucestershire councils must keep up the good momentum of engagement and information sharing.

We had 71 attendees across the two days (45 on Tuesday, 5 August and 26 on Wednesday, 6 August). The audience was a mixture of residents, council staff and councillors from all tiers of council.

Unlike some in-person conversations and the survey results, webinar attendees did not request that the status quo remain. This shows that if it is clearly explained then people do understand that LGR is a national government requirement, and change will be taking place. Attendees commented that they found it helpful and were grateful for the engagement.

Survey results

Demographics

The survey gathered demographic data from respondents so we could assess how representative the respondents were of Gloucestershire's population. Where possible, this has been reviewed against the 2021 Census data.

The key demographic findings are as follows:

Age: The majority of respondents were aged 55 and over (57%), followed by those aged 35-54 (30%), and under 35 (9%). Gloucestershire does have an older population than the national average, however given that the figures for 65+ at a county level are 22%, the survey responses skew to an older demographic than is fully representative.

Sex and Gender Identity: The respondents were almost evenly split between female (53%) and male (47%), with a slightly higher number of women than men responding, slightly higher than the census data which has 51% female. Almost all respondents indicated that their gender identity is the same as their sex at birth.

Sexual Orientation: About 80% of respondents identified as heterosexual/straight, which is less than the census data which 90% identified as such. Smaller proportions identified as asexual (~3%), bisexual (~3%), gay man (~2%), or lesbian/gay woman (~1%). The number of respondents identifying as LGBTQ+ was higher among under-35s (16%) compared to those aged 55 and over (less than 4%).

Ethnicity: The largest ethnic group was White British (87%), followed by White European (4%) and White Irish (1%). Other individual ethnic groups each accounted for less than 1%. This is reflective of the demographics of the county (based on the 2021, 88% of the population is White British with a further 5% coming from other White backgrounds).

Religion or Belief: The most common responses were 'No religion' (46%) and 'Christian' (44%). 'No religion' was more prevalent among under-35s, while 'Christian' was more common among older age groups, reaching around 62% in those aged 75 and over. The county levels for 'Christian' are higher at 48%, and lower for 'No religion' at 43%.

Long-term Illness or Disability: About 19% of respondents reported having a long-term illness or disability that limits their day-to-day activities, less than the census figure of 23%.

Caring Responsibilities: Approximately 20% of respondents had caring responsibilities, mainly for older family members (15%). A smaller proportion (4%) cared for children with additional needs, and around 1% had dual caring responsibilities. This is higher than the census' average of 9% providing unpaid care.

Survey responses in detail

Section 1: A sense of belonging

This section of the survey focused on where people lived and where they identified as 'home' within the county. Respondents were asked for their postcode (first half only), which councils they

thought represented them, and where they consider they live. The latter was to determine whether people's local identity is more closely tied to the county, district, or local neighbourhood.

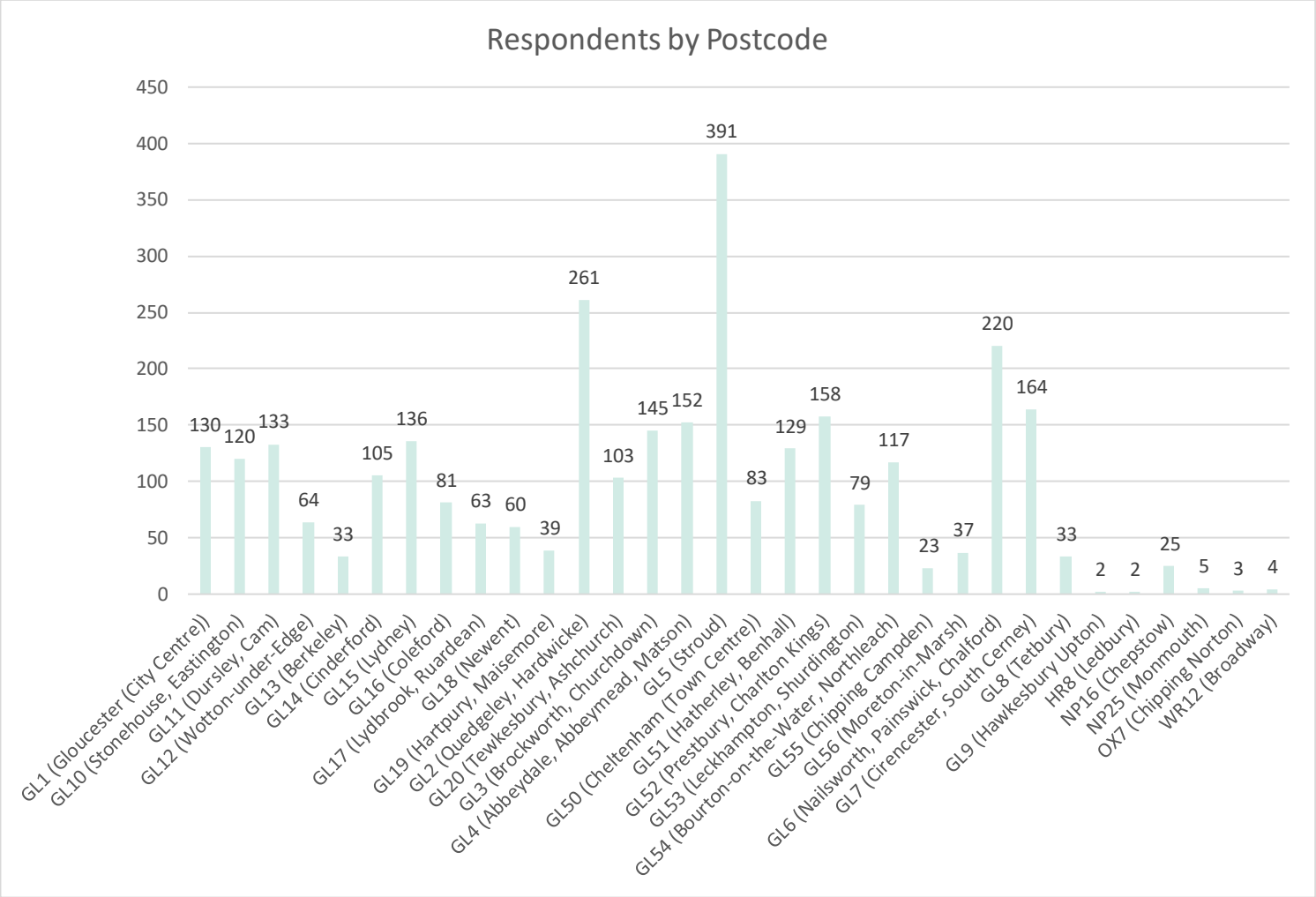


Figure 1

Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents across postcodes and the most commonly associated areas within the postcodes. There is notably high turnout from GL5 (Stroud), GL6 (Nailsworth, Painswick, Chalford), GL7 (Cirencester, South Cerney), GL52 (Prestbury, Charlton Kings), GL4 (Abbeydale, Abbeymead, Matson) and GL3 (Brockworth, Churchdown).

Eleven respondents gave a hometown postcode outside of Gloucestershire, explained by the fact some lived on the borders or visited the county for work. Those postcodes were: GL9, BS37, IP2, GL20, GL8, GL12, OX7 and TA1.

People were asked to select their council, with the option of all six districts, the county council, and 'other.' 52 (2%) were not sure which council they were served by, indicated by either selecting 'not sure' or by selecting multiple district councils. However, we were able to allocate all except seven using the postcode and description of where they live for the purpose of effective survey analysis.

1,012 (33%) included Gloucestershire County Council as part of their answer, with 15 of those placing it as their only council. This shows that 2,090 (67%) respondents either do not realise this is their council or do not see it as much a part of their day-to-day life as their district council.

As shown in Figure 2, the districts were relatively evenly represented in responses, except for Stroud District Council which saw a considerably higher response rate.

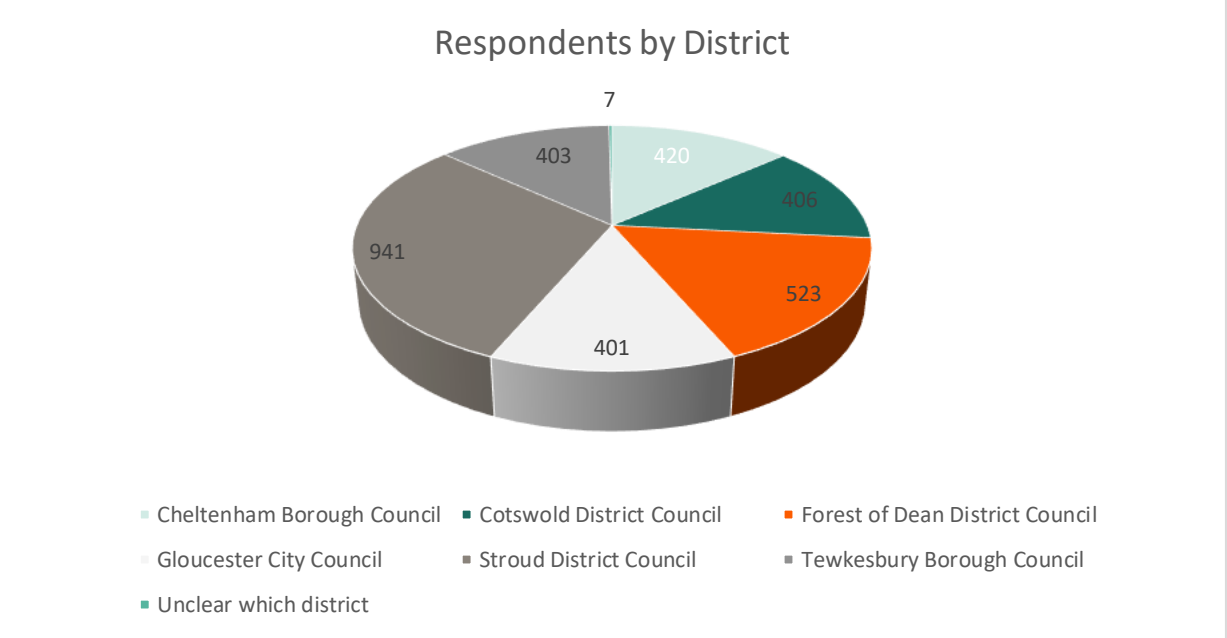


Figure 2

34 people added a council after selecting 'other'. Of these, 23 were Parish Councils and 11 were councils outside of Gloucestershire County Council lines (e.g. South Gloucestershire, Wychavon, West Oxfordshire, Malvern Hills, Somerset and Ipswich).

Next, people were asked to tell us first where they lived (Figure 3) and then what they considered to be their 'local area' (Figure 4). The word-clouds below summarise the most common responses to each.



Figure 3

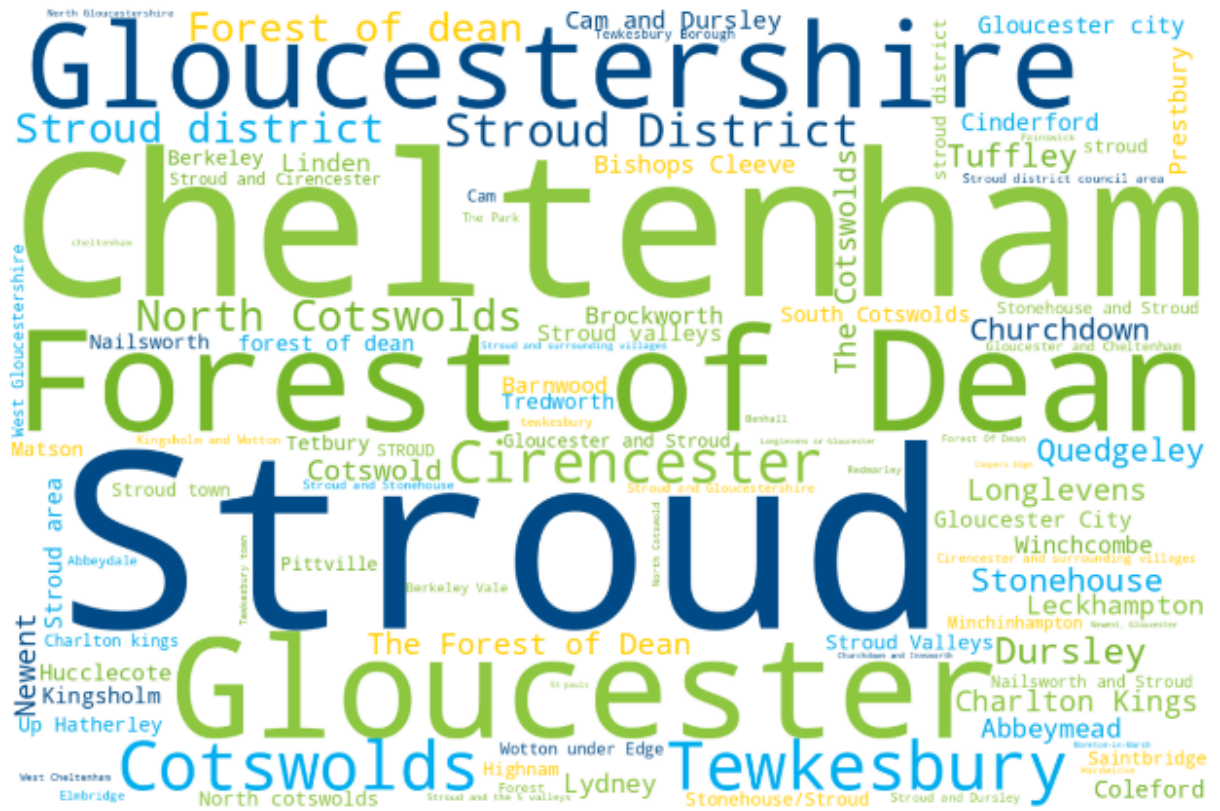


Figure 4

These two questions were designed to get people thinking about where they feel most connected to, rather than thinking solely in terms of council boundaries. The results show that people are

more specific when thinking about where they live vs what is their local area, and that while the district names are mentioned frequently, hundreds of smaller towns and villages are included, suggesting people's sense of home is more complex than which district or county they belong to.

We then asked people to what extent they felt a 'sense of belonging' to the local area they just identified. The responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive, with 1,503 (48%) saying strongly agree, and only 218 (7%) either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (shown in Figure 5).

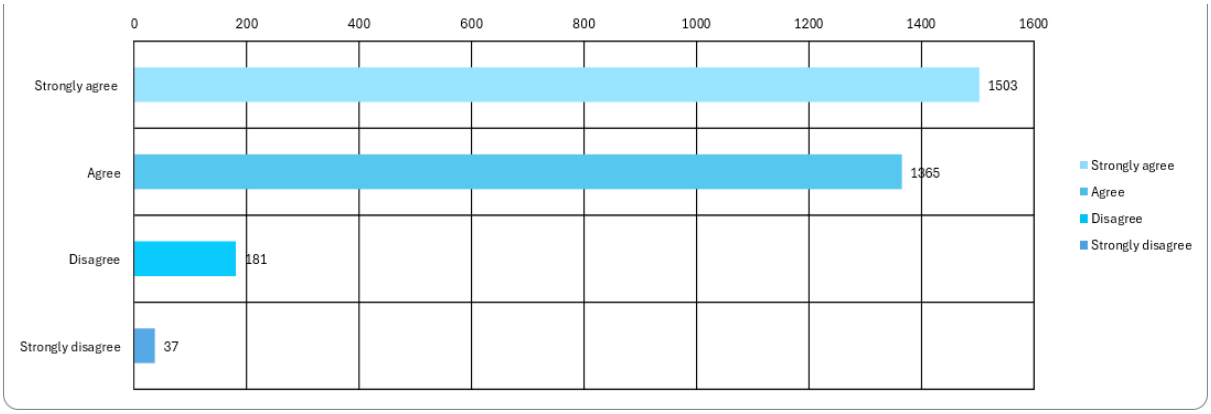


Figure 5

We then asked respondents to rank the importance of various key factors in contributing to this 'sense of belonging'.

Overall, green open spaces were rated as the most important element, with 72% saying they were 'very important'. Safety was the next priority, with 70% rating it very important, followed by 65% saying 'easy to get to important things like buses, schools and the GP' were very important.

Only 40% said history and heritage was very important to them, however overall, all elements were seen as more important than not important. 9% said events were not at all important, and this was the highest percentage of all 'not at all important' rankings.

Section 2: Council Services

In this next section of the survey, respondents were asked for feedback on their council services as they are now, including assessments of a series of council services and feedback on their engagement with councillors and officers.

Overall, 2,215 (71%) know who their councillors are, and 1,045 (34%) have contacted them in the last two years. 77% were satisfied or very satisfied with the response from their councillor.

1,904 (61%) have contacted a council department, and 73% were happy or very happy with the response from the relevant department.

In terms of services provided, rubbish and recycling and parks and green spaces consistently receive a high positive sentiment across all councils, while roads and pavements are the weakest area – in almost every council, these saw the lowest 'very good' ratings and highest negative feedback.

Residents across all councils received good ratings on average, with little differentiation between the six districts.

Overall average satisfaction per district (rated 1–4 scale):

Cheltenham Borough Council: 2.89
Cotswold District Council: 2.70
Forest of Dean District Council: 2.72
Gloucester City Council: 2.81
Tewkesbury Borough Council: 2.87
Stroud District Council: 2.86

Each council's individual feedback figures are summarised below:

Cheltenham Borough Council

420 responses were from residents in Cheltenham Borough Council. Table 1 shows how respondents from Cheltenham ranked the council services. Key things to note are that parks, gardens, and other green spaces were the highest rated, with 93% 'very good' or 'good', and roads, pavements, and streetlights were rated the lowest, with only 2% rating them as 'very good' and 76% as 'not good' or 'not very good at all'.

	Very Good	Good	Not good	Not very good at all
Rubbish and recycling	32%	55%	9%	4%
Roads, pavements and streetlights	2%	21%	48%	28%
Parks, gardens, and other green spaces	40%	53%	6%	1%
Schools and education	23%	69%	6%	2%
Libraries	22%	60%	15%	4%
Sports facilities/festivals/events	32%	57%	9%	2%
Local buses	14%	59%	23%	4%
Social care and benefits	5%	56%	29%	10%

Table 1

Engagement with Councillors
The survey included two questions about residents' awareness and interactions with their district or county councillors.

Awareness
A significant portion of residents (75%) are aware of their councillors, with 35% having actively engaged with them in the last two years. 15% did not know who their councillors were and 10% were unsure or did not respond.

Satisfaction
Among those who had contacted their councillors, 27% were very satisfied with the response, 40% were satisfied, 22% were dissatisfied, 10% were very dissatisfied and 1% did not respond.

The satisfaction levels are relatively positive, with 67% expressing satisfaction (either very satisfied or satisfied). However, the dissatisfaction rate of 32% (dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) indicates that there is still a notable portion of the population that feels their concerns are not being adequately addressed.

Engagement with Council Officers
The survey also included questions about residents' interactions with council departments over the past two years.

Contact
65% of respondents had contacted a council department within the last two years, some respondents mentioned contacting a different borough, possibly related to friends or family across the border or where they work.

Satisfaction
Of those who had contacted a council department, 19% of respondents were very happy with their experience, 47% were happy, 21% were not happy, 12% were not at all happy and 1% did not respond.

Cotswold District Council

406 responses were from residents in Cotswold District Council. The rating of the services is detailed in Table 2 below. There were several well rated services in this district, with 90% rating Schools and education as 'good or very good', 89% rating rubbish and recycling as the same and 87% for parks, gardens, and other green spaces.

Roads, pavements and streetlights were less well rated, with 56% rating 'not good' or 'not very good at all', and 42% saying the same for social care and benefits.

	Very Good	Good	Not good	Not very good at all
Rubbish and recycling	35%	54%	8%	3%
Roads, pavements and streetlights	3%	22%	44%	32%
Parks, gardens, and other green spaces	17%	70%	11%	2%
Schools and education	21%	68%	9%	2%
Libraries	18%	60%	16%	6%
Sports facilities/festivals/events	15%	58%	22%	5%
Local buses	4%	25%	41%	29%
Social care and benefits	7%	51%	32%	10%

Table 2

Engagement with Councillors

Awareness
42% of respondents knew who their councillors were and had contacted at least one of them within the last two years. 37% knew who their councillors were but had not contacted them, while 13% did not know who their councillors were.

Satisfaction
Among those who had contacted their councillors, 39% were very satisfied with the response, and 40% were satisfied. However, 15% were dissatisfied, and 6% were very dissatisfied.

Contact with Council Departments

Engagement
65% of respondents had contacted a council department within the last two years.

Satisfaction
18% of respondents were very happy with their experience, and 46% were happy. However, 26% were not happy, and 9% were not at all happy.

Forest of Dean District Council

523 responses were from residents in Forest of Dean District Council. Table 3 shows the range of ratings given to the services by the residents.

Rubbish and recycling were rated very highly, with 95% of respondents rating it as 'good or very good'. Roads, pavements, and streetlights, and local buses were seen as poor, with 67% and 64% rating them 'not good' and 'not very good at all' respectively.

	Very Good	Good	Not good	Not very good at all
Rubbish and recycling	51%	44%	4%	1%
Roads, pavements and streetlights	3%	30%	43%	25%
Parks, gardens, and other green spaces	26%	60%	11%	3%
Schools and education	12%	69%	15%	4%
Libraries	16%	62%	16%	5%
Sports facilities/festivals/events	10%	56%	27%	6%
Local buses	5%	31%	40%	24%
Social care and benefits	4%	49%	35%	12%

Table 3

Engagement with Councillors

Awareness
34% of respondents knew who their councillors were and had contacted at least one of them within the last two years. 33% knew who their councillors were but had not contacted them, while 23% did not know who their councillors were.

Satisfaction
Among those who had contacted their councillors, 39% were very satisfied with the response, and 44% were satisfied. However, 10% were dissatisfied, and 7% were very dissatisfied.

Contact with Council Departments

Engagement
59% of respondents had contacted a council department within the last two years.

Satisfaction
26% of respondents were very happy with their experience, and 52% were happy. However, 13% were not happy, and 8% were not at all happy.

Gloucester City Council

401 responses were from residents in Gloucester City Council. Table 4 details the ratings given by people in this district. The data reveals that while some services, such as rubbish and recycling, are well-regarded (92% saying very good or good), but other areas are seen as sub-par, with 56%

reporting roads, pavements and streetlights as 'not good' or 'not very good at all' and 42% saying the same for social care and benefits.

	Very Good	Good	Not good	Not very good at all
Rubbish and recycling	34%	58%	5%	3%
Roads, pavements and streetlights	3%	41%	41%	15%
Parks, gardens, and other green spaces	11%	68%	18%	3%
Schools and education	13%	69%	15%	3%
Libraries	18%	66%	13%	3%
Sports facilities/festivals/events	9%	57%	28%	5%
Local buses	17%	55%	23%	5%
Social care and benefits	5%	53%	35%	7%

Table 4

Engagement with Councillors

Awareness
30% of respondents knew who their councillors were and had contacted at least one of them within the last two years. 38% knew who their councillors were but had not contacted them, while 23% did not know who their councillors were.

Satisfaction
Among those who had contacted their councillors, 25% were very satisfied with the response, and 47% were satisfied. However, 17% were dissatisfied, and 12% were very dissatisfied.

Contact with Council Departments

Engagement
61% of respondents had contacted a council department within the last two years.

Satisfaction
16% of respondents were very happy with their experience, and 46% were happy. However, 18% were not happy, and 10% were not at all happy.

Stroud District Council

The district with the most responses was Stroud with 941, and the service ratings are below in Table 5. Responses were very positive overall, especially relating to rubbish and recycling which received 97% 'good or very good' ratings. Parks, gardens, and other green spaces, schools and education. Libraries all also had positive ratings above 85%.

	Very Good	Good	Not good	Not very good at all
Rubbish and recycling	60%	37%	2%	1%
Roads, pavements and streetlights	3%	28%	48%	21%
Parks, gardens, and other green spaces	30%	63%	7%	1%
Schools and education	20%	68%	9%	3%
Libraries	26%	59%	12%	3%
Sports facilities/festivals/events	19%	67%	12%	2%
Local buses	5%	33%	40%	22%
Social care and benefits	5%	54%	33%	9%

Table 5

Engagement with Councillors

Awareness
33% of respondents knew who their councillors were and had contacted at least one of them within the last two years. 38% knew who their councillors were but had not contacted them, while 19% did not know who their councillors were.

Satisfaction
Among those who had contacted their councillors, 51% were very satisfied with the response, and 36% were satisfied. However, 8% were dissatisfied, and 5% were very dissatisfied.

Contact with Council Departments

Engagement
63% of respondents had contacted a council department within the last two years.

Satisfaction
33% of respondents were very happy with their experience, and 44% were happy. However, 16% were not happy, and 7% were not at all happy.

Tewkesbury Borough Council

403 responses were from residents in Tewkesbury Borough Council. The survey results indicate that Tewkesbury residents were most positive about rubbish and recycling services (96% very good or good), with schools and education second (84%) and most negative about roads, pavements and streetlights, with 66% rating them not good or not very good at all.

	Very Good	Good	Not good	Not very good at all
Rubbish and recycling	63%	33%	4%	0%
Roads, pavements and streetlights	4%	30%	43%	22%
Parks, gardens, and other green spaces	17%	62%	18%	3%
Schools and education	16%	68%	14%	2%
Libraries	24%	57%	15%	3%
Sports facilities/festivals/events	16%	60%	20%	4%

Local buses	18%	47%	24%	11%
Social care and benefits	7%	52%	34%	7%

Table 6

Engagement with Councillors

Awareness
30% of respondents knew who their councillors were and had contacted at least one of them within the last two years. 40% knew who their councillors were but had not contacted them, while 20% did not know who their councillors were.

Satisfaction
Among those who had contacted their councillors, 36% were very satisfied with the response, and 36% were satisfied. However, 19% were dissatisfied, and 7% were very dissatisfied.

Contact with Council Departments

Engagement
56% of respondents had contacted a council department within the last two years.

Satisfaction
25% of respondents were very happy with their experience, and 46% were happy. However, 20% were not happy, and 9% were not at all happy.

Other Services

An additional option after rating the eight specified services was 'I'd like to rate a different service'. Across all respondents, 261 respondents chose to respond to this question, just over 8% of the total respondents. This has been analysed across the county rather than by district, as the relatively low response rate to this question would imply

Issues around planning and highways dominate the comments - these two areas alone account for more than half of all service mentions. By noting that people felt the need to add extra analysis to topics such as roads and schools that had already been rated in the previous questions shows the strength of people's opinions.

For each, we have included a sentiment score[61] and some examples of the kind of comments included.

a) Planning / Development / Building Control - 16.5% of comments

[61] *Each comment in the survey was tagged with a sentiment label: **Positive**, **Neutral**, or **Negative**. To quantify overall sentiment for each issue, these labels were converted into numerical scores as follows:*

- ***Positive** → **+1***
- ***Neutral** → **0***
- ***Negative** → **–1***

*For each category, the **average sentiment score** was calculated by taking the mean of all individual comment scores associated with that issue. This provides a simple, interpretable metric:*

- *A score **closer to +1** indicates generally positive feedback.*
- *A score **around 0** suggests mixed or neutral sentiment.*
- *A score **closer to –1** reflects predominantly negative feedback.*

This approach allows for easy comparison across service areas and helps highlight where public perception is most favourable or critical.

Average Sentiment Score: -0.27

There were concerns raised about new development, density, lack of local consultation and poor enforcement of planning decisions. There were also complaints raised about the performance of planning services.

- *"Planning decisions - this should be more under the umbrella of the town council not the district most of which do not live in the area".*
- *"Planning applications are dealt with extremely slowly... little consistency between councils."*

b) Roads / Highways / Potholes - 10.0% of comments
Average Sentiment Score: -0.30

There were recurrent complaints about potholes, poor road maintenance, resurfacing delays and local road safety. There were also localised complaints about the streetscape, covering issues like parking availability and enforcement, and litter and graffiti.

- *"Highways- not very good at all. Far too many road closures, and temporary traffic lights."*
- *"Fix my pothole website... a pothole in my street was fixed within the week!"*

c) Housing / Homelessness / Council houses - 5.5% of comments
Average Sentiment Score: 0.09

A number of comments were frustrated that housing services have not improved in the area.

- *"Lack of social housing for people."*
- *"Housing officers aren't good as they have too much work to do".*

d) Schools / Education - 4.0% of comments
Average Sentiment Score: 0.00

A small number of people raised issues around education, from a lack of nurseries through to problems with the education system overall. There were a number of comments about poor transport to school.

- *"Early careers - needs to be better in schools"*
- *"I think we should not have an 11 plus grammar school system. It is divisive. I went to a comprehensive school in Oxford."*

e) Children's services / Child protection - 3.5% of comments
Average Sentiment Score: -0.43

Similar to schools / education, a small number of people raised real concerns with children's services, mostly from parents trying to access SEND support for their children.

- *"Children's services - not good at all"*
- *"Parents trying to negotiate SEND provisions for children with extra needs is a lengthy and high stress process. This needs huge investment as these children will slip through the*

cracks."

f) Waste / Bin collections / Recycling - 3.5% of comments
Average Sentiment Score: -0.14

Missed collections and recycling issues appear across a number of comments. There was a surprisingly strong opposition to the way recycling centres operate with multiple people raising frustration with having to register in advance to attend and feeling that these centres make it harder for them to recycle.

- *"Any suggestion of bin collection every 3 weeks should be stopped".*
- *"Recycling Centres: Not very good at all due to having to book for a slot".*
- *"Recycling Household Centre. The registration of cars should be removed".*

g) Public transport / Buses - 3.0% of comments
Average Sentiment Score: -0.50

There were a range of complaints about bus reliability, frequency and connections — and a recognition that these impact people's ability to travel without a car. Many of these were very specific complaints about a local service.

a) *"The Number 10 bus service: Inconsistent every single day, rarely happens according to the schedules at the bus stops. Many busy stops rely on printed schedules as they do not have electronic schedules. The Stagecoach West app sometimes lies about where buses are. And the overall cost is terrible. The monthly Rider Plus ticket now costs £85 per 28 days (i.e. £1,020+ per year). This is reaching a point where private transport is becoming economically comparable and vastly more comfortable and convenient over public transport. This is exactly the reverse of where public transport as a service in Gloucestershire should be heading."*

h) Council tax / Benefits / Finance - 2.5% of comments
Average Sentiment Score: -0.20

b) *"Cost of council tax value for as council tax is incredibly expensive for the services received/provided."*

c) *"Council tax can vary greatly in cost between councils & also which parish you live in."*

Section 3: Local government reorganisation

In this section of the survey, we focused on questions about LGR and the future of councils in Gloucestershire.

What are your top priorities when it comes to reorganising councils in Gloucestershire?

We first asked respondents to rank in order of priority the four key objectives of LGR, as set out by National Government:

'Make sure your council tax is well spent' was the top priority for most people, with 1,267 rating this highest. Next highest was 'make local services better', named as the top priority by 1,128 respondents.

There is then a large gap with only 330 naming 'provide a sense of community' as their highest priority and a similar figure of 337 saying 'provide a stronger voice for residents'.

We can see from this that overwhelmingly people's priority is the practical day-to-day spending and work of the council, rather than feeling the council should focus on issues of identity and feeling included.

Is there anything else you think should be a priority, or anything you would like us to think about when putting together plans to reorganise Gloucestershire's local government structure?

The final question in the survey asked if there was anything else respondents wanted us to consider when designing proposals for how new council services will be delivered under LGR. Almost 60% of respondents answered this question and their comments are summarised below, divided into overall comments and specific references to different structures.

Topics to consider

Almost 60% of respondents answered this question and their comments are summarised below, grouped into key categories:

Theme	Percentage (%)	Explanation
Community	16.06	Concerns about local representation, community identity, and engagement in decision-making.
Transport	9.36	Issues related to public transport, road maintenance, and connectivity.
Housing	5.47	Comments on housing affordability, development planning, and infrastructure.
Environment	3.51	Feedback on climate action, sustainability, and environmental conservation.
Economy	2.8	Suggestions for economic growth, job creation, and business support.
Healthcare	2.19	Concerns about access to medical services and hospital facilities.
Education	2.06	Issues regarding schools, learning opportunities, and educational infrastructure.
Safety	1.64	Mentions of crime prevention, policing, and community safety.

Table 7

Of the above, the most common concerns were:

- Community engagement and local representation – Emphasis on keeping decisions local and maintaining identity.

1. *"Local government is not just about providing services, it is also about being a place leader and convenor for the local system and communities. I am concerned that discussions about LGR are so reductive - just focusing on what the boundary should be. If I had a preference it would be for two authorities to retain local identity and prioritisation of areas that may be overlooked on a larger footprint with joint working to achieve economies of scale in service delivery."*

2. *"Support for community hubs which provide a point of contact for services and places for people to come together."*

3. *"The decision should be based on what's best for residents, NOT local politicians."*

- Transport infrastructure – Calls for better public transport, road maintenance, and connectivity.
- *"Integrated public transport network."*
- *"Churchdown is part of Tewkesbury. I can't get to Tewkesbury on a bus from Churchdown."*
- *"Improve transport across the county as a one Gloucestershire scheme, not just good in the urban areas of Gloucester and Cheltenham."*
- Housing development – Concerns about affordability, planning, and infrastructure support.
- *"I recognise the need for more housing… but it's SO important that the roads and parks/green spaces around these new estates is managed well."*
- *"Local housing only for local people and ex-military."*
- *"Housing needs to be prioritised. Limited and get infrastructure right before new homes."*
- Environmental protection – Requests for climate action, conservation, and sustainability.
- *"Protecting our green spaces, fields, woods, and farmland from development."*
- *"Climate and nature action for the transition to a low carbon economy."*
- *"Environmental concerns, green energy and net zero."*

Other Issues

Several other issues were raised, although in much smaller numbers. These included:

- Youth Services
- Public Health / GP services
- Cycling infrastructure
- Libraries and museums
- Environmental services
- Parking / Car Parking
- Services Older People
- PROW (Public Rights of Way)
- Policing

Council Structure

While at no point were respondents asked to give their view on the proposed structure options of the future unitary council, 225 (7% of the respondents) actively gave preferences in the written text on which unitary council formation they would prefer out of the three currently proposed options. Of these, 205 (91%) preferred one single unitary council governing the whole county, 14 (6%) preferred the East / West split, and 3 (1%) preferred the Greater Gloucester City model. Three (1%) people said they preferred a two-council split but did not specify the split.

There were concerns that the East / West split would essentially be seen as a rich / poor divide. Few were in favour of the East / West approach, with even fewer in favour of the 'Greater Gloucester' approach. There were some disparaging remarks about the latter not "making sense" and references to this model being a "political" manoeuvre.

- *"It would be extremely unfair to split our county into two councils, especially along the lines proposed - which would effectively mean a "rich" side and a "poor" side of the county, as this would likely cause greater feelings of division between people."*

- *"The Greater Gloucestershire option is also very silly. It's just a political idea that will make us poorer."*

Some people saw the two-council option as a half-measure, continuing to cause confusion over who is responsible for what, and causing disruption to existing services while not achieving the efficiency LGR claims to provide.

- *"Providing a 'one stop' shop for council services across the County, to eliminate confusion as to who does what. Also not to break up services that operate perfectly well at the moment to further a 'two unitary' arrangement."*

- *"To have two unitary authorities would be divisive, inefficient (compared to one), and cause identity confusion (with the additional factor of South Gloucestershire already existing)."*

Many said one large council was the most efficient option, noting concerns about splitting Gloucestershire County Council regarding health, fire, police services. Economies of scale were mentioned.

There was a feeling from Forest of Dean residents that they would be neglected in a larger council.

There were those who mentioned options outside those currently proposed. Many wanted the system to stay as it is, however, many who mentioned this realised this was not an option. Some offered alternative solutions such as areas joining Wiltshire or Herefordshire or South Gloucestershire Councils.

Conclusions

Headline conclusions

Existing councils are generally well-thought of, with high ratings for both services and interactions with councillors and officers. While this reflects well on local services, it does mean that residents may be concerned about any potential change to the way their councils operate. Several comments, in person and online, reflected a contentment with the current system and a preference for no change at all.

Reviewing any negative ratings and written feedback should guide improvements in the new system, especially by addressing limitations in the current two-tier system to improve services that are less

successful now. This could include emphasising that housing and infrastructure would now be more joined-up which was requested, or it could be shown that the change gives a chance to improve the environmental credentials of the councils.

Despite many concerns about local identity and community being lost, when respondents were asked to clearly rank their priorities for the future, efficient use of council tax and good service provision were far above sense of community and a local voice.

The whole Gloucestershire model was given as the preference by the majority of those who offered an opinion on future structures.

Resistance to change

There is a need to explain to people that LGR is a national policy with wider objectives – and that no change is therefore not an option.

Our engagement activities have included informing residents about the purpose and requirements of LGR, so this process has already begun. Based on discussions and shared information, it appears that more residents now understand the national government's requirements. Although some express a preference for maintaining the current system, there is recognition that change will occur.

Many people were also aware of the wider plans for devolution, ranging from conversations about combined authority mayors to potential increased roles for parish and town councils. Future information will need to include references to what will happen here as soon as possible, to avoid the current information spreading which could be misleading.

Next steps: Clear communications

It is important to build on the engagement already carried out, to keep residents' trust and prevent any misinformation. The key learnings of the engagement show which concerns were raised and where reassurance will be needed in future communications.

People wanted to see financial efficiencies – but not a service reduction: Those who preferred a unitary system cited financial efficiencies and the main priority was effective council tax spending and day-to-day services. Presenting evidence that supports these outcomes would strengthen the case.

People are confused about which council they belong to and who is responsible for what, leading to frustration when passed between councils. Messaging should highlight that a simpler system would be easier to navigate and encourage more engagement.

Each area has a distinct identity, so it must be made clear that the change is aimed at improving administration and efficiency, rather than changing altering the local character. Neighbourhood initiatives can help maintain a sense of community and clear roles for parish and town councils.

Another primary consideration is maintaining a sense of belonging to Gloucestershire, balancing local representation with broader identity. It should be noted that local representation will remain in place, and it will become more straightforward to identify and contact representatives.

Concerns were raised that larger councils will mean decisions are made for areas by people further detached from the area in question. Measures will need to be put in place to ensure officers or councillors handle this carefully.

Residents currently happy with the council services provided will need reassurance as to how services will be managed during the period of transition – mentioning the shadow council period and being open about the fact it may take a while but will provide a better service long term.

There were concerns raised that there was no real chance to state preference for the system. Since this was a period of engagement, rather than a formal consultation, the materials clarified that an official consultation would follow. When recommendations go to the government, local messages should make it clear that people can and should provide feedback.

As detailed plans to guide the choice of options are formed by officers, these facts and figures should then be used to support communications to residents, to work together to bring forward the future of Gloucestershire.

Appendix 1: Survey questions

Section 1: A sense of belonging

What is the first part of your postcode (e.g. GL5)?

What is your local council (tick all that apply)?

- Cheltenham Borough Council
- Cotswold District Council
- Forest of Dean District Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Gloucester City Council
- Tewkesbury Borough Council
- Stroud District Council
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)

Where do you live?

What do you consider to be your local area?

Thinking about your answer to the last question, tell us how much you agree with the following statement: 'I feel a sense of belonging here'

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

How important are the following aspects in contributing to your sense of belonging to where you live?

Local places to go like shops, community centres, sports and fun places.

- Very important
- Important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important
- I don't have a view

Things happening nearby like festivals and events.

- Very important
- Important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important
- I don't have a view

People you know in your area like friends, family, and neighbours.

- Very important
- Important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

I don't have a view

Green areas like parks, communal gardens, nature, and open spaces.

Very important
Important
Slightly important
Not at all important
I don't have a view

Easy to get to important things like buses, schools and the GP.

Very important
Important
Slightly important
Not at all important
I don't have a view

How safe you feel in your area.

Very important
Important
Slightly important
Not at all important
I don't have a view

History and heritage like important things from the past and local traditions

Very important
Important
Slightly important
Not at all important
I don't have a view

Section 2: Council services

For each of the following everyday council services, please rate how well you believe they are working in your area.

Rubbish and recycling collection

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Roads, pavements and streetlights

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Parks, gardens, and other green spaces

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Schools and education

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Libraries

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Sports facilities/festivals/events

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Local buses

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Social care and benefits

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

I'd like to rate a different service:

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Do you know who your DISTRICT or COUNTY councillors are, and have you contacted them within the last two years?

Yes, and I've contacted at least one of them
Yes, but I've not contacted them
I'm not sure
No, I don't know who they are

If you answered 'Yes, and I've contacted at least one of them', overall, how happy were you with how the dealt with your questions, concern or comment?

Very satisfied

Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied

Have you contacted a council department (for example, parking, council tax, housing, etc) in the last two years?

Yes - several times a year
Yes - once or twice a year
No

Which council(s) did you contact?

Gloucestershire County Council
Cheltenham Borough Council
Cotswold District Council
Forest of Dean District Council
Gloucester City Council
Stroud District Council
Tewkesbury Borough Council

Think about the last time you contacted your council. Overall, how happy were you with the experience?

Very happy
Happy
Not happy
Not at all happy

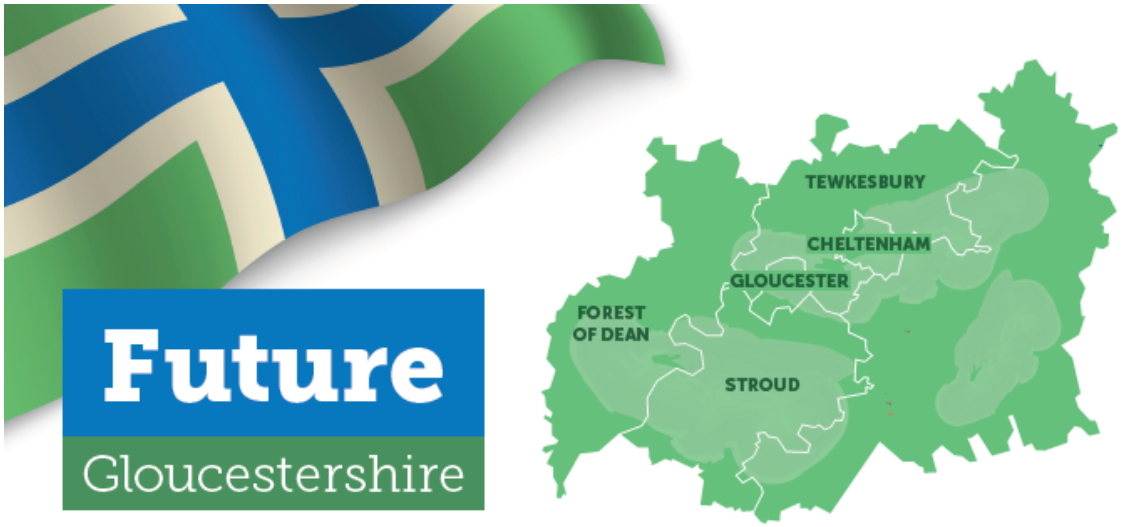
Section 3: Local government reorganisation – what matters to you?

What are your top priorities when it comes to reorganising councils in Gloucestershire? Please rate the following priorities from 1-4 (where 1 is the most important) based on how important they are to you:

Make local services better: This means improving things like rubbish collection, parks, and other services you use every day.
Make sure your council tax is well spent: Provide good local services without wasting your council tax.
Provide a stronger voice for residents – listening and responding to your concerns.
Provide a sense of community and belonging – respect the unique character of Gloucestershire, like its history and culture.

Is there anything else you think should be a priority, or anything you would like us to think about when putting together plans to reorganise Gloucestershire's local government structure?

Appendix 2: Flyers and banners



What is Local Government Reorganisation?

The national government wants to change how local councils work. You currently have one county council and six smaller district councils in Gloucestershire. The different types of councils are responsible for different services (explained overleaf).

The plan is to swap them for fewer, bigger councils that look after all services. These are known as 'unitary' authorities, and have existed across the UK in many places for several years - they can cover a whole county, part of a county or a large town or city.

The government produced an official document in 2024, showing their plans for devolution (handing power from national to local government) and saying that a unitary council system is the best way to achieve this.

What does it mean for Gloucestershire?

Rather than stating the plans for reorganisation, the government asked local councils to produce proposals on how they would like to move to a unitary model. In Gloucestershire, this could involve combining all six districts into one unitary council or dividing into two separate unitary councils.

The district councils and the county council are discussing what the best plan would be, both individually and as a group. The views of residents and communities are an important part of the decision-making process.

These changes give us a chance to check all the services we offer, to give people in Gloucestershire good, strong, and effective public services for years to come.

When will be know what is happening?

The deadline for all seven local councils to submit a joint final plan is the end of November 2025. If the seven cannot agree a shared plan, each council can submit one proposal, and the government would make the final decision.

The transfer of services would take place gradually over two years, and the unitary authority or authorities would be up and running fully by 2028.

www.futuregloucestershire.org.uk

Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

What do councils do?

County Council Services that Gloucestershire County Council is responsible for include:

- Helping children, including fostering and adoption
- Helping older people and adults who need support
- Making sure roads, paths, and cycle routes are safe and usable
- Buses, park & ride, and school travel
- Streetlights and traffic lights
- The fire and rescue service
- Making sure shops sell things fairly (Trading Standards)
- Registering important life events: births, deaths, marriages, and civil partnerships
- Working with businesses to create more jobs and help people learn new skills
- Free bus passes for older people and blue badges (parking for people with disabilities)
- Education
- Public Health - services that support people to become or remain healthy
- Libraries
- Large recycling centres and disposal of household waste collections

District Council

Cheltenham Borough Council · Cotswold District Council · Forest of Dean District Council · Gloucester City Council · Stroud District Council · Tewkesbury Borough Council

- Home rubbish and recycling collection, and street cleaning
- Collecting Council Tax
- Public spaces like footpaths, parks and trees on streets
- Planning and Building Control - Looking at plans for new buildings
- Culture, sport and leisure e.g. events and museums
- Providing homes and reducing homelessness
- Community safety teams, preventing and dealing with issues such as vandalism or noise complaints
- Community wellbeing - looking how to make people happier and healthier
- Managing benefits to help people pay their rent and council tax
- Licencing - permits for things like pubs, taxis, and events.
- Making sure places like restaurants are clean and safe
- Collecting taxes from businesses in the area (Business Rates)
- Public toilets

Town and Parish Councils

The most local voice you have is the town or parish council, although they do not have as many required roles to carry out as district, county or unitary councils. Each one could carry out different roles than their neighbour, and not all areas will have one. These will be unaffected by any plans for local government reorganisation. Responsibilities can include:

- Supporting local community groups
- Allotments
- Car parks
- Community centres
- Providing local grants
- Playgrounds
- Vandalism
- Neighbourhood plans
- Providing an official neighbourhood voice e.g. on planning applications

Future Gloucestershire

SCAN ME



Have your say!

Your district and county council want to hear from you:

How well do you feel council services in our area work?

Have you ever spoken to your local council or councillors?

What about your community is most important to you?

How can we make Gloucestershire run as smoothly as possible?

To fill out our survey, scan the QR code or visit www.futuregloucestershire.org.uk

Future
Gloucestershire

SCAN ME



Local Government Reorganisation

Did you know there are national plans to re-structure the way local government works?

The system will change from a 'two-tier' to a 'unitary' authority – come and ask us what this means!

Help your local councils shape the future of Gloucestershire.

To fill out our survey, scan the QR code or visit
www.futuregloucestershire.org.uk

Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Appendix 4: Summary Report of Feedback from Partner Organisations (Engagement conducted June - August 2025)

Background

Ministerial guidance for LGR has provided clarity about the role and purpose of Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) stakeholder engagement in the proposal development process. Criteria 4c of the Ministerial criteria makes clear that:

'Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed'

In addition, GCC has been mindful of its role in providing most of the 'crucial services' referenced in criteria 3c:

'Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety'

Guidance has also been provided to ensure wider public sector providers are engaged as proposals are developed. The relevant guidance is contained within the Letter to Leaders from the (former) Local Government Minister.

In this context, it was necessary for a stakeholder engagement exercise to be undertaken, at pace, to ensure GCC's county-wide stakeholders were positively engaged. All engagement was conducted in the context of GCC Cabinet policy to be agnostic of structural options.

The feedback from stakeholder groups has been considered alongside the outcomes of other forms of engagement and is addressed clearly in the substantive engagement chapter of this proposal.

Objectives and methodology

Over June – August 2025, senior GCC officers held stakeholder meetings concerning LGR, focusing on services or matters of relevance to the council's work.

The objectives of the engagement process were to:

1. Ensure stakeholder views were taken into account as proposals for the single unitary and east/west two-unitaries were developed;
2. Gather intelligence about the impact of LGR on stakeholder organisations;
3. Understand what aspects of LGR were of most importance to stakeholders, as well as any concerns; and
4. Gauge appetite and interest for future involvement in LGR (and Devolution).

To achieve these objectives, the following information was provided as part of each meeting:

- An update on how LGR proposals and Devolution discussions are progressing in Gloucestershire;

- An update on the LGR policy position of GCC's new Cabinet (i.e. to be agnostic and evidence-led in considering both a one unitary and two unitary model); and
- The timetable and key processes underway.

A total of 41 meetings were held. Many of the meetings, particularly those involving Gloucestershire associations, were attended by multiple attendees. Some stakeholders chose to write to us after the meeting setting out their views. Where consent has been obtained, this correspondence is appended.

Analysis of responses – key themes

The stakeholder discussions have been synthesised and anonymised. Four key themes, together with short quotations, are set out in the table below:

Theme 1: Structural options

There was a preference amongst stakeholders for a single county unitary model. This was described by one as the *"only workable solution"*. Further comments included that two unitary authorities would *"create economic chaos and a social divide"*, whereas a single unitary would *"open up opportunities, creating aspiration"*.

Creating two unitary authorities was referred to as *"risky"*, potentially resulting in *"confusion, disruption and duplication"* and creating *"barriers and bureaucracy where it isn't needed".*

Further comments included that a two unitary model would *"exacerbate existing disparities, particularly in rural western areas such as the Forest of Dean"* and *"create greater division over time, due to the further potential different political leadership".*

Concerns were expressed that *"job losse*s", *"delay and disruption in services"* and *"loss of local identity"* would follow as a result of a two-unitary solution.

Some stakeholders supported a two-unitary model for its targeted benefits. One noted potential *"savings of £4–6 million annually"*, and argued that the West would not be disadvantaged, citing evidence of *"affluent people moving to the Forest of Dean"*.

Stakeholders that supported the two unitary model emphasised its potential to deliver more localised and responsive governance. As one stakeholder observed, *"Splitting the county would enable each authority to focus on the priorities unique to their communities, providing services that truly reflect local needs."* Another stakeholder remarked, *"With two unitaries, there's an*

opportunity for healthy competition, driving innovation and ensuring better value for our residents."

An education leader commented that a two unitary model would *"lead to a long period of protracted negotiation and uncertainty"* and *"make the delivery of public services more challenging and not achieve the same economies of scale"*.

Special school headteachers felt that a two unitary model would *"make it even more challenging to place all the children who require specialist provision in an appropriate setting – sufficiency is already one of the key barriers".*

Stakeholders from the adult social care sector raised a concern about continuity of care under a two unitary model with one stakeholder feeling that, *"waiting times for adult social care services would increase."*

Theme 2: Local identity

There was widespread support for a stronger neighbourhood approach and a place model to drive increased engagement, with repeated calls for *"co-design"* and consultation informing boundaries.

Faith and voluntary leaders highlighted that *"relationship is at the heart of what it means to be human,"* urging that *"an emphasis on neighbourhood-level engagement and the creation of place-based structures"* should underpin reform.

Theme 3: Devolution/strategic partnerships

Some stakeholders felt that West of England Combined Authority (WECA), based on patterns of economic activity and travel, was the right devolution partner. However, there was also support for considering broader Devolution models (e.g., three counties) to maximise economic opportunities and regional collaboration.

Some also saw merit in partnerships with Herefordshire / Worcestershire, especially for sectors like cyber and agri-tech. However, there was also concern that Devolution would result in "*loss of local voice"* and *"funding competition*".

Theme 4: Finances and implementation

A stakeholder stated that analysis shows *that "single unitary models incur lower transition and ongoing costs"* and *"clear benefits in annual gross savings, payback period and net savings".*

Business groups felt that *"the two unitary model would create confusion and lack identity outside of the county. They also felt that it would weaken our ability to promote the place for investment and create an artificial economic split"*.

Stakeholders mentioned the benefits of simplification, cost savings, and better use of resources under a single unitary authority.

A risk highlighted was the potential for *"paralysis in any of the seven existing authorities, during the period of change/implementation and public sector realignment"* and whether *"the anticipated savings being promoted in the LGR take into account the investment required to create the best countywide service departments"*.

There was also concern over central government interference potentially impacting coordinated implementation.

Stakeholder Meetings

Engagement took place with the following organisations and individuals:

Name	Organisation	Notes
Alistair Russell	Laing-Russell	Business Membership Group Member
Sam Holliday	Federation of Small Businesses	Representing 4,000 small business members in Gloucestershire
Helen Bojaniwska, Chair	Gloucestershire Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)	
Mark Gale, Chief Executive	Gloucestershire Gateway Trust	
Matt Lennard, Chief Executive	Gloucestershire VCS Alliance	On behalf of VCSE Strategic Partnership and Integrated Locality Partnership representatives in Gloucestershire. Eight organisations represented in meeting
Barbara Piranty, Chief Executive	Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC)	
Simon Pickering, Chair	Energy Business Group	14 individuals in meeting representing different businesses and other organisations
	Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers	Numerous attendees

Name	Organisation	Notes
	Federation of Principals – Further Education and Higher Education	Numerous attendees
	Gloucestershire Association of Special School Headteachers	Numerous attendees
	Gloucestershire Association of Secondary School Leaders	Numerous attendees
Francesca Inman	Chief Executive, Cheltenham Business Improvement District	
Andy Bates, Chief Financial Officer	Gloucestershire College	
Robert Nettleton, Chief Executive & Martyn Blackman, Chief Investment Officer	Bromford Housing	
Ruth Dooley, Partner	Hazelwoods LLP	
Anonymised	CyNam	
Rupert Waters	Social Value Gloucestershire	
Simon Carey, Managing Director	Barnwood Construction	
	Northrop Gumman	Name not shared for security reasons
Rob Stemp	Deepminds Ltd	
Bishop Rachel Treweek	Bishop of Gloucester	Joined by senior clergy including Deans of the Diocese
Michael Ratcliffe	MR Insurance Services & Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce	
	Adults Collaborative Board	A group of people with lived experience of adult social care
	Gloucestershire Care Providers Association	GCPA Board Members: • Cathy Andrews • Chris Atkins • Claire Hopkins • Della Gilby • Josh Isaac GCPA Staff:

Name	Organisation	Notes
		• Pip Wilson • Riki Moody
Sarah Bell-Hartley	Barclays Bank	
David Goodall	FW Capital	
Suzanne Hall-Gibbins, Angela Edwards	C2S Ltd	Business membership organisation
Chris Farr, Regional Adviser (South West),	Country Land and Business Association (CLA)	
Michael Jones, Warden	The Honourable Company of Gloucestershire	
	Construction and Infrastructure Business Group	Numerous attendees
Chris Haine, (Chief Executive), Kerrin Wilkinson (Strategic Support Officer)	Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC)	
	Cyber Tech Business Group	Numerous attendees
Ruth Greenwood (OPCC Chief Officer), Chris Nelson, (PCC), Maggie Blyth, Chief Constable	Gloucestershire OPCC, Gloucestershire Constabulary	
Sarah Truelove (CEO), Dame Gill Morgan (Chair)	Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board	
Phil Smith, Chief Executive	Business West	
Matt Bishop MP, Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, Alex McIntyre MP, Simon Opher MP, Cameron Thomas MP, Max Wilkinson MP, Roz Savage MP	Gloucestershire Members of Parliament	

Written responses

Some stakeholders, listed below, chose to provide further feedback via email or letter. Their responses, together with any other organisation or association who chose to write to GCC, are included below:

Name	Organisation
Matt Lennard, Chief Executive	On behalf of VCSE Strategic Partnership and ILP Representatives in Gloucestershire
Maggie Blyth, Chief Constable	Gloucestershire Constabulary
Stephen Limbrick, Chair on behalf of the group	Construction and Infrastructure Business Group
Fran Inman, Chief Executive	Cheltenham BID
Bishop Rachel Treweek	Diocese of Gloucester
Gill Blackwell, Chair	Hucclecote Parish Council
Gloucestershire FE Colleges (Federation of Principals)	Gloucestershire College, South Gloucestershire and Stroud College, Cirencester College, Hartpury College and University, National Star College
Hollie Wakefield	CyNam and Cyber Tech Business Group Member
Kerry Cunningham, Co-chair	Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers (GAPH)
Barbara Piranty, Chief Executive	Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC)
Steve Rudd, Associate Director of Strategy and Transformation and Gloucester GP	Gloucestershire GP Collaborative (GDOC)
Sarah Truelove, Chief Executive	Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board

Response from VCSE sector

Date: 05/08/2025
From: VCSE Strategic Partnership and ILP Representatives in Gloucestershire
To: Siobhan Farmer and Alex Khaldi

Firstly, we would like to thank Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) for engaging meaningfully with the VCSE sector throughout this process. We have welcomed the opportunity to take part in open and constructive dialogue about the future of local government in our county.

As representatives of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, we recognise the scale and significance of this reorganisation. The decisions taken will shape how communities are supported and how services are delivered for many years to come. It is therefore vital that the voice of the VCSE is heard and that the implications for our sector, our communities, and the wider population are carefully considered.

One of Gloucestershire's longstanding strengths lies in its coterminous structure. This alignment has enabled strong partnership working, effective strategic planning, and efficient use of resources across the public and VCSE sectors. A move away from this model, by dividing the county into two separate unitary authorities, would risk undermining these strengths. For the VCSE sector, the consequences could include duplicated relationship management, more complex and fragmented commissioning and monitoring processes, and reduced capacity for coordinated delivery at scale. These risks carry both financial and operational costs, particularly for organisations already operating under significant pressure.

We are also particularly concerned about the impact of structural changes on smaller, place-based VCSE organisations. Many of these groups are deeply rooted in specific districts and neighbourhoods and play a critical role in supporting their communities. Splitting the county into two unitary authorities could dilute the visibility and influence of such organisations. In contrast, a single countywide unitary, if designed with strong local engagement in mind, offers a more stable platform for inclusive, locally responsive governance. It would allow for consistent commissioning approaches, clearer points of contact, and reduced administrative complexity, ensuring that smaller groups are not required to navigate multiple, potentially inconsistent systems.

We understand that the move to a unitary structure is part of a broader national policy direction, as outlined in the 2024 English Devolution White Paper and reiterated in the June 2025 *Local Government Reorganisation: Summary of Feedback on Interim Plans*. These documents emphasise the importance of clear rationale in decision-making, particularly where population thresholds are concerned. However, we do not believe the case for splitting Gloucestershire into two unitaries

has been sufficiently made. There is currently no robust evidence that such a model would improve outcomes for residents or offer any advantage to the VCSE sector.

On the contrary, analysis from PricewaterhouseCoopers suggests that single unitary models incur lower transition and ongoing costs compared to two-unitary models. Furthermore, Gloucestershire's unique geography and the clustered distribution of employment, housing, and inequalities suggest that a single structure would be better placed to support equitable development. There is a real risk that a split would exacerbate existing disparities, particularly in rural western areas such as the Forest of Dean and reduce the strategic capacity of each authority to respond to future challenges.

We appreciate the ongoing engagement from GCC officers and the commitment to working with the VCSE. Our shared ambition is for a Gloucestershire where all communities thrive, inequality is actively addressed, and services are delivered efficiently, equitably, and in partnership with the people and organisations who know their communities best.

We believe that a single unitary authority offers the clearest path toward this vision by preserving the strengths of our current system while enabling more joined-up and responsive governance.

We look forward to continuing this important conversation and to working together to co-produce a future that works for everyone in Gloucestershire.

Signed,
Matt Lennard
CEO, Gloucestershire VCSE Alliance
On behalf of the VCSE Strategic Partnership and ILP Representatives

Response from Gloucestershire Constabulary

Gloucestershire Constabulary
Police Headquarters
No.1 Waterwells, Waterwells Drive
Quedgeley, Gloucester. GL2 2AN
www.gloucestershire.police.uk

Jo Walker

Chief Executive

Gloucestershire County council

Shire Hall

Gloucester

Thursday 7th August 2025

Dear Jo,

I am writing to congratulate you on behalf of Gloucestershire Constabulary on your recent Ofsted inspection of your Children's Services. This is a tremendous achievement and a complete acknowledgement of the work that Ann and your wider leadership team have done to drive through improvements for children in Gloucestershire.

I know that my chief officer group, led by our ACC for Crime, Rich Ocone, are absolutely clear that working with and supporting you in keeping children safe is a top priority for Gloucestershire Constabulary. I am reassured that you and I have already met as Lead Safeguarding Partners to outline the key areas in which we will work together, and I am supportive of our joint plans for the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Clearly, from our perspective it is vital that policing, alongside the local authority and health service fully discharge our joint statutory safeguarding duties and you have our full chief officer group support.

There are a couple of areas I thought it may be worth reinforcing as we move forward.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) and MASH

Firstly, I am aware that Rich will continue to work with Ann in overseeing the detail of evolving multi agency safeguarding arrangements and will continue to work with Ann and partners to make sure these are successful. We are keen to help shape these, and I know Rich and Ann will update us accordingly. We can also keep close in our CEO roles so we can create the most effective and coordinated response to child protection concerns, with improved communication and information sharing and putting children's needs and interests at the heart of our joint MASA. From our

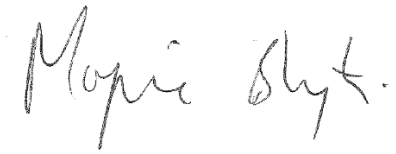
perspective our one MASH enables one front door for our respective workforce to ensure the right assessment, identification of risk and support for children requiring intervention or protection happens swiftly and robustly- we are keen to maintain one MASH to ensure consistency and coordination across the partnership, and swift assessments to respond to all children in need/requiring protection. I know that as you and colleagues work through your plans for local government and devolution you will be considering different options for the local authority. From a policing perspective, as PCC Chris Nelson and I reinforced when we met you and Cllr Lisa Spivey, we much prefer the positioning of one unitary authority so we can maintain and improve our coordination of vital capability, such as the MASH. Moreover, as we increase our analysis of our joint responses for children at risk of CSEA, criminal exploitation, going missing and the ever-increasing harm of online threat, we know that a focus on coordination, pooling of resources, identification of specialist capability and careful and swift risk assessment will be key. We are keen to ensure that we are not in a position where we dilute our current MASH capability but build on it together as a crucial front door to a range of services across the County, including police investigation and resource where required.

Secondly, we are really keen to ensure that our front-line workforce continues to receive the latest training and CPD on the threats facing children in our County. I am pleased that we have identified the joint training day on CSEA in February 2026 and we are also keen to develop our approach to responding to online harm, perhaps working with wider colleagues in CT policing and wider law enforcement. I know there are early meetings to take this forward already.

Finally, we will be disseminating our improvements since our national child protection inspection undertaken in December 2024 – we are pleased that we are making progress and would be keen to share this with you over the next month.

I look forward to working with you,

Kind regards,



Maggie Blyth, KPM MA, BA (Hons)
255558
T/Chief Constable
Gloucestershire Constabulary
Police Headquarters | No. 1 Waterwells | Quedgeley | GL2 2AN
Office – 01452 752313
www.gloucestershire.police.uk | X page | Facebook page

We are committed to being an anti-discriminatory organisation. This means not only acting in a non-discriminatory way, but addressing systemic inequalities, disadvantage and discrimination.

Response from Business Groups

For the kind attention of David Owen, Director of Economy and Environment, GCC

Ref: Responses from the Construction and Infrastructure Business Group on the Local Government Re-organisation and Devolution plans.

Date: 4th August 2025

LGR – Have you a preferred model?

- Our preference is the Single County Unitary Option.
- This should help to enable and create planned and managed strategic, sustainable growth and social regeneration throughout the county.
- It should ensure a whole county approach which does not disadvantage businesses in rural areas or urban hubs that continue to need long term investment and regeneration solutions
- This option meets the Government's size criteria

Devolution – Have you a preferred geography?

- Our preference is for Gloucestershire to be a standalone, single authority.
- If we are required to combine with another authority as part of Devolution, then we consider that South Gloucestershire has more established and relevant links with important business sectors in Gloucestershire including: - Defence, Cyber, Advanced Manufacturing, Creative, Education and Sustainable Energy.

What are the big economic opportunities from change?

- Planned strategic and sustainable growth.
- An opportunity to create centralised exemplar departments for key services e.g.
  A Planning / Sustainable Environmental Growth Team. This should be a new team with strong leadership and resources combining: - Planning, Highways (building on their delivery capacity), Planning Legals, mains Services, Water, flooding etc., working around solutions to, and promotion of, a Countywide Strategic Plan for economic regeneration and development (already in its infancy). This could be an exemplar department providing a proactive, quality and effective service across the whole of the county in a balanced, joined up and integrated manner.
- A Utilities Czar could be a new role focusing on coordination and cooperation between all parties over challenging needs and requirements of development and infrastructure, helping to minimise log jams and delays across the county. This would also help to avoid strategic, countywide, economic planning needs being affected by individual district priorities and boundaries e.g. J10 and Cyber Park.It is accepted that to create such a department and

service will require new investment in new professional skills and resources, however, the benefits are anticipated to be considerable in assisting sustainable growth and regeneration for Gloucestershire.

- It is hoped that the anticipated savings being promoted in the LGR take into account the investment required to create the best countywide service departments as the one broadly outlined above.

What are the economic threats from change?

- It is anticipated that there will be job losses (especially at senior level) to achieve LGR.
- In the short term there is likely to be delay and disruption seen in services, however, it is anticipated that these issues will be outweighed by the long-term benefits.
- Lack of investment in the right personnel and resources in the detailed planning, establishment and management of new operational service structures will impact on the effective change and value of LGR. This is essential for their success.
- Risk of reduction in Government funding to the county following savings promoted in LGR.

Response from Cheltenham Business Improvement District

From: Fran Inman
Date: Thursday, 7 August 2025 at 11:16
To: OWEN, David
Subject: Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

Good morning David,

Please see below how devolution and local government reorganisation could provide both pros and cons for Cheltenham Business Improvement District:

Key Threats to the BID from Devolution

- Loss of local voice: A larger devolved authority may centralise decisions, weakening Cheltenham's influence.
- Funding competition: Risk of resources being directed to bigger centres.
- Reduced business engagement: Complexity and distance from decision-making may disengage levy payers.
- Policy misalignment: Devolved priorities may not reflect Cheltenham's business needs or placemaking ambitions.

Opportunities for Cheltenham

- Access to greater funding: For transport, regeneration, and skills development.
- Stronger strategic voice: If BIDs are embedded in governance structures as a key stakeholder, we can influence regional economic strategy.
- Joined-up planning: Opportunity to align infrastructure, town centre growth, and skills strategies.
- Cheltenham as a hub: A chance to position Cheltenham as a key economic and cultural centre within a devolved geography.

Cheltenham BID does not take a position on the political decision of whether devolution or LGR should happen. However, if change does occur, we believe the voice of Cheltenham's businesses must be represented, local decision-making should be protected, and opportunities for investment in our town centre should be maximised.

Always happy to discuss further.

Best wishes,
Fran

Francesca Inman

Chief Executive

Response from Diocese of Gloucester

The Rt Revd Rachel Treweek
Lord Bishop of
Gloucester & Anglican
Bishop for HM Prisons
The Bishop's
Office 2 College Green,
Gloucester, GL1 2LR
bgloucester@glosdioc.org.uk
Tel: 01452 835511

+RG/AODP
29 July 2025

Siobhan Farmer
Director of Public Health
Gloucestershire County Council
Shire Hall
Westgate
Street
Gloucester
GL1 2TG

Dear Siobhan

Reflections following our recent meeting on Local Government Reform

Thank you again for meeting with the Bishop's Staff Team on 17 July 2025 to explore the implications of the proposed Local Government Reform for Gloucestershire. We appreciated the opportunity to contribute to your thinking at this formative stage and to reflect together on both the risks and opportunities for our communities.
As you noted, the shift to a unitary authority model raises complex questions of identity, representation, and place.

Our discussion focused heavily on the importance of identity. Gloucestershire as a whole lacks a single, cohesive identity. Many communities are orientated more towards external centres - Bristol, Birmingham, London, and even Wales—than towards a unifying county centre. This is reflected in regional media coverage, patterns of travel, and informal networks. Interestingly, many communities feel as if they are 'on the edge' (e.g. bordering Oxford, Wales etc).

As a diocese (covering an area from just south of Stratford upon Avon to just north of Bristol-the old ceremonial county) we have two Archdeaconries (Gloucester and Cheltenham), each with a number of what we call deaneries (clusters of parishes). The Gloucester deaneries are Gloucester City, Stroud, Forest, Wotton and Severn Vale; and the Cheltenham deaneries are Cheltenham, North Cotswolds, Tewkesbury and Winchcombe, and Cirencester.

About 10 years ago we did an analysis of the social context, and Benjamin Preece Smith (Diocesan Secretary) would be very willing to share that with you. One of the things we observed is three key areas in the county: Forest, Vale and Hill. Neither Cheltenham or Gloucester are big enough as single entities and are quite insular settlements. In Gloucestershire, a number of settlements are quite old, and several of the market towns act as hubs for the villages and surrounding areas e.g. Northleach/Moreton-in-Marsh,

Stow and Chipping Campden.

Each of the 42 dioceses in the church of England are grouped into regions. This diocese is formally in the SW region but we have removed ourselves to the West Midlands region as we have far more in common with Worcestershire and Herefordshire (not least regarding events such as the Three Counties Show and the Three Choirs Festival). We are curious about how connections with these counties are being considered in proposals.

Gloucestershire is actually relatively small compared to many large cities and counties, and we are concerned that the discussion is around dividing what is already small into something even smaller. What does this mean in terms of critical mass for the University, our schools etc? Dividing the county into east and west could weaken rather than strengthen local governance and complicate partnerships—particularly in areas such as education and health, where scale and consistency matter.

When we appoint new clergy to the diocese we always talk about the diocese as being large enough to be well-resourced and small enough that we know each other. In all of your discussions, we would want to keep an emphasis on relationship, which is something that is not emphasised enough in political thinking, new housing, governance and policies etc. As Christians, we believe that relationship is at the heart of what it means to be human and to be made in the image of God, and we believe that people of different faiths and of no faith would recognise the fact that, in the UK, we have diminished the importance of relationship across so much of our society. We would want you to be asking questions about relationship and community. Thus, we strongly support your emphasis on neighbourhood-level engagement and the creation of place-based structures that reflect where people actually live and relate. This is what we endeavour to live as a diocese, encouraging local community engagement.

We were encouraged to hear that any neighbourhood model will be co-designed and that consultation will inform how boundaries are drawn. We would welcome the opportunity to support that work and would be glad to contribute parish and deanery mapping to help build a fuller picture of local networks.

In all of this, there are also questions about social identity. There is undoubtedly much greater diversity in Gloucestershire than some people wish to acknowledge, not least regarding social background and racial diversity. In areas which are often characterised as middle-class and affluent, there are many pockets of hardship, and much greater inequality than many people want to recognise. I also believe we have to be asking the hard questions about why young people choose not to come back to Gloucestershire once they have left home.

Finally, it was good to acknowledge that, in all these discussions, we are certainly not saying that the structures we currently have work really well. Some district councils are performing better than others, and we note that authority and influence are pretty poor in other areas. For example, we would certainly want to acknowledge that the city centre in Gloucester has changed hugely, and no one seems to have a grip on owning it or bringing about change.

Having said that, we did also comment on the fact that Gloucestershire punches above its weight when it comes to charities, voluntary organisations and the third sector. How will proposed changes affect the activity of civil society?

Finally, we were glad to note the commitment to continued engagement and consultation.

Thank you again for your time and partnership. Please do keep us informed as the process develops - we would be very glad to remain part of the conversation.

Yours sincerely.



Copy to:

Benjamin Preece-Smith (Diocesan Secretary)

Lucy Taylor (Head of Diocesan Comms & Engagement & Deputy Diocesan Secretary)

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Registered in England: 162165. Registered Office: Gloucester Diocesan Board of Finance, Church House, College Green, Gloucester, GL1 2LY. Registered Charity Number: 251234.

Response from Gloucestershire Further Education Colleges

Campus, Llanthony Rd
Gloucester GL2 5JQ
0345 155 2020

29th July 2025

To whom it may concern

Response from the Gloucestershire Further Education Colleges to Unitary Authority Proposals for Gloucestershire

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing discussion around local government reform in Gloucestershire. Further education (FE) colleges play a central role in delivering technical and professional education, improving social mobility, and addressing the region's skills needs. Whilst we will ultimately work proactively with whichever model is adopted, we strongly favour the creation of a single all-county unitary authority. This model offers the most coherent, equitable and strategic approach to supporting learners, employers, and the county's economic development.

We believe that option has the following advantages:

- Strategic Alignment Across the County - A single authority enables a joined-up approach to economic development, transport, housing, and education -all of which are essential to integrated skills planning.
- Simplified Relationships - Colleges currently operate county-wide, working with multiple stakeholders and systems. A single point of engagement would reduce duplication, streamline planning, and improve accountability.
- Efficient Commissioning and Funding - Fragmentation risks are likely to increase commissioning costs, with more overhead and bureaucracy -meaning less funding reaches the learner. A single authority offers economies of scale and consistent commissioning decisions.
- Equitable and Impact-Led Resource Allocation - A county-wide authority is better positioned to allocate capital and revenue funding where it delivers the greatest impact for learners and employers, not simply within rigid administrative boundaries.
- Unified Voice in Devolution and Investment - A single authority would be a stronger and more coherent partner in any future devolution deals or combined authority arrangements. This is essential to secure fair access to devolved budgets and influence key strategic decisions.

Whether through an East/West division or a "Greater Gloucester" configuration, we have significant concerns about the impact of splitting Gloucestershire into two unitary authorities. Some of us already have experience or working across multiple local

government areas and the attendant administrative and strategic consequences which include:

- Multiple EHCP and Transition Pathways - Working with multiple local authorities risks increasing inconsistent approaches to EHCPs, transition planning, SEND funding, and placement decisions - adding complexity and creating inequity for vulnerable learners.
- Diverging Priorities and Governance - having to align to multiple sets of political priorities, governance structures, and reporting processes. This reduces clarity for the communities we serve and adds pressure to strategic and operational planning.
- Fragmented Transport, Careers and Support Services - Inconsistent approaches to transport policy, travel subsidies, and wraparound support (e.g. mental health, careers advice) can undermine participation and progression -especially for rural and disadvantaged learners.
- Risk of Geographic Ring-Fencing of Funding - If future funding (including capital) becomes restricted to specific local authority areas, this creates distortions in investment decisions and reduces the ability to deliver provision where it is most needed - especially where college catchments span boundaries.
- Devolution Misalignment - There is a risk that different parts of Gloucestershire could become aligned to different combined authorities or mayoral areas. This would fragment influence, reduce coherence, and complicate FE's ability to engage with regional priorities.

In conclusion, based on our experience and the operational realities of FE delivery, we believe that the single all-county unitary model represents the best option; and have reservations about any structure that splits the county and introduces duplication, inconsistency, or competition for resources.

We look forward to engaging further as proposals develop.
Signed on behalf of:

Gloucestershire College, South Gloucestershire and Stroud College, Cirencester College, Hartpury College and University, National Star

Response from Hucclecote Parish Council

HUCCLECOTE PARISH COUNCIL

Ms Jo Walker Chief
Executive
Gloucestershire County Council Shire
Hall
Westgate Street
Gloucester
GLI 2TJ

13th August 2025

Dear Ms Walker

Hucclecote Parish Council discussed the recent Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) engagement exercise that is being undertaken at its 28 July meeting, and we could not understand why the survey did not clearly ask which of the three current LGR options we preferred.

As we could not state our preference, we felt we had to set out why we strongly support the single countywide unitary option.

- It is likely to result in the most cost effective and efficient delivery of services.
- It will also provide the opportunity for early Community Governance Reviews would enable the uniting of fractured communities to be considered: -
  (a) The majority of the existing Hucclecote Parish within Tewkesbury and the remainder ofHucclecote currently within the City of Gloucester.
  (b) The creation of a single parish to cover Coopers Edge, which currently straddles the border between Tewkesbury Borough and Stroud and is split between three parish councils.

It should also be noted that the single unitary option is also supported by the County Councillor for the Brockworth Division, as well as the Borough Councillors for the Churchdown Brookfield and Hucclecote Ward.

We believe the suggested two unitary split of East and West Gloucestershire would permanently re-enforce the current difficult local boundaries for local communities.

We therefore seek your assurance that you will actively advocate for a single unitary council for the county.

Yours sincerely



Gill Blackwell
Chair of Hucclecote Parish Council

CC:
Cllr Lisa Spivey, County Council Leader
Alistair Cunningham. CEO Tewkesbury Borough Council Cllr
Richard Stanley, Tewkesbury Borough Leader
Jon McGinty, MD of Gloucester City Council Jeremy
Hilton, Gloucester City Leader
Alex McIntryre, MP Gloucester
Cameron Thomas, MP Tewkesbury Max
Wilkinson, MP Cheltenham Matt
Bishop, MP Forest of Dean Dr Simon
Opher, MP Stroud
Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, MP North Cotswold

Response from Cyber Tech Group
From:
Sent: 07 August 2025 12:37
To: CAMPBELL, Karen
Cc: WOODHOUSE, Paul
Subject: Re: Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

Hello Karen,

Thank you for the note. Please find my feedback below.

Whilst I do not have a deep understanding of the implications of selecting a single unitary authority, or two unitary authorities, or the Greater Gloucester model, my preferred model would be a single unitary authority. There are ovbious benefits like cost savings and efficiencies, alongside the ability to develop a strong narrative and plan for the whole of Gloucestershire which competes on a national and international level. I am not sure how much I buy into a couple of arguments specifically put forward about the east/west model. Specifically:

1. Whether the average person understands the role of their local councillor (especially the younger population), how often they utilise their local councillor and their MP, and whether a person identifies with their ward, their town/city, or their county. It would be interested to know what the turnout of the population voting in the local elections versus the general election in the 6 authorities, as this would likely show how much of the population would be affected by less localisation.
2. Forest of Dean being put into the clean energy cluster - they have huge advanced manufacturing capability and so would surely align more with the defence and advanced manufacturing organisations in Tewkesbury for example
3. Cotswolds in the secure tech cluster - not sure what capability exists in this authority for this rationale

Regarding devolution, preference seems to be WECA as government has made it clear funding will be funnelled through mayoral authorities, yet there is a slight concern that Gloucestershire's tech cluster will be overshadowed by Bristol and Bath, and the funding they have already received. If mayoral elections could be held for the Herefordshire/Worcestershire option, I would welcome more information on Worcestershire and Herefordshire's key sectors to think about alignment. There is a defence alignment that I am aware of already, for example.

The main economic opportunity I see is funding, and how the accessibility of this funding will be impacted by the option we choose.

The main threat I see is the disparity in the services and the costs associated with them provided by each Council, and how future service provision and associated costs will be calculated, as this is what will impact the average person the most. E.g. Cheltenham and Gloucestershire's licensing fees are more expensive than the other 4 authorities, and Stroud has the highest council tax rate in the county. I also mentioned above about competing for funding with other established strategic authorities and the places within them.

Thank you,

Member of Cyber Tech Group – Name withheld for security reasons

Response from Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers (GAPH)

Director for Education
Gloucestershire County Council Shire Hall,

Westgate St
Gloucester GL1 2TG

Sent by email to Kirsten Harrison cc:
Ann James

16.07.25

Dear Kirsten

Thank you so much for the meeting on Thursday 10.07.25 and for introducing us to the potential change for Gloucestershire.

As Co-Chair of Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers (GAPH), on behalf of the Executive, I am writing to you in your capacity as Director of Education, to set out our views on this proposal.

We would have waited until the GAPH Executive Meeting in September, which you will attend, however, as you explained in your presentation, you have a meeting on 17th July 2025, with the Chief Executives group and we therefore wanted to make our position clear on this very important issue for Gloucestershire as a whole and in particular the Education sector, for which the District Councils have no jurisdiction, nor responsibility.
The Government Criteria for Change:

- *Establish a single tier for the whole of the county area*
- *The right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand shocks (aim for 500k population or more)*
- *High quality public services with specific mention of 'crucial' services (children's, SEND, homelessness)*
- *How devolution will be unlocked*
- *Enabling stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment*

As conveyed by the unanimous views of the members of GAPH Executive, with representation from each Partnership, we hold the view that one, single tier, Unitary Authority is the only workable solution for Gloucestershire, with reasons including the following:

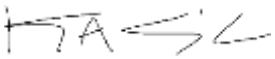
- Children's Services and the Education sector's current working model (countywide) for statutory duties (for example: Admissions, EHCPs and timely access to support for children with SEND, Hospital Education, Social Care) would need to be split in an East/West model, creating potential difference and division over time, due to the further potential different political leadership.
- How would the Designated Schools Grant this be apportioned fairly and equitably, with

schools located as they are geographically in an East/West model?

- The potential costs of splitting the single authority responsibilities of Children's Services-Education into two authorities will lead to a long period of protracted negotiation and uncertainty. You cited Northamptonshire as an example of disaggregation, which, having created two Authorities in 2018, only in August 2024 finally came to agreement over the financial settlement.
- The standard for a Unitary Authority is 500,000. The current county size is 650,000. Creating East and West would make those two Authorities smaller than the proposed standard size, which would making the delivery of public services more challenging and not achieve the same economies of scale that a single Unitary Authority would make, creating higher overall vulnerability to 'shocks'.
- How would the current countywide High Needs debt be apportioned fairly, in a two-tier system?
- Forming two Authorities from one, would create an additional border for the county and result in working an 'out of county' services model, for services which sit within the same postcode.
- The geography of schools means that schools working in Partnerships, Federations and/or in Gloucestershire MATS could find themselves working with two different Authorities, making effective and efficient running of these settings more challenging.

In your meeting with the Chief Executive Group, we are seeking written reassurance that you and Ann James, as our representatives, advocate strongly the view of GAPH and our position that a single county Unitary Authority is the only workable solution to this Government Strategy.

Yours sincerely,



Kerry Cunningham
Co-Chair of GAPH and Executive Headteacher of The Longlevens Primary Federation

Response from GRCC

Formal Feedback from GRCC
Local Government Reorganisation County Options

There is an overwhelming need for the whole process of Local Government Reorganisation to be properly managed due to the risk of becoming a major distraction, take longer to implement, and cost significantly more to achieve meaningful rationalisation.

GRCC has a role in supporting Parish and Town Councils, whose concern is that this first tier of government will get either bypassed or forgotten or, worse still, be required to take on, possibly by default, delivery of local services without the wherewithal, especially financial, to ensure continued, viable service delivery.

The concept of Local Neighbourhoods, with populations of between 20- 50,000 is an interesting one, possibly comparable with the old Rural District Councils. However, there are currently major questions which remain unanswered:

- How would the Local Neighbourhoods be configured?
- Where would the local alignments be set?
- What responsibilities and powers would they have?
- What relationships would they have with the upper tier?

Within these higher population configurations, smaller communities, particularly those situated on the periphery of the county, perceive a risk of being subsumed into larger clusters with which they perhaps share neither natural connections nor established relationships. More concerning still is the fear of being entirely overlooked. Such communities frequently express apprehension that their perspectives will be marginalised, leaving them with limited or no opportunity to have their voices acknowledged or meaningfully heard

GRCC is in a position to support local communities in the transition to new models of local government and enable them to step in to help provide local services. Most of these services are currently delivered by District Councils which may otherwise struggle, for example: management of allotments, playing fields and open spaces; maintenance of highway verges; management of public toilets etc.

It is noticeable that there is no GCC cabinet member with a specific remit / portfolio for rural. Gloucestershire is the 33rd most rural authority in terms of its geographic area. It is in the top 20% of authorities in terms of rurality, and 87.5% of its area is classified as rural, therefore a specific rural focus would be beneficial. We would of course be happy to support this work as rural specialists.

A question that needs to be answered also is whether Devolution would come with a recalculation of funding for Gloucestershire.

Options Appraisal

Single Unitary Authority

A single unitary authority meets government criteria in terms of size, will be more cost effective, and will eliminate the confusion of the current fragmented county and district council system.

It also preserves 'Brand Gloucestershire' – a clear identity which is stronger with all constituent towns and parishes taken together, speaking with one voice on a regional and national level. 'Brand Gloucestershire' is more marketable as a single countywide authority. It would provide a strong, cohesive entity which would play its full part in the operation of any upper tier Strategic Authority, irrespective of whether Gloucestershire is combined with WECA or with Herefordshire / Worcestershire.

The single unitary option will also provide an opportunity to create strong community hubs to address local matters, supporting small communities.

The single unitary option makes eminent sense and is the only option which would achieve the Government's stated objectives, with the following benefits:

- With a population of circa 652,000 it would meet the Government's aspiration for Councils to have a population of over 500,000. One unitary authority would be a considerable size, but would mirror the county's current footprint.
- The current three tier authority model is outdated and creates dissention between the differing tiers, especially over planning, waste management, etc., as well as causing confusion for communities as to 'who does what'. The single unitary is simpler, saving the most amount of money, and communities already know this governance model.
- It has the potential to achieve significant operational and financial savings by:
    - removing duplication of service delivery, e.g., planning, waste collection / disposal, etc.;
    - rationalising property, particularly office accommodation;
    - securing economy of scale benefits generally
- It has the potential to:
    - strengthen the County's voice at national and regional levels;
    - achieve effective strategic alliances with Health, Police, Highways;
    - provide more attractive career pathways for staff to progress, which will in turn help recruitment and retention;
    - enable proper countywide strategic thinking and planning to take place, especially in terms of:
        - land use disposition;
        - new housing allocations;

  - proper forward planning;
  - development of creative economic models to enhance growth and employment;
  - flood management
- It removes confusion in the minds of the general public and could provide opportunities to establish genuine 'One Stop Shop' Local Service Delivery points around the county
- From the perspective of the rural communities we serve and smaller VCS organisations and groups we support, there is a real fear around loss of voice and loss of funding to support the most vulnerable

East and West Option

The only real benefit is the improvement on the current seven district and county council arrangement for most of the reasons set out above, albeit to a lesser extent due to there still being two councils operating within the geographic county area instead of one. It would also allow communities to keep a local identity, and not feel as if they are being swallowed up by the county.

If this option were to be pursued there would be an overwhelming case for not aligning it around the current District Council configuration because this would perpetuate, indeed exacerbate current boundary anomalies and tensions. Much of this is currently being played out in the case being made by Gloucester City Council to create a Greater Gloucester to overcome largely historical inconsistencies created in 1974 when Tewkesbury Borough Council in particular was established.

The major disadvantage of the two-council split model is that it could lead to the disaggregation of services currently delivered on a countywide basis by Gloucestershire County Council, such as Social Care, Education, Fire and Rescue, Highways Management, Libraries, County Farms, etc., into two separate organisations. It raises concerns around consistency and quality of care provision, such as mental health and social care services, where Gloucestershire County Council has taken on responsibility for more of these services from Gloucestershire Health and Care Trust.

More boundaries add complexity for support and service delivery, contracting may be become a logistical nightmare, and ultimately it could result in fragmented and inequitable service provision across the county. This split of services into two organisations could be avoided by joint board or lead authority models being put into place, but this would largely defeat the object of adopting this option in the first place. This model would also exacerbate cross-border issues, especially in health provision, cause confusion for communities, and cause a wealth divide.

Overall, adoption of this model would be a major missed opportunity to create an organisation with identity and presence, and many of the benefits of a single council option would be significantly diluted or dissipated.

General Issues

Affordable Housing delivery

Local Government Reorganisation offers both potential benefits and drawbacks in terms of affordable housing delivery. While the pros include greater clarity for residents, potentially more efficient and cost-effective service delivery due to larger scale, and easier strategic decision making, these must be balanced against a list of cons that might involve a key potential loss of local responsiveness, difficulties in achieving projected savings, and challenges in boundary alignment with functional economic areas.

Rural areas already face significant challenges in delivering affordable housing due to a combination of factors including: high house and land prices; area designation; relatively low wages and limited development opportunities. These issues are exacerbated by factors like second homes, short-term lets and restrictive planning policies.

Differing policies within the districts in terms of planning and allocation policies are also an issue. When we add that loss of “localness and clarity” that is essential in the delivery of truly affordable homes to those challenges, the difficulties faced by those in dire housing need in rural Gloucestershire become insurmountable. We have started to witness areas within rural Gloucestershire that are becoming gated, dying communities with unbalanced demographics, where socioeconomic development is stagnant. The reduction in the number of Local Registered Providers is becoming a real issue as more and more merge, with a significant and detrimental effect on the delivery of small numbers of homes in rural villages. However, Rural Affordable Housing is finally being recognised as a significant and important topic for everyone. It is about much more than just building a house; it is actually the foundation of everything else in our society.

Affordable housing must become a KPI of every major sector, be they Public or Private, and this is especially true in rural areas such as Gloucestershire. Affordable Rural Housing delivery is crucial for a thriving economy and society, impacting heavily upon various industries and communities as well as public sector bodies such as health and education. This means that policies and initiatives, including Local Government Reorganisation, must consider the housing needs of rural regions. In the refresh of the Leadership Gloucestershire group, GRCC feels decision makers should seriously consider a place for planning. Having this level of expertise available to the group would enable efficient countywide strategic planning to take place in terms of housing, land use, and the economy.

As LGR emerges in Gloucestershire it is vital that there is a uniform and consistent approach from all sectors at all times. The more boundaries and borders there are, the more difficulties and costs faced by sectors such as Health, Education and the Police, and the delivery of Rural Affordable Housing becomes even more challenging. This at a time when all sectors need to be able to work coherently and seamlessly together in order to deliver sustainable, quality services that can also work together, forming strong partnerships.

One Health Authority, one Education Authority, one Police and Emergency Authority, one Planning Authority, and one Rural Affordable Housing organisation could mean faster, more efficient partnership-based delivery of affordable housing. Lack of affordable housing affects all

areas including economic growth, social equity, health and wellbeing, education, hospitality and retail.

In conclusion, as a neutral, independent Voluntary Sector organisation and rural specialist whose role is to represent and serve the communities of Gloucestershire, we hope to have provided a balanced and constructive view/opinion of both options based on over a century of understanding and knowledge of the county, along with our multi-level connections and reach into those communities.

August 2025

Response from GDOC (Gloucestershire's GP provider organisation)

Hi Alex,

We tested this with our GP Collaborative Summit today, comprising all of our Gloucestershire GP practices and Primary Care Networks. There was a clear majority decision from our practices, which has informed the response that I'm pleased to provide below:

Gloucestershire General Practice Collaborative, on behalf of our general practice providers across Gloucestershire, welcome the opportunity to comment on proposals for future local government structures in our county. Our primary objective in providing this feedback is ensuring that the health and care system best supports the delivery of high-quality, sustainable and integrated care for our population and the patients we serve on a daily basis.

We believe that a **single unitary authority for Gloucestershire** would bring clear benefits compared to establishing two smaller unitary authorities:

1. **Clearer Alignment with NHS Structures**
   - Gloucestershire is a clearly defined 'place' within the new Gloucestershire and BNSSG Integrated Care Board (ICB). Furthermore, our primary care structures are also aligned to our Gloucestershire footprint, such as our GP Collaborative, our Local Medical Committee (LMC) and our Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC). A single unitary authority would align with this geography, avoiding the duplication and fragmentation of relationships that two authorities would inevitably create.
   - This alignment would streamline joint planning for population health, prevention, and service delivery.

2. **Simplified Partnership Working**
   - General practice is engaging in system-level programmes, through our GP Collaborative, our Primary Care Networks, our Integrated Locality Partnerships and our ICB. Having one local government partner makes collaboration more straightforward, saving time and resources.
   - A two-unitary model would double the number of political, officer, and governance forums practices would need to engage with, stretching already limited leadership capacity in primary care.

3. **Consistency for Patients, Communities and Neighbourhoods**
   - A single authority provides residents with a more consistent offer for public health, social care and other services that directly affect health and wellbeing.
   - In contrast, a two-unitary model risks divergence of policy and provision, leading to inequities between communities and confusion for patients, potential boundaries in our

recognised primary care networks and neighbourhoods and inequalities being exacerbated by two-unitary authorities with potentially quite divergent economic positions.

4. **Efficiency and Value for Money**
   - From a health system perspective, the fewer the boundaries, the less duplication in commissioning, contracting, and monitoring arrangements. This efficiency ultimately releases more resource for front-line services.
   - At a time when both the NHS and local government face severe financial pressures, avoiding duplication is essential.

5. **Stronger Strategic Voice**
   - A single Gloucestershire authority would be a more robust and influential partner when working with NHS England, regional bodies, and government departments on health and care issues.
   - It would reduce the risk of competing priorities or fragmented lobbying across different councils.

Conclusion

Gloucestershire General Practice Collaborative strongly favours a single unitary authority for the county. This model is most compatible with the way health services are organised now and also with the future plans for organisation, best supports effective partnership working, and minimises duplication. Most importantly, it provides the clearest and fairest route to improving outcomes for patients, communities and neighbourhoods across Gloucestershire.

With best wishes,

Steve

Steve Rudd MBA | Associate Director of Strategy and Transformation and Gloucestershire GP Collaborative Management Lead | G DOC LTD | Quayside House, Quay Street, Gloucester, GL1 2TZ | Mobile: 07795 685090 | Email: stephen.rudd@nhs.net



G DOC LTD

Registered Office: Quayside House, Quay Street, Gloucester GL1 2TZ

Registered in England and Wales, CRN 08230041

Response from Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB)





2nd October 2025

NHS Gloucestershire
Shire Hall
Westgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 2TG

PA. tara.carr@nhs.net

Jo Walker
Chief Executive
Gloucestershire County Council
Shire Hall
Westgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 2TG

(sent via email)

Dear Jo

Local Government Reorganisation

Following the ICB Board seminar agenda item on Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution that Sarah Scott led I am writing to give the feedback on behalf of the ICB to the three options presented. The strong preference from the ICB is for the Single County Unitary option. The key points that we felt supported this view were as follows:

- Having developed social services at a whole Gloucestershire level we think it would be a backward step to move to two social work teams for the county. This would increase complexity for those working in our NHS services, to have two sets of processes and teams to engage with to ensure the flow of people through our care.
- There is also significant risk that we have a higher concentration of people with complex needs living in the West of the County because as commissioners of services that have been driving to achieve best value for the whole county we have physically placed certain care settings where property prices are lower (in the West of the County). This is a risk that in an East/West split of unitary authorities that there will be an imbalance of responsibility for high need groups that will cause unforeseen consequences and exacerbate inequalities.
- The PWC financial option analysis shows a clear advantage to having a single unitary authority from a financial perspective and in a period when all public services are under considerable pressure to deliver best value to our population we feel this is an important consideration.
- We recognise that we need to work closely with you to ensure we continue to shift our care models to meet the changing needs of our population. This is best done in neighbourhoods and we feel the option described as Greater Gloucester may disturb some of those natural communities and the good strong working that we have developed in our localities.

Becky Parish has shared evidence with Siobhan and Sarah from previous public engagement exercises which shows little difference in what is important to people from their public services.

I hope this response is helpful as part of the business case development and I am happy to discuss this further at our next 1:1 if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Truelove

Sarah Truelove
Chief Executive Officer
NHS Gloucestershire

cc: Shane Devlin
Jane Cummings

Appendix 5: Detailed Options Analysis

This appendix provides additional detailed commentary assessing a **Single Unitary Authority (1UA)** and **Two Unitary Authorities (2UA - East and West)**, against the nine criteria agreed for this business case.

Detailed analysis of **single unitary (1UA) model** against criteria

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Alignment Summary	RAG
1. Sensible single tier of local government	A) Establishes a single tier of local government for the whole of the area concerned.	Under a 1UA model, the current councils would be replaced by a single authority (albeit legally GCC would be a 'continuing authority'). This would remove structural duplication and create one point of democratic and operational accountability for all services across Gloucestershire. • **Removes two-tier complexity** – Seven existing councils (one county, six districts) would be replaced by one organisation delivering all functions • **Simplifies resident experience** – Residents would contact one council for all local services, reducing confusion and referral between tiers. • **Consolidates statutory roles** – All key statutory officers would sit within a single executive team, streamlining leadership and governance. • **Enables consistent locality governance** – The Place Model for Gloucestershire proposes establishing Neighbourhood Partnerships in every part of the county. A single council can embed this consistently across all areas, regardless of historic district structure. • **Supports whole-system working** – Joined-up delivery becomes easier when strategic and local functions sit within one structure. • **Meets MHCLG expectations** – The model delivers a complete single-tier structure for the area, as defined by government policy.	G

	B) Sensible economic breakdown: with a tax base which does not create undue inequalities.	The 1UA model allows financial variation across Gloucestershire to be managed within a single council. This enables redistribution between areas, protects against localised risk, and supports a unified approach to tax and budget strategy. • **Enables pooled resources** - Council tax, business rates, and government funding can be allocated based on need across the whole county. • **Supports financial equity** – A single UA can help drive more equitable growth across the county as a whole balancing any disparities that might exist in productivity and growth across individual areas at the moment (e.g. Business Growth in the East is 1.10% v/s -1.15% in the West). • **Simplifies council tax alignment** - Aligning current tax levels has reduced political and legal complexity under one council. • **Increases fiscal stability**– A larger tax base and merged reserves lower the risk of localised budget pressures and increases the ability to effectively manage Local Authority Debt (£819 for countywide v/s £674 in the East and £948 in the West). • **Allows single financial strategy** – One Medium-term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and capital programme can be used to balance investment and risk county-wide, including place-based regeneration and neighbourhood infrastructure.	G
	C) Sensible geographic breakdown: which will help increase housing supply and meet local needs.	The 1UA model keeps Gloucestershire's existing administrative and strategic footprint intact. This aligns with current health, community safety, transport, and economic delivery boundaries, reducing disruption and supporting long-term coordination. • **Alignment with existing partner geographies** – The ICB, Police, Fire and NHS all operate on a countywide footprint, reducing need for renegotiation or duplication e.g. in terms of engagement activities. • **Maximise the Council's influence with the ICB -** Given the proposed changes with ICBs looking to take on more local authority areas, retaining a single UA across the county will enable Gloucestershire to retain a strong voice.	G

		• **Avoids the creation of administrative internal borders** – A 1UA structure removes the risk of current countywide services or geographies being split (e.g. Children's admissions, SEND pathways, acute hospital discharge pathways etc). • **Supports more strategic spatial planning** – The model enables Local Plans, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and the Gloucestershire Infrastructure Strategy to be aligned across the county. This would ensure strategic projects such as The Forum project in Gloucester City and the Berkeley Site low carbon energy park in the West are planned in a coordinated way, alongside shared housing and infrastructure corridors that link Gloucester, Cheltenham, and Tewkesbury • **Simplifies strategic countywide structures that already exist** – There are already numerous examples of successful countywide partnerships across all seven councils including Climate Leadership Gloucestershire; Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP); Gloucestershire Strategic Housing Partnership etc. These partnerships enable strategic countywide coordination and leadership for things like housing priorities, rough sleeping, cross cutting climate issues etc. A 1UA model makes this even simpler to drive with a single council. • **Strategic management of homelessness and housing land supply**- A single council could be better positioned to take a more joined up approach to homelessness and housing supply countywide, which could reduce variation in housing capacity and support in meeting the increasing demand and complexity particularly in temporary accommodation across the county. This would allow strategic allocation of sites, directing development to areas with greater capacity while managing demand hotspots. Consistent policy could be applied to meet the countywide shortfall against the five-year supply target (East has 4.97 years and West has 3.83 years, with a countywide shortfall of 4.37 years).	
2. Right-sized local government	A) A population of 500,000 or more (unless	The 1UA option: • **Meets statutory benchmark** – The combined population of ~659,000 is above the MHCLG target of 500,000 or more.	**G**

	specific scenarios make this unreasonable)	• **Supports strategic scale** – This population size enables the council to manage key statutory functions (e.g. ASC, education, planning) with scale and consistency. • **Aligns with successful precedent** – The population aligns closely with other approved unitaries (e.g. North Yorkshire, Cornwall, Buckinghamshire).	
	B) Supports efficiencies and value for money for council taxpayers	By consolidating governance, systems, and staffing, the 1UA model offers significant opportunities to reduce duplication and generate savings over time. • **Delivery of potential net revenue savings from reorganisation of ~£21.1m per annum.** • **Reduces duplication** – Only one set of ICT systems, governance structures, and senior statutory roles e.g. one Director of Adults Social Care Services (DASS), one Director of Public Health (DPH) etc. • **Streamlines service delivery** – A single operating model for each service (e.g. One revs and bens team and set of policies and not seven) avoids overlapping teams and inconsistent standards or support offers for residents across the county. • **Contracting economies of scale** – Significant benefits from aggregation of contracts (particularly noting bringing together Line of Business system contracts for service areas etc). In addition to this, increased economies of scale and procurement leverage of procuring a single contract (as opposed to six smaller ones) for specialist services e.g. cyber, contaminated land, asbestos etc.	G
	C) Improves capacity and supports the council to withstand	The 1UA model offers stronger resilience, especially in high-cost and high-risk areas like ASC and CSC. In addition to this, through aggregation of some fairly small and stretched teams, there is increased resilience in areas where there are already significant workforce recruitment and retention challenges and scarce professional expertise and capacity.	G

	financial shocks	• **Enablers better management of significant imbalances in demand across the county –** In particular, within ASC, there is significantly higher demand and cost for working age adults (specifically for supported living) between the East and West of the county. A single UA can deploy resources (incl. finances and staffing) more flexibly to service this imbalance in demand. • **Increased workforce resilience for highly qualified and specialist service professionals –** Skills sets which are already highly scarce (with national shortages) e.g. environmental health officers within public health, planners, social workers benefit from being in single organisation to enable pooling of expertise, support succession planning and reducing the risk of exacerbating workforce challenges through duplicating or splitting staff across multiple organisations (or creating competition between authorities for the same staff). • **Frontline workforce flexibility –** A single UA can flexibly deploy front line staff incl. casual staff across the county to support delivery e.g. Library staff currently working across multiple libraries or even the Registrars team maintaining a single pool of c.80 casual celebrants who are deployed flexibly to deliver weddings and ceremonies across the county. • **Supports statutory resilience** – A single set of statutory roles reduces recruitment pressure and minimises significant additional ongoing costs of senior roles. • **Protects Place Model delivery** – Central support functions (finance, HR, data) are key to enabling locality-level delivery across Gloucestershire. • **Strong support resilience for front-line services –** Core services such as fire and rescue rely on local authority support services and financial support e.g. HR, legal, finance etc to support delivery. A single larger UA is likely to offer strong financial resilience and create less administrative burden of apportioning out support costs etc. • **Decreased senior management capacity –** Due to the aggregation of senior management roles, the 1UA model could potentially have a reduced capacity at senior levels to sustain financial shocks	

	D) Manageable transition costs	A single authority model allows for less structural duplication and avoids the cost and complexity of standing up two separate organisations, through reduced disaggregation • **Requires creation of only one new authority and legal structure, minimising transition costs** - estimated to be ~£21.3m. *Assumption based on assuming a continuing authority being in place.* • **Simplifies legal setup** – Only one constitution, shadow authority, electoral review, consultation and governance framework would need to be designed, approved and run. • **Reduces portfolio and programme duplication** – A single implementation portfolio required to manage the transition and implementation. • **Lower ICT migration and integration costs –** Currently shared countywide systems such as Liquid Logic (for ASC) would not need to be disaggregated or duplicated. In addition to this, data and systems migration could be managed on a service by service once (as opposed to multiple sets of systems migrations activities for each service). Lastly, one single website can be developed for the new council. • **Minimises duplication of senior roles** – One executive team avoids the need to recruit and fund parallel statutory leadership posts which can be significantly costly. • **Reduces duplication of county input –** Current county council stakeholders can be a part of a single implementation portfolio and would not need to spend additional time in multiple meetings, governance forums, working groups (i.e. county council stakeholders would need to be involved in all conversations if there were multiple UAs being created given disaggregation implications). • **Reduced risk of disruption to traded services –** Reduced risk of disrupting effective traded services that operate on a countywide footprint particularly in relation to services provided to schools.	G

3. High quality, sustainable services	*A) Improves local government and service delivery, avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation*	The 1UA model would preserve current integrated delivery structures in areas like social care, education, and public health. A single unitary within Gloucestershire, if designed with strong local engagement in mind, offers a more stable platform for inclusive, locally responsive governance. Colleagues currently operate countywide, working with multiple stakeholders and systems. A single point of engagement would reduce duplication and improve accountability. • **Preserves current service integration** – Existing countywide delivery in areas such as transport, ASC, CSC, SEND, and safeguarding would remain intact, avoiding risk to safeguarding, statutory thresholds, and pathway coordination. • **Supports end-to-end planning** – Joined-up pathways for prevention, care, education, and housing can be planned across one structure (particularly important for high-risk residents who cross multiple services). • **Enables minimum disruption to significant transformation and improvement journeys that are ongoing** – e.g. there are significant multi-year transformation programmes planned in ASC which could continue with minimum disruption under a 1UA scenario. • **Minimal disruption to multi-agency partnership arrangement** – Only one set of safeguarding boards, ICB pathways, youth justice panels, and place-based health partnerships are required, making service collaboration easier and more effective. • **Resilience through scale and leadership continuity -** Professional Service Leads consistently highlight that larger authorities reduce risk during transition by retaining experienced senior leadership teams and service delivery infrastructure. • **Challenges of delivering services across diverse geographies -** The 1UA model would require the integration of two urban centres (Cheltenham and Gloucester) and expansion of capabilities to meet the rural needs across the county. This could complicate existing operating models and ways of working and risking inconsistencies in access and quality that could endure into the future.	**G**

		• **Increased aggregation risk** – A 1UA model would require aggregation of six district-specific services into one collective service which is likely to be significantly complex e.g. aligning six different council tax support schemes etc.	
	B) Opportunity for public service reform including where this will lead to improved value for money	The 1UA model enables a unified transformation strategy and consistent investment in digital tools, analytics, automation, workforce planning, and shared infrastructure, all of which are already underway through the transformation initiatives and emerging Place Model design. • **Creates a single platform for change** – Transformation programmes in ICT, workforce, data, and estates can be delivered countywide. • **Enables shared innovation** – AI, automation, and digital case management tools can be designed once and used everywhere. • **Supports cultural alignment** – One council avoids divergence in practice or priorities, allowing consistent reform over time. • **Improves analytical capacity** – Shared data infrastructure can support predictive and population-level service planning, particularly linking to public sector partners like Police and NHS – this is key to continuing to drive a focus moving away from eligibility to focus on prevention and early intervention (i.e. not waiting for the crisis to happen first). • **Backed by service insight** – Service leads across ICT, libraries, revenues and benefits, asset management, housing and homelessness etc consistently stated that a 1UA model would remove duplication in systems and governance, strengthen programme alignment, and enable investment to scale across the county. • **Improved strategic influence and collaboration with partners –** A single larger UA is likely to have more influence and scale to negotiate with local and national partners incl. Educational institutions, DWP, ICB etc to drive stronger system-wide leadership and delivery of improved shared outcomes locally.	G

		• **Increased scale and financial resilience to innovate –** A single larger UA is likely to have access to large amounts of resources (workforce, finances, connections with others) to innovate, fail fast and learn. This is critical to driving improvement and reform. • **Better value for money** – In services such as ASC, CSC, public health and commissioning, the scale of a 1UA model could provide better value for money through economies of scale and single strong voice in the market. • **Creation of a single trusted front door for residents and partners** – A 1UA model can retain a simple, universal, trusted front door for residents to simplify their experience but also drive efficiencies in contact and delivery.	
	C) Improves delivery of, or mitigates risk of negative impact on, crucial services	A single authority can manage variation in service demand and outcomes across the geography by redistributing resources and targeting investment based on need. This supports equity in access and outcomes, especially for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public protection services including for public safety. • **Enables flexible resource allocation** – Investment can be targeted where demand is highest (e.g. higher ASC and CSC spend in the West) can be managed effectively. • **Improves consistency** – A single authority can maintain common standards and expectations for service access across the county, with flexibility built in at the point of delivery. • **Supports data-led prioritisation** – Systemwide data enables identification of emerging needs across urban and rural areas and supports early intervention strategies that can be locally delivered. • **No need for disaggregation of critical countywide services delivered to the most vulnerable in society** - Service leads across CSC, education, public health, and commissioning warned that two unitary authority models would pose risks of disaggregating safeguarding, school admissions, EHCP timeliness, statutory performance oversight etc. • **Reduces postcode variation** – Residents in different areas would experience equal levels of service and support which drives fair and equal access for all.	G

		• **Protects Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) and MASH –** Minimum disruption to the single front door to make sure the right assessment, identification of risk and support can be provided to children at most risk who need to be protected. In line with engagement with stakeholders from the Police, *"a 1UA provides the best opportunity to continue to maintain and improve coordination of this vital MASH capability with a focus on driving consistency, pooling of resources and alignment"* between the Police and Local Authority workforce. • **No borders created between the county** – A countywide model makes it easier to coordinate placements for education or social care to be considered across a bigger geography without the need to negotiate potential 'out of county' placements if administrative boundaries were to be created. • **Addresses homelessness strategically** – A single housing and commissioning function can plan across high-demand urban areas (e.g. Gloucester and Cheltenham) and rural areas, ensuring consistent prevention and support offers.	
4. Meets local needs	*A) Meets local needs and is informed by local views*	While formal public consultation has not yet taken place, this options analysis has been informed by engagement undertaken with the public through surveys and in-person events, officers from service areas and partners across the county (including county council, district councils and other partners including Police, VCSFE, health etc). Many countywide partners, including further education, health, VCFSE, Constabulary and the Diocese, voiced strong support for a single voice and shared strategic frameworks to maintain coherence across Gloucestershire. The EQIA analysis that has been conducted also indicates that a single council could strengthen consistency in engagement with groups with protected characteristics (e.g. disabled residents, ethnic minority communities) by creating one countywide approach to inclusive communications and accessible consultation materials, reducing risk of variation in how voices are heard across areas. • **Reflects strategic partner input** - The 1UA structure aligns with preferences expressed by the NHS, Police, and some economic partners for a single interface, highlighting that a single accountable authority would reduce duplication and improve clarity for service users.	**A**

		• **Backed by some VCFSE organisations** – Some VCFSE representatives who have been engaged emphasised that a single UA would make partnership working and funding engagement "simpler and more consistent," reducing the duplication they currently face when working across multiple districts. • **Supported by some of the county's local business networks** – Feedback from business representatives, including the Federation of Small Businesses, highlighted the benefit of "one clear voice" for economic development, inward investment, and regulatory services, making Gloucestershire easier to promote to investors and government. • **Based on current delivery structures** - The model builds on the existing approach to ASC, CSC, public health, transport - all delivered at county scale. • **Enables future local engagement** - Under a 1UA model, the council would have capacity to design and invest in community-level consultation structures. • **Capacity to combine strategic oversight with local delivery-** Services such as HTST, EHCP delivery, and ASC benefit from being managed by a single larger UA which has the scale to sufficiently manage and resource but with the ability to flexibly deploy resources locally. • **Places local voice at the centre** - The Place Model workstream (co-led by GCC and partners including OPCC, VCS Alliance, and ICB) has designed mechanisms for neighbourhood engagement within a single authority. • **Service-led locality feedback** – Discussions across ASC, CSC, libraries, ICT and education consistently supported a single authority with locally delivered services. Officers favoured retaining local footprints for operational delivery, noting this was already how people experience services. • **Risk of reduced local visibility if locality model is not prioritised** – Several stakeholders, including parish councils and VCSFE representatives, expressed concern that without sustained investment in neighbourhood governance, a single UA could appear more distant from communities, particularly in rural areas such as the North Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean, where access to decision-makers is already seen as limited.	

	B) Improves / mitigates risk to issues of local identity, cultural and historic importance	The 1UA Model has been designed to protect and celebrate the many places of Gloucestershire. 267 parish councils currently cover the majority of the county and our Neighbourhood Partnership proposals seek to decentralise services and give greater voice to communities of place, interest and identity. • **Local identities –** There could be concerns that a single UA could dilute the distinct cultural, social and economic identities of Gloucestershire's two key urban centres (Gloucester and Cheltenham) which therefore may not gain local support. However, this can be mitigated as noted below. • **Civic identity retained** – Town and parish councils, mayoralties, and ceremonial roles would remain in place. For Gloucester a parish (city council) would be created, and similarly for Cheltenham, a parish (town council) would be created. These new parishes would serve to strengthen the identity and significant cultural and historic value of each city/town within Gloucestershire • **Allows for place-based branding** – Services can retain local naming, visual identity, and signage to reinforce place association, a priority raised in the Diocese and VCFSE stakeholder engagement responses. • **Reflects community affinity** – Feedback from planning, libraries and safeguarding services emphasised that residents associate more strongly with place-based identities than with institutional structures, making it essential to maintain visible local identity alongside a single governance tier. • **Neighbourhood Partnership proposals will make the new council closer to the places people know.** – The model will create a coherent offer for populations of 30k-50k, bringing the council and decision making closer to residents • **Supports visibility of place** – The new authority can retain ward and locality names to reflect place-based identity across the county. • **Builds on community infrastructure** – Areas like the Forest, Stroud, and the Cotswolds already have strong place-based partnerships in place. The 1UA model enables these current strengths to be built on with a more powerful place-based emphasis and approach.	**A**

		• **Builds on current area-based practice** – e.g. ASC and CSC already hold case review forums and safeguarding panels at area level, often aligned to the current districts. This culture of place-based accountability would continue to be retained and formalised under the single authority. • **Successful precedents exist** – Unitaries such as Buckinghamshire and North Yorkshire have adopted area boards and neighbourhood forums to maintain local visibility, improve outcomes and encourage community participation.	
	C) Addresses local concerns	The 1UA model enables county-wide service planning while allowing targeted investment in places with higher levels of need. This supports consistency of offer while maintaining flexibility to respond to local variation. • **Could be perceived as overcentralisation –** A single larger UA could be perceived by some stakeholders and residents as moving services further away from people and creating less understanding and tailoring of services to meet local needs. However, this can be mitigated with robust locality governance and retaining operational delivery close to people (as is the case already e.g. with locality based social work teams etc). • **Supports differentiated planning** – Strategic services (e.g. ASC, education) can be commissioned based on local demand and vulnerability indicators. • **Addresses inequality** – The model enables planning across areas with different outcomes (e.g. West: 16,609 children in low-income families per 100k vs East: 12,274). The 1UA model maintains the ability to respond strategically while allowing delivery to reflect place. • **Place-sensitive commissioning already in use** – Commissioners in ASC and Education noted that funding allocations already account for variation in deprivation, demand and access (e.g. funding per capita is higher in the West for ASC and in the East for transport access). A 1UA model protects this flexibility while enabling oversight of equity countywide • **Supports coherent infrastructure and regeneration investment** – Officers stressed the value of having one capital planning and housing function able to target investment into high-need areas (e.g.	**A**

		brownfield regeneration in the West; affordability and access issues in the East), rather than splitting strategic capacity across two smaller councils. EQIA findings highlight current East–West disparities in transport access for disabled and older residents, and a 1UA model enables these to be addressed in a single transport accessibility strategy linked to Local Transport Plans.	
5. Supports devolution arrangements	*A) Helps to support devolution arrangements / unlock devolution*	The 1UA model simplifies engagement with Whitehall and regional partners. • **Streamlined governance** – A single authority avoids internal fragmentation, simplifies representation, and strengthens Gloucestershire's strategic negotiating position. A single council gives partners a single door in for strategic collaboration and funding opportunities. • **Improves visibility and scale** - A bigger footprint and unified leadership increase Gloucestershire's credibility and profile in national negotiations. • **Compatible with existing regional structures** – Gloucestershire currently aligns with the South West for funding and some aligned service delivery (e.g. South West Ambulance Service) and also shares ties with the West Midlands (e.g. through economic corridors and shared events). A single council can better preserve overlapping relationships and flex across both without splintering Gloucestershire's strategic position or regional partnerships. • **Improved clarity in negotiations** – Members and senior officers highlighted that a single unitary would allow Gloucestershire to present itself with clarity in devolution negotiations, and avoid unnecessary complexity in areas like housing, infrastructure and skills. • **Attractive investment platform** – A single council is better positioned to attract investment in growth sectors like advanced manufacturing, cyber, and clean energy, which operate across county boundaries. These areas require joined-up strategic leadership and investment. • **Improving transport connectivity -** There are already plans in place across the county to improve transport connectivity. Devolution offers opportunities to build on this and connect Gloucestershire	G

		with other economic corridors enabling further regional collaboration and enabling residents to access further opportunities.	

	B) Sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Under a 1UA model, Gloucestershire would join any future Combined Authority or Strategic Authority as a single partner, with a population of ~659,000. This contributes meaningfully toward the 1.5 million minimum benchmark used in current legislation and policy design for deeper devolution.
		• **Compatible with multiple strategic groupings to meet minimum population thresholds by and large –** With one voice, Gloucestershire can engage in potential Combined Authorities including:
		  ○ Gloucestershire + West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Core: 1.6m
		  ○ Gloucestershire + WECA (incl. North Somerset): 1.81m
		  ○ Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire: 1.45m (falls a little short of the 1.5m threshold).
		  ○ Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire + Swindon: 1.63m
		• However, concerns were noted around the relative size of a single Gloucestershire Unitary Authority in comparison with other partners in a Combined Authority. For example, in the case of a WECA option, Gloucestershire would be the largest partner in WECA, with a population of c. 659,276, compared to Bristol's c.472,400, South Gloucestershire's c.290,400 and Bath and North East Somerset's c.193,400 (population figures based on ONS 2021 census). This could potentially make a single unitary less appealing for other partners.
			G

6. Local engagement and empowerment	*A) Enables stronger community engagement*	The 1UA model removes local district councils but can introduce new forms of local representation and democratic engagement. Its success in this area would depend on strong designs and investment in locality arrangements. Some partners expressed concern that community engagement in a 1UA model must be deliberately designed, with one noting: 'if you don't build in real localism, people will feel even further away".	G

		• **Could be perceived to be further away from communities –** A larger authority may be perceived by some stakeholders to be moving further away from communities with a much larger and more diverse geography to consider. • **Requires active design** – The model does not automatically strengthen participation; new structures would need to be developed (a process already initiated through the Neighbourhood Area Partnerships proposed by the Place Model programme). • **Supports consistent frameworks** – A single council can create countywide standards for local structures including Neighbourhood Area Partnerships. • **Avoids duplication of democratic processes** – One tier of governance reduces overlap and potential confusion over responsibilities (a key concern in feedback from the VCFSE sector and the Diocese). • **Can be designed to enable inclusive local representation** – Governance can be shaped to reflect towns, parishes, and historic communities across Gloucestershire. • **Rooted in ongoing local work** – The Neighbourhood Partnership model, co-designed by GCC, OPCC, the ICB, and the VCS Alliance, is already testing place-based forums that bring residents, councillors and service teams together to shape local priorities. • **Allows for a strengthening of capacity to support engagement** - The 1UA delivers the highest overall savings of options being considered (c.£21.1m annual net savings). In turn, this may allow for its Neighbourhood Partnership proposals to be given greater financial support and expert officer capacity.	

	B) Delivers genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment	The 1UA model allows the council to embed neighbourhood governance into its core structure, particularly through the development of Neighbourhood Partnerships and Locality Hubs. It can formalise new models of area-based working and build on existing parish and community networks. There are also projected to be greater financial benefits from a 1UA model (noted above), which can support investment in place-based working and visible local governance across the county. • **Facilitates locality working** – Existing family hubs, community wellbeing teams, and parish clusters can be aligned to formal locality areas, ensuring operational delivery remains close to communities. • **Enables shared design** – Area committees (formal sub-committees of a local authority that operate at a more local, geographical level) or Neighbourhood Partnership can be co-designed with communities and elected members. The Place Model being worked on already in Gloucestershire explicitly sets out a roadmap for co-production. • **Formalises locality governance** – Proposals are being co-designed with partners including OPCC, ICB and VCS Alliance, with clear plans for shared decision-making at place level. • **Supports consistent service access** – Local service offers can be standardised, targeted and resourced across the county. • **Backed by services and partners** – Service professionals including CSC, planning, and ASC leads stressed the importance of retaining area-based decision-making capacity, noting that local visibility matters for legitimacy. • **Raises the visibility and role of local councils and VCFSE organisations**: The creation of a Civil Society Covenant and a Local Councils charter elevate the role of vital local and hyperlocal organisations • **Protects equity of access** – A single council can strive to ensure that every locality, rural or urban, has the same opportunity to develop Neighbourhood Partnerships and access resources. However, this may sometimes be harder to achieve on such a big footprint.	G

		• **Reduces risk of divergence** – Feedback from ICT, Audit and Planning services highlighted that neighbourhood working is best enabled by shared systems, standardised training, and joint commissioning, which is possible under a 1UA model. • **Builds on existing models** – Several services (e.g. ASC, children's services, housing) already operate with area-based or district-level coordination. For example, in CSC, local safeguarding hubs, and area panels are already delivering place-based oversight. • **Risk of democratic deficit** – By removing layers of government people feel as though the unitary is far removed from their local issues which can decrease engagement.	
7. Environmental and climate protection	A) Ensures the new authority/authorities have clear capabilities to deliver existing and future climate and nature plans.	The 1UA model offers scale and continuity in environmental governance. It enables strategic investment, consistent targets, and stronger institutional leadership on net zero, nature recovery, and flood resilience while safeguarding key partnerships and plans. • **Preserves existing plans and partnerships** – Gloucestershire's Climate Strategy, Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Climate Leadership Gloucestershire and Strategic Flood Risk Management approach are all designed countywide and can continue seamlessly under 1UA. • **Enables scale of investment** – Environmental budgets, procurement, and staffing can be centrally coordinated, with local delivery shaped through Neighbourhood Partnerships. • **Avoids duplication of leadership** – A single structure prevents gaps or overlaps in environmental governance. • **Aligns with existing officer capacity** – Current small specialist teams in areas such as flood risk and climate strategy can be consolidated. • **Enables neighbourhood engagement** – Through the Place Model, the new authority can embed environmental priorities into Neighbourhood Partnership plans, empowering communities to lead on climate actions suited to local needs.	G

		• **Bolster the role of the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) -** Pooled resources between county and districts, and the ability to direct those resources according to need across the whole county would maximise the resources we do have (i.e. whether based on the location of consenting and enforcement cases, schemes, planning consultations or individual flooding events). In addition to this, a single authority would have single ownership of Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (Levels 1and2) and could also drive a more coordinated approach to identification and delivery of flood alleviation schemes and associated bids to national funding	
	B) Reflects local priorities in areas with sensitive landscapes (e.g. Forest of Dean, Cotswolds AONB).	The 1UA model supports joined-up spatial planning and stewardship across protected landscapes. It maintains geographic continuity and ensures consistent protections across jurisdictional boundaries. • **Avoids splitting landscape governance** – Natural assets such as the River Severn catchment, Cotswolds escarpment, and Forest woodlands would remain under one set of policy and delivery arrangements. • **Supports integrated land-use planning** – The Local Plan and planning policy can incorporate rural, urban, and protected areas under one authority. Officers confirmed that issues like nutrient neutrality need consistent policy and joint delivery at county level. • **Retains current plans for Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** – Developed at a county level over the past three years and to be delivered by upper tier / unitary authorities. • **Retains current infrastructure for biodiversity net gain (BNG)** – Gloucestershire Nature and Climate Fund (GNCF) is a not-for-profit body supported by all seven LAs to trade BNG development units within Gloucestershire • **Preserves cross-boundary programmes** – Flood schemes, biodiversity corridors, and green infrastructure plans are easier to deliver through one capital plan and Local Plan framework. • **Allows local tailoring within one system** – Local protections (e.g. Cotswold design codes, Forest regeneration priorities) can be embedded in area-specific planning and delivery through the Place Model.	G

		• **Supports rural stewardship through locality governance** – Parish partnerships and community networks, particularly in the Forest and Cotswolds, can be empowered through Neighbourhood Partnerships to influence local environmental strategy.	
	c) Builds on existing commitments (e.g. "Fairer Greener Forest", Climate Emergency responses).	The 1UA model provides the governance platform to protect, expand and align Gloucestershire's district-led climate initiatives. It strengthens monitoring and accountability while enabling communities to drive action locally. • **Does not erase local ambitions** – Protects locally developed climate action - Programmes such as "Fairer Greener Forest," Stroud CAN, and Cheltenham's net zero route map which can continue with local leadership but benefit from countywide funding, systems, and legal support. • **Allows integration of district priorities** – The new authority can build a single climate plan that draws on existing strategies. reducing duplication and aligning priorities without weakening local ownership. • **Supports accountability** – A single scrutiny framework allows monitoring of commitments made at both county and locality level. • **Enables targeted support –** Rural off-gas areas, high-deprivation urban communities, and at-risk flood zones can be prioritised in capital investment using a shared dataset and single capital plan. • **Backed by partners** – Stakeholders, including public health, VCFSE and environmental partners, emphasised that 1UA would simplify joint action on climate and support more joined-up community participation.	G

8. Civic engagement and participative democracy	*A) Promotes civic engagement and strengthens participative democracy.*	The 1UA model creates the scale and reach to invest in countywide civic engagement, while retaining flexibility for local communities to shape how they participate. It provides the infrastructure to support both digital and in-person engagement through the Place Model. • **Supports digital and in-person tools** – Investment in consultation platforms, community budgets, and resident panels can be made at county scale, supported by the central functions of the new council • **Embedded in service design** – Housing, planning, transport, ASC and CSC services are already designing resident input into locality plans and Local Development Frameworks. A 1UA allows this to continue without duplication. • **Protects equal access to voice** – A single model of civic engagement ensures that all areas, including rural parishes and urban neighbourhoods, can participate on equal terms. • **Supports community leadership** – Officers emphasised that strong place-based leadership is already being built through co-design pilots in the Forest and Cheltenham, and that a single authority enables these structures to scale. • **Anchored in Gloucestershire's tradition of community partnership** – The VCFSE sector and local clergy highlighted the need to maintain grassroots decision-making. The 1UA model can help to make sure the local voice can be protected and funded within a single, countywide democratic framework. • **Risk of democratic deficit -** Given LGR will reduce the number of elected councillors and create larger electoral divisions, this will increase the number of residents each councillor represents. This could risk a democratic deficit.	**A**

9. Inclusive growth and equity	*A) Ability to tackle disparities in wealth setting up one unitary authority or two unitary authorities.*	The 1UA model allows the council to address local disparities across the county through joined-up economic, transport, and skills planning with the ability to redistribute funding and focus support on areas of need. A single structure would be well-placed to support equitable development and reduce strategic risk. • **Enables countywide planning** – Economic development, employment, and regeneration can be designed to benefit the full geography, not just high-growth areas. • **Targets investment to areas of need** – Indicators show clear differences between areas (e.g. GDHI: £26,149 in East vs £21,191 in West, and job density is 1.01 and 0.82 respectively) that can be addressed through unified policy and without governance friction. The West also has higher deprivation scores (IMD 17.16 vs 12.71 in the East) and carries 60% of the county's children in low-income households - factors that a single authority can address through pooled resources, targeted regeneration, and shared preventative service funding. • **Reduces risk of postcode inequality** – A single structure avoids divergence in access to services or funding between two separate councils. • **Improves delivery of levelling up goals** – National funding (e.g. LUF, SPF, Homes England) can be more effectively coordinated through a single accountable body, improving Gloucestershire's attractiveness as an investment partner. • **Supports area-based targeting** – Through Neighbourhood Partnerships, the council can ensure each area has a local regeneration plan focused on its specific barriers to growth and access.	G

	B) Prioritises vulnerable residents and community-level regeneration.	The 1UA model allows for pooled budgets and shared commissioning strategies that prioritise support for those most in need. Vulnerability and deprivation can be addressed without artificial boundaries between areas. • **Supports consistent targeting** – Shared datasets and analytics platforms allow services to target support to where indicators show the greatest unmet need (e.g. West Glos: 16,609 children in low-income families per 100k vs 12,274 in East). • **Enables flexible, place-based intervention** – Services such as ASC, housing, and CSC already work with local partners (e.g. Family Hubs, VCFSE, schools) to deliver support through local forums, which would be retained and enhanced under 1UA. • **Simplifies cross-cutting delivery** – Services such as mental health, substance misuse, and housing need require coordinated input across teams. A 1UA allows wraparound offers to be planned centrally and delivered locally. • **Retains current safeguarding structures** – Countywide safeguarding boards, early help pathways, and integrated commissioning would remain intact, avoiding disaggregation risk. • **Builds from neighbourhood action plans** – The Place Model already includes a neighbourhood planning model for co-produced regeneration strategies, which can be aligned to countywide outcomes under a single council.	**G**
	C) Ensures that financial sustainability is not achieved at the expense of service levels.	A 1UA model enables savings and efficiencies through consolidation - not service withdrawal. It allows services to be protected by reforming back-office structures, harmonising systems, and pooling reserves, particularly important in high-cost statutory functions like ASC and CSC. • **Improves efficiency through strategic consolidation** – Consolidation savings can be achieved through shared platforms, aligned contracts, and joint infrastructure investment, as confirmed through extensive engagement with both upper and lower tier service professionals.	**A**

		• **Supports strategic commissioning and market shaping** – A single commissioning function can set consistent pricing, improve leverage with providers, and reduce fragmentation in markets such as ASC or education placements. • **Enables financial flexibility and cross-subsidy** – Shared MTFS, pooled reserves and countywide income allow high-cost services in one locality to be sustained without placing disproportionate strain on that area's council tax base. • **Reduces service fragmentation risk** – Disaggregation of statutory services like SEND and CSC was seen by officers as high-risk under 2UA. The 1UA model removes that risk entirely. • **Supports long-term value** – Investment in digital, prevention, early help and neighbourhood working can be delivered once, reducing cost over time without cutting access or quality. • **Reinvestment in frontline service delivery** – Most of the savings noted by service professionals are across back-office functions (and not directly from already overstretched front line teams). These savings can be reinvested back in front line delivery and interventions focussing on prevention and early intervention to drive improved outcomes. • **Countywide Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit projected to reach ~£234m by Vesting Day (1 April 2028).** If statutory override is not maintained or an alternative solution implemented, then both a 1UA and 2UA would face significant financial risks. • **Impact of the Fair Funding Review** – This also remains unknown at this time presenting further financial uncertainty to both 1UA and 2UA scenarios.	

Detailed analysis of **east/west two unitaries (2UA)** model against criterion

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Alignment Summary	RAG

1. Sensible single tier of local government	A) Establishes a single tier of local government for the whole of the area concerned.	The 2UA model fully removes two-tier governance by creating two all-purpose councils. While this simplifies governance within each new authority, it introduces an internal boundary that cuts across several existing countywide systems and partnerships. • **Removes two-tier structure** – Both county and district councils would be replaced by two new single-tier organisations which meets the overall criteria. • **Simplifies local service access** – Residents would interact with only one council for all services within their local area. • **Establishes clear internal governance** – Each authority would hold its own statutory roles and make decisions independently.	G
	B) Sensible economic breakdown: with a tax base which does not create undue inequalities	The 2UA model creates two financially independent authorities. While their tax bases are broadly similar at the point of transition, underlying income, need, and reserve disparities mean each council would have to manage its own risk, cost pressures, and investment strategies. • **Creates separate tax bases and MTFSs** – The East and West would operate independent financial strategies, with no shared reserves or risk-pooling between councils. • **Similar tax base across both areas** - The 2024 tax-base (Band D equivalents after council tax support) for two-unitary authorities model, shows a tax base in the West of 49% compared to 51% in the East [62]. • **Potential fiscal disparities** – Local Authority Debt is much higher in the West (£948) compared to the East (£674) and there is also a higher household benefit claimant rate (17.87% in the West compared to 13.79% in the East). These pressures would need to be	A

[62] Council Tax Receipts, 23/24, MHCLG

		managed by each individual authority with limited ability to create more fiscal resilience overall e.g. through pooled reserves etc. • **Increased potential exposure for West** – Higher service costs particularly for ASC where spend per resident is £629 in West vs £405 in East. This is likely to put a significantly higher pressure on the West council given the majority of a unitary authority budget is attributed to ASC spend. • **Opportunities to drive economic growth based on the unique strengths of each authority –** Opportunities to drive a coherent narrative within each authority for their sector specialisms (Clean Energy in the West and Technology in the East). This will support in creating more job opportunities, upskilling young people and attracting inward investment to kickstart economic growth across both UA areas.	
	C) Sensible geographic breakdown: which will help increase housing supply and meet local needs	The proposed East/West boundary reflects historic district groupings but introduces a new internal division across some shared service areas and travel-to-work zones. While this may support visibility and identity at a local level, it creates complexity in coordinating planning, housing, transport, and environmental strategy, all of which currently operate at county scale. • **Builds on existing urban centres in the county –** Gloucestershire has two significant urban centres (Cheltenham and Gloucester) and the proposed East / West 2UA model aligns with these. In addition to this, the 2UA model is based on familiar district boundaries which will continue to enable the retention of unique local identities. This could also be helpful in designing place-based governance. • **Reduces alignment with partners -** The Police, Fire and Rescue, ICB, Education partners all largely operate on a countywide footprint currently and the creation of 2UAs would mean partners likely need to engage with two different organisations which is inefficient and can also drive reduced influence for each of the respective UAs.	**A**

		• **Each UA can retain its own housing and HRA –** There are currently two councils in Gloucestershire with their own housing stock (c.5,000 homes each) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA): Stroud and Cheltenham. In the proposed 2UA model, there would be minimum disruption or change required to this arrangement given one of these is in the West and one in the East. • **Challenges around private housing market** - Average house prices illustrate that the private housing market faces greater challenges in the West, where values are lower [63] (e.g. Gloucester £225,000; Forest of Dean £291,000) compared to the East (e.g. Cotswolds £419,000; Cheltenham £324,000), reducing profit margins and making it less likely that the private sector will deliver sufficient supply without public intervention. • **Variations in housing supply** –Homelessness is higher in the West compared to the East [64] (0.21% in the West and 0.11% in the East) with housing land supply following the opposite trajectory (lower in the West at 3.83 vs 4.97 in the East). This could result in more demand for housing in the West with less supply to meet this efficiently within the new UA borders. • **Risks inconsistency in spatial planning** – Without a shared framework, the East and West could pursue divergent housing policies, development standards, and regeneration priorities, which could make Gloucestershire less coherent in the eyes of investors and government. • **Fragmentation of strategic housing functions and engagement -** Fragmentation of delivery partnerships and engagement / negotiations with housing associations, developers, and Homes England, increasing the risk of inconsistency in policy, pipeline delivery, and tenant standards across East and West Gloucestershire.	

[63] House Prices, 2025, ONS
[64] Homelessness, 2024, ONS

2. Right-sized local government	A) A population of 500,000 or more (unless specific scenarios make this unreasonable)	Under the 2UA model, each authority would have a population above the 300,000 minimum threshold, but below the 500,000 MHCLG guideline. The East would serve ~310,641 people and the West ~348,635. • **Meets the viability threshold** – Both authorities exceed 300,000 population, in line with recent two-unitary models (e.g. Cheshire East/West). • **Falls short of MHCLG guidance** – Neither authority reaches the preferred 500,000+ benchmark for strategic scale but this could enable each UA to target their resources and focus on manageable population sizes and geographies (noting both the East and West would each have a densely populated metropolitan area with surrounding rural areas). • **Comparable to successful precedent** – East (~310k) and West (~349k) align with other approved two-unitary areas such as Cheshire East/West, Dorset, and Somerset, which have demonstrated operational viability. • **Aligns with precedent** – Dorset and Cheshire provide examples of approved two-UA models operating at similar population sizes.	**A**
	B) Supports efficiencies and value for money for council taxpayers	The 2UA model can continue to offer some efficiencies within each authority, but also introduces duplication of systems, statutory posts, and governance. Gloucestershire also has some good examples of shared working across existing councils which can continue to be built on under a 2UA model (where beneficial and appropriate to do so). • **Creates duplication for county wide services** – County-wide infrastructure would likely need to be split or duplicated e.g. in relation to governance structures; statutory roles e.g. two Director of Children's Services (DCSs), DASSs etc; Upper tier service systems used by adults and children's services etc. This will reduce the overall net savings achievable in a	**A**

		2UA scenario (potential net revenue savings from reorganisation of ~£10.7m per annum under a 2UA model). • **Reduces potential economies of scale** – Whilst there remain continued opportunities to jointly commission specialist services e.g. cyber between the two authorities, it is possible that over time strategic contracts would be negotiated separately within each authority e.g. for children's and adults. This is likely to result in less market influence and a potential risk of suppliers 'playing both authorities against each other'.	
	C) Improves capacity and supports the council to withstand financial shocks	Each new authority would need to independently build and sustain specialist teams and leadership capacity. Smaller scale may reduce resilience, particularly in hard-to-recruit areas such as social care. • **Supports competitive positioning** – Each council can engage in targeted regional partnerships (e.g. East with WECA, West with Midlands Engine) to maximise sectoral strengths and funding opportunities. • **Continued opportunities to share services in a targeted way to drive efficiencies and improve outcomes -** A 2UA model can continue to build on the strong foundation of shared services and wholly owned companies in Gloucestershire already (e.g. Ubico for waste management, Publica for transactional services, One Legal, Audit and Counterfraud etc). However, this can be done in a targeted way to enable the 2UAs to operate independently where tailored approaches are required to serve their populations but come together to achieve scale where it drives more value and increases resilience / capacity e.g. continuing to operate waste collection via Ubico to reduce costs, offer improved scale and a more consistent offer to residents. • **Overall tax base similar across both UAs –** There is not likely to be significant variations in total council tax receipts between both UAs.	**A**

		• **Increased senior officer capacity** – In a 2UA model, both authorities may have to recruit for identical senior officer roles, allowing for greater capacity in senior leadership. • **Could result in a significant financial burden for the West authority –** Given the significant imbalance in demand and cost between the East and West for ASC (e.g. £405 spend per resident in East v/s £629 in West), there could be a significant risk around Ordinary Residence implications which could create a financial challenge for the West authority. • **Reduced workforce resilience -**Smaller teams are more exposed to capacity pressures and recruitment risk, especially in specialist roles. Service leads flagged risks in safeguarding, SEND, commissioning, and public health with concerns that "we'll each be half as strong". • **Limits financial flexibility in hardship** – Without pooled reserves or a shared workforce, each council would need to absorb shocks (e.g. market failure, inflation) independently which does reduce overall financial resilience for both statutory and non-statutory services. • **Additional overheads / administrative burden for shared services –** Where services are retained as shared, there is likely to be additional costs of managing governance, performance, budgetary allocations, potential disputes etc. • **Potential budget deficits for the West on day one -** Current financial analysis indicates that the East council in a 2UA scenario would be established with a day one General Fund surplus of ~ £21.9m. Whilst a West council would be established with a day one General Fund deficit of ~ £21.9m. This assumes the full delivery of unidentified savings required by all seven councils between now and Vesting Day (1 April 2028) and does not fully account for the impact of the Fair Funding Review (subject to further detail from government).	
	D) Manageable transition costs	Transitioning to two authorities would involve higher implementation costs and programme complexity compared to a single authority (currently estimated at ~ £29.0m). This means potentially	**A**

		higher legal, staffing, ICT, and governance setup costs than a single-authority model, alongside increased programme complexity and coordination risk. • **Requires two sets of transition and implementation governance** – Two constitutions, two electoral reviews, two consultations, two shadow authorities, and dual branding would be required. • **Lowered aggregation risk -** A 2UA model would require aggregation of three district-specific services into one collective service per region, resulting in reduced administrative and transitional risks for aggregated services. • **Disaggregation of systems and contracts** – High-risk, high-cost systems like Liquidlogic, Capita One, SAP, and GIS platforms would need to be split or reprocured, which are flagged as major risks and costs from discussions with service leads across ASC, ICT, and education. • **Increased implementation portfolio staffing costs -** Two separate transition and implementation portfolio teams are likely to be set up (noting close working between the two in some areas). This is likely to result in additional internal and external costs particularly in areas such as programme management, Legal and governance support, IT support etc. • **Prolonged implementation timelines -** Shadow arrangements, TUPE consultations, contract revisions, and legacy system exit timelines could vary between East and West. • **Additional ongoing costs of additional shared services arrangements** - Any new shared services arrangements (e.g. potential considerations around coroners, registrars, archives etc) would require formal governance and charging frameworks to operate across both councils which are likely to add increased ongoing running costs and effort to delivery. • **Costs to key services –** Essential services such as ASC and CSC require the appointment of statutory senior roles. These positions are mandated by law and therefore represent unavoidable costs that will be incurred by both councils.	

3. High quality, sustainable services	A) Improves local government and service delivery, avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	The 2UA model would require the disaggregation of services that are currently delivered at county scale. This may increase the risk of fragmentation and inconsistency, especially where delivery depends on cross-county governance or shared systems. Delivery challenges have also been noted by stakeholders from the VCFSE sector particularly given increased duplication, fragmented commissioning, and reduced ability to coordinate delivery at scale. • **Aligns delivery to distinct area profiles** – East could design services around its rural access needs, building on the Cotswolds' established community transport networks and the Tewkesbury Garden Communities. West could integrate regeneration and safeguarding priorities for Gloucester and the Forest of Dean. • **Strengthens local partnerships** – Smaller geographies make it easier to work intensively with anchor institutions such as the University of Gloucestershire in the West and RAU (Royal Agricultural University) Cirencester in the East, embedding them into local economic and education strategies • **Potential disruption to countywide transformation pipelines** – Significant multi-year transformation and digital programmes, largely at county level, already underway would likely need to be paused and rescoped for each authority – This could slow down improvements to service delivery. • **Requires disaggregation of critical countywide services** – ASC, CSC, education, SEND, public health, emergency planning, transport would each need to be split out in a 2UA scenario (or at a minimum with some form of shared arrangements in place to enable delivery across two sovereign organisations). Given the statutory responsibilities associated with these services and the legislative requirements and governance, it is most likely services would need to be fully disaggregated to maintain clarity in accountability and enable long-term service stability. While this is possible, it is noted it will be extremely complex for example issues regarding ordinary residence (i.e. who pays for the cost of delivery) in social care as well as the disparity of need across the two unitary authorities.	**A**

		• **Requires the creation of a standalone Fire and Rescue Authority -** Under the provisions in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, fire and rescue will need to move to non-local authority governance, financial and service arrangement (i.e. the creation of an independent Fire and Rescue Authority), which will incur additional costs and may increase risk to sustainable service provision. • **Reduces potential operational flexibility for transport and highways services** - Operational flexibility may be reduced if contractors are restricted to specific UA boundaries, limiting the ability to respond efficiently to local issues. • **Introduces governance complexity** – Safeguarding, Legal, and Commissioning leads confirmed that multi-agency boards would need to be split or restructured, adding complexity to ICB engagement and joint delivery with NHS and Police. • **Could lead to variation** – Differences in resources, priorities or capacity could lead to divergence in how services are delivered across the two areas with residents close to boundaries experiencing variations in provision. • **Disaggregation introduces risk of fragmentation** – Education, ASC and public health services warned that users moving between East and West may face different systems, policies, and access routes. • **Challenges for cross-border services** – School trusts, Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), and regional partnerships may have to deal with two education strategies, SEND policies, and admissions frameworks, which was flagged by GAPH and FE as significant risks to consistency and collaboration. • **Place-based delivery becomes harder to coordinate** – With two sovereign councils, divergence in how neighbourhood models are resourced and prioritised becomes more likely. • **Lack of a unified capital programme** - Service leads across strategic finance, ASC, and planning emphasised the importance of a unified capital programme that allows resources to flow toward the county's most deprived areas, including Gloucester, Cheltenham, and the Forest, without needing to negotiate priorities between councils.	

		• **Examples of inter-authority collaboration** - Gloucestershire already operates several shared service models, including Ubico, One Legal, Publica, and shared audit arrangements. These demonstrate that inter-authority collaboration is possible and has worked successfully in Gloucestershire. *However, it is important to note that professional service leads emphasised that disaggregating countywide statutory functions such as ASC, CSC, and public health would be significantly more complex than these current arrangements given the significant cost, legal and care implications associated with them.*	
	B) Opportunity for public service reform including where this will lead to improved value for money	Each new authority would be responsible for designing and funding its own service transformation agenda. While local flexibility may increase, fragmentation of platforms and investment plans may limit the pace and scale of change. • **Enables local flexibility** – each council can shape its own digital investment, reform priorities, and neighbourhood model in line with community needs and political ambition, alongside being agile and flexible enough to implement • **Focused investment in area-specific reforms** – The East could prioritise digital health outreach and rural connectivity upgrades, and the West could channel regeneration funds into brownfield redevelopment and city-centre renewal in Gloucester, as identified in local growth plans. • **Reduces scale for innovation** – Smaller transformation budgets and teams may limit ability to adopt digital and analytics tools at pace. • **Increases technology fragmentation** – Without aligned procurement, the two authorities may implement incompatible systems (e.g. finance, social care case management, HR), reducing future interoperability and driving long-term inefficiency.	**A**

		• **Undermines shared learning and replication** – Innovation tested in one council may not scale to the other, limiting transferability of successful models and requiring duplicated discovery work and investment.	
	C) Improves delivery of, or mitigates risk to negative impact on crucial services	Separate authorities could create inconsistency in design and delivery of crucial services. • **Risk to homelessness prevention** – Housing and homelessness services flagged that disaggregating commissioning and housing capital programmes could make it harder to manage countywide pressures, especially with differing homelessness rates in both regions (0.21% in the West and 0.11% in the East) • **Public safety governance** – Disaggregating safeguarding structures would require new MASA boards and potentially separate Police partnership frameworks. Senior Police stakeholders stressed that this could weaken consistency of response in child protection and community safety. • **Disrupts end-to-end service planning** – Care pathways, school placement systems, early help, and transition into adult services are all currently managed across one system, and disaggregation would complicate coordination and risk continuity. In addition to this, splitting services like admissions, EHCPs and SEND into East/West would create division over time and risk undermining delivery. • **Disruption to hospital discharge and integrated care pathways** - This is an area of concern for service professionals, particularly as Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, located in the West, serves as the county's central acute site. The countywide discharge-to-assess (D2A) model, which provides short-term bedded care for assessment (Pathway 2), often leads to placements that become individuals' long-term homes. Introducing a requirement to source placements based on the boundaries of two separate unitary authorities, depending on ordinary residence, could reduce placement options and delay discharge processes.	**A**

		• **Ordinary residence implications for ASC -** The challenge around 'Ordinary Residence' is not only operationally / financially complex but impacts the most vulnerable residents if there are implications in terms of moving people across the county specifically those with long-standing placements. • **May increase outcome variation** – Differing financial starting points, access to reserves, and workforce size could affect ability to maintain parity of service quality. In addition to this, divergent policies on exclusions, admissions, and SEND support could result in inequity between areas. • **Inequitable access for vulnerable residents** - Splitting education commissioning and admissions could lead to inequitable access to the county's 14 specialist schools, especially for children with rare needs. • **Disruption to home to school transport (HTST)** - due to disaggregated placement decisions and geography, particularly availability of drivers, fleet, and routes to special schools. • **Requires robust governance and assurance** – Without shared framework; monitoring, escalation, and intervention pathways may vary - which service leads warned could expose gaps in statutory performance (e.g. SEND timeliness, EHCP outcomes). • **Creates complexity for regional partners** – Public health, education, and safeguarding professionals expressed concern about splitting countywide responsibilities and the need to co-manage performance across two legal bodies. • **Increase in out of county placements** – The creation of 2UAs would create an additional border for the county and result in working an 'out of county' services model, for services which sit within the same postcode.	
4. Meets local needs	A) Meets local needs and is	The 2UA model aims to reflect established localities, with an East/West split broadly aligned to existing district boundaries. This may support a stronger sense of local identity and enable more	**A**

	informed by local views	localised leadership and governance. However, some stakeholders raised concerns that splitting into two authorities would risk 'fragmenting already fragile cross-county partnerships' and pull focus away from place-wide strategies for education, health, and climate. • **Localities do not always follow district lines** - Some communities span the proposed boundary or rely on countywide services and networks. The 2UA model risks weakening connections between these areas. Alongside this, Education, safeguarding and housing teams noted that many communities rely on shared infrastructure and networks. A 2UA model risks creating artificial barriers around lived geography. • **Supported by some local voices –** Stakeholders in Cheltenham and some parish councils suggested that smaller units may improve visibility and local responsiveness. • **Risk of undermining cross-county place design** – The Place Model assumes consistent Neighbourhood Partnerships and locality governance. Splitting delivery governance may result in inconsistent coverage or investment. • **Some community feedback highlighted risks around marginalising communities** – The Diocese and parts of the VCFSE sector expressed concern that splitting Gloucestershire would further marginalise communities already on the edge, especially in rural transition zones like the Severn Vale and North Cotswolds. • **Some resident feedback highlighted concerns around creating a divide** - Concerns were consistently noted by some residents (who responded to a survey issued out by all Gloucestershire councils in July 2025) around fairness, division, and efficiency – with particular references to "creating a rich side and a poor side of the county".	
	B) Improves / mitigates risk to issues of local identity, cultural	The 2UA model allows each new council to retain visible place identity, which may strengthen civic pride. It supports branding and ceremonial continuity, but only if local governance and engagement are properly resourced and consistent.	**A**

	and historic importance	• **Aligns to known geographies** – District geographies in the East and West already support local branding, parish engagement, and heritage-based governance. • **Reflects distinct demographic and community profiles** – EQIA work suggests the East UA combines a more diverse urban centre (Cheltenham) with older rural areas (Cotswold, Tewkesbury), while the West UA combines Gloucester's higher ethnic diversity with older rural communities (Forest of Dean, parts of Stroud). This supports locally tailored equalities frameworks across both UAs. • **Enables place-led branding** – East could emphasise its international tourism offer around the Cotswolds, Regency Cheltenham, and cultural festivals; West could promote the Forest of Dean's green heritage and industrial legacy and Gloucester's historic docklands regeneration as part of its identity. • **May enhance local connection** – Smaller organisations may allow residents to feel more seen, particularly in distinct areas like the Forest, Cotswolds, and Stroud Valleys. • **Strengthens local heritage partnerships** – Smaller authorities could work more intensively with heritage bodies, e.g. Gloucester Cathedral Chapter in the West and Cotswold Conservation Board in the East, to protect and showcase local assets. • **Not a guarantee of civic strength** – As several service leads noted, "having smaller boundaries doesn't automatically deliver stronger community governance." Success depends on local design and sustained political investment. • **Civic identity retained** – Town and parish councils, mayoralties, and ceremonial roles would remain in place. For Gloucester a parish (city council) would be created, and for Cheltenham, options would be considered for parishing unparished areas of the town. These new parishes would serve to strengthen the identity and significant cultural and historic value of each city/town within Gloucestershire • **Supports continuity of place names** - Councils can adopt names, branding, and narratives rooted in local geography and history.	

		• **Inconsistent rollout of locality models** – Without a shared vision or resourcing strategy, Neighbourhood Partnerships and area boards may develop unevenly between the two councils, risking postcode variation in access to voice and influence. • **Risk from divergence in civic promotion -** Without coordinated messaging, the two councils could present different external identities for Gloucestershire, weakening the countywide brand. • **Heavy focus on the two urban centres** - Findings from local engagement with residents in July 2025 highlighted that it could be difficult to create local identities for each unitary that do not revolve around the largest towns which would exclude other areas.	
	C) Addresses local concerns	The 2UA model could also increase inconsistency in service design and delivery unless shared frameworks are agreed. • **Enables localised service design -** West Gloucestershire could focus on tackling urban deprivation and higher ASC/CSC demand, drawing on targeted regeneration in Gloucester and the Forest of Dean. The East could prioritise rural access needs, while maximising the economic impact of Cheltenham's Golden Valley Development and related secure tech sector, alongside the Cotswolds' tourism and agri-tech industries • **Magnifies financial and capacity disparities** – Demographic and Economic data shows that the West has higher ASC costs, higher household benefits claimant rates, higher homelessness, lower income, and higher deprivation. This may create potential challenges for the West Authority in terms of financial resilience and the ability to meet local needs effectively. • **Opportunities for joint working will remain across the 2UAs** – Employment zones, housing markets, transport corridors, and flood risk do not respect the East-West divide. For example, major commuting flows link Cheltenham, Gloucester, and Tewkesbury across the	**A**

		proposed boundary; the Golden Valley tech corridor and proposed Severn Edge energy project both require countywide planning to maximise investment potential.	
5. Supports devolution arrangements	A) Helps to support devolution arrangements / unlock devolution	In a 2UA structure, each new council would be the accountable body for its own area so there would not be a single Gloucestershire voice in national negotiations for devolution. • **Scope for tailored devolution asks** – Two councils could negotiate complementary but distinct devolution priorities, enabling the East to focus on innovation and cyber skills linked to The Innovation Village at Royal Agricultural University Development, while the West prioritises clean energy investment and infrastructure for the Berkeley Site. • **Potential to broaden regional alliances** – East could strengthen alignment with WECA and Oxfordshire for tech and high-value manufacturing; West could align with Worcestershire/Herefordshire or the West Midlands to secure agri-tech, tourism, and industrial regeneration funding. • **Could increase coordination demands** – The two councils may need to join up on priorities, funding bids, and delivery models for housing, transport, skills, and climate programmes to drive increased influence and negotiating power. • **Adds negotiation complexity** – Government may seek assurance that the two councils can act with unity on countywide matters. Stakeholder feedback from FE colleges and the VCFSE sector emphasised that clarity of leadership is essential to secure confidence from Whitehall. • **Risks divergence in place vision** – Without a shared countywide strategy, the two councils could set different priorities for Neighbourhood Partnerships, local regeneration, and climate action, weakening a consistent Gloucestershire offer in negotiations. • **Feedback from Economic Development and Planning**: Service leaders in economic development and planning warned that without joint frameworks for infrastructure, skills, and housing, the county's competitive edge could be diluted in a crowded regional market.	**A**

		• **May require dual representation** – Combined Authorities like WECA or Oxfordshire may need to engage with two Gloucestershire councils, complicating governance and coordination. • **Place delivery risks** – Without countywide oversight, devolved funding for Neighbourhood Partnerships could be designed and resourced differently between East and West, creating variation in local empowerment models.	
	B) Sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Under a 2UA model, Gloucestershire would be split into two councils, East and West, with populations of ~310,000 and ~349,000. There is a chance that each of the two UAs may join a different strategic authority if there is political divergence which has implications for scale and coherence. • **Still meets 1.5m minimum if coordinate groupings** – If both councils join different groupings (e.g. East joins WECA; West aligns with West Midlands), the full benefits of scale could be lost, and we could fall short of the minimum thresholds, but if they coordinate with each other then the minimum thresholds can be met • **Worcestershire and Herefordshire group** - Two smaller Gloucestershire authorities would cause concerns around meeting the minimum 1.5m benchmark in all potential combined authority scenarios e.g. Herefordshire and Worcestershire have a combined population of c.806,000 so if only of the one Gloucestershire authorities was to form a combined authority with these two areas, this would fall short of the minimum 1.5 million threshold (at a max, it would be c.1.2m). • **Flexibility in regional partnerships** – By joining different Combined Authorities, each council could target the most relevant funding streams and policy platforms for its local economy, increasing the total range of investment opportunities for Gloucestershire. • **More comparable relative size with partner authorities -** In terms of relative size of two smaller Gloucestershire authorities compared with potential partners, this may be more	G

		palatable. The populations of c.300,000-350,000 for Gloucestershire would not be significantly higher than potential partners particularly in the case of a WECA option.	
6. Local engagement and empowerment	A) Enables stronger community engagement	By reducing the size of each council to ~310k (East) and ~349k (West), the 2UA model could allow councillors and officers to work more closely with their local communities. Some stakeholders believe this scale feels more approachable than a single countywide body. However, the quality of engagement would depend on how each council designs, resources, and sustains its locality governance model. • **Smaller footprint may improve visibility** – Members and officers could be more locally embedded, with shorter travel distances and potentially closer relationships to communities. • **Allows more localised decision-making** – Committee structures and warding arrangements can be designed to reflect local culture, population density, and settlement patterns in each area. • **Service leads stressed importance of design** – ASC, CSC, and housing officers emphasised that engagement structures need dedicated staffing, budget, and authority to work effectively, with size alone not guaranteeing impact. • **Improved councillor–resident connection** – Smaller populations and geographies make it easier for members to be directly accessible, as already seen in district-level ward surgeries in Stroud, Cotswold, and Cheltenham. • **Potential to embed local culture in governance** – Allows warding and committee structures to reflect distinctive settlement patterns, e.g. rural parish clusters in the Cotswolds or ward-based representation in Gloucester. • **Risk of inconsistency** – Each authority may take a different approach to engagement, leading to uneven governance strength across the county.	G

		• **Maintaining partner coherence is harder** – VCFSE and parish representatives warned that cross-county organisations may face duplication in engagement, consultation, and partnership work.	
	B) Delivers genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment	Each authority would be responsible for designing and maintaining its own locality governance offer in a way that aligns with its geography, culture, and service profile. This could create opportunities for innovation but risks fragmentation if frameworks are not aligned. There is strong support around an emphasis on neighbourhood-level engagement and the creation of place-based structures that reflect where people live. Feedback suggested that two smaller councils might 'create stronger local ties,' but this would depend heavily on capacity and willingness to devolve power within each. • **Allows place-based design** – Each council could shape governance in dialogue with parish and town councils, community groups, and residents to reflect local traditions and priorities. • **May reflect civic identity more closely** – The West could prioritise structures for strong rural parish engagement in the Forest and Stroud Valleys, while the East could focus on urban–rural connectivity in Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, and the Cotswolds. • **Scope to pilot local decision-making** – Smaller councils could trial devolved budgets for specific localities, mirroring models in Buckinghamshire and Dorset, but adapted to Gloucestershire contexts. • **Encourages innovation in community partnerships** – Each authority could adapt the Neighbourhood Partnership principles to local capacity and needs, enabling diversity in engagement while keeping community leadership central. • **Risk of fragmentation in place delivery** – The Place Model envisions consistent Neighbourhood Partnerships across Gloucestershire. Under 2UA, these could evolve differently in each council, leading to unequal investment or capability.	G

		• **Risk of duplication or gaps** – Where partnerships (e.g. safeguarding boards, housing associations, climate forums) span the East–West boundary, separate locality models could create administrative complexity and reduce efficiency. • **Risk of democratic deficit** – By removing layers of government, some residents may feel as though the unitary is far removed from their local issues which can decrease engagement.	
7. Environmental and climate protection	A) Ensures the new authority/authorities have clear capabilities to deliver existing and future climate and nature plans.	The 2UA model could potentially mean splitting existing specialist teams, strategies, and funding streams, creating a higher risk of inconsistency and duplication. • **Could still retain strategic Climate Leadership Gloucestershire –** This already operates across seven councils currently and could continue to provide an overarching collaboration mechanism between the two UAs to strategically coordinate some activities where scale offers improved outcomes / efficiencies. • **Requires duplication of plans and delivery** – Each council may produce separate climate and nature plans, scrutiny arrangements, and reporting cycles, increasing administrative cost. • **Risks weaker investment leverage -** Countywide funding bids (e.g. for nature recovery, flood defence, EV charging infrastructure) may lose scale and competitiveness if submitted separately. • **Feedback from Flood Risk and Planning leads** – Officers stressed that some climate and flood issues are inherently cross-boundary and require shared governance to avoid duplication or gaps. • **Neighbourhood Partnerships could diverge** – Without a shared approach, local environmental action plans could vary in scope, resourcing, and ambition between East and West.	G

	B) Reflects local priorities in areas with sensitive landscapes (e.g. Forest of Dean, Cotswolds AONB).	The 2UA model is still likely to require cross-boundary coordination for shared natural systems. • **Aligns to clear geographic distinctions** – East: Cotswolds AONB, river catchments, rural agricultural land; West: Forest of Dean, Severn Estuary, urban-rural interface. • **Still requires joint governance for shared assets** – River catchments, wildlife corridors, and flood plains cross the proposed boundary would need shared planning and investment to remain effective. • **Service leads warned of coordination risk** – Planning and environmental health officers flagged that without aligned design codes and infrastructure plans, developers and land managers could face conflicting requirements in different parts of the county.	G
	C) Builds on existing commitments (e.g. "Fairer Greener Forest", Climate Emergency responses).	Each authority would be able to maintain and expand current district-led climate commitments, but with differing capacities and investment potential depending on their starting points. • **Allows continuity of local plans** – Existing commitments like “Fairer Greener Forest,” Stroud’s climate strategy, and Cheltenham’s climate targets could be retained and developed. • **Maintains political accountability** – Climate and environmental decisions would remain close to elected members and communities, which some stakeholders believe would encourage stronger local ownership. • **Requires alignment where appropriate** – Shared goals such as emissions reduction, transport decarbonisation, and biodiversity corridors would still need coordinated policy to prevent gaps or duplication. This is particularly relevant to countywide assets like the proposed Severn Edge project, which spans clean hydrogen, nuclear, and synthetic aviation fuel production, and contributes directly to Gloucestershire’s net zero targets. This is	G

		something that could be coordinated by a strategic countywide forum (building on the existing Climate Leadership Gloucestershire principles).	
8. Civic engagement and participative democracy	A) Promotes civic engagement and strengthens participative democracy.	Both authorities would be able to develop civic engagement strategies suited to their geographies and communities. The smaller scale may enable closer relationships between councils and residents, but investment and commitment will vary depending on resources and leadership. • **May feel more accessible to residents** - Councils serving 310k–350k residents may be seen as more approachable, with shorter decision chains and closer member–resident relationships. • **Risk of unequal investment** - Financial or political priorities may lead to different levels of civic participation infrastructure. • **Requires long-term commitment** - Strong participative democracy relies on consistent leadership and culture, not just structural change. • **Risk of democratic deficit -** Given LGR will reduce the number of elected councillors and create larger electoral divisions, this will increase the number of residents each councillor represents. This could risk a democratic deficit.	**A**
9. Inclusive growth and equity	A) Ability to tackle disparities in wealth setting up one unitary authority or two unitary authorities.	The 2UA model would allow each council to focus on its own economic geography and priorities, which may improve local targeting of interventions. However, without a shared tax base or pooled reserves, there is no direct mechanism to redistribute resources between East and West, meaning inequalities may persist or grow over time without intervention.	**A**

		• **Greater ability to focus on local economic drivers** – East could align its growth strategy to maximise Cheltenham's festival economy, and Cotswolds tourism; West could drive regeneration of Gloucester's city centre redevelopment, and Forest of Dean industrial renewal. • **Limits redistribution capacity** – Income and demand would need to be managed independently, reducing ability to manage known variations and inequalities across the East and West. • **Service leads voiced concern** – Finance, ASC, and CSC officers warned that over time, the West could face greater difficulty sustaining service quality and investment without a countywide balancing mechanism. Demographic projections show the West has higher deprivation levels and demand pressures. This has implications for long-term financial sustainability, preventative care, and integration with NHS partners. • **Neighbourhood regeneration may diverge** – The Place Model's ambition for consistent Neighbourhood Partnerships could be undermined if each council invests at different levels in deprived areas. • **Risk of splitting resources** - EQIA analysis shows that economic challenges are different in each part of the county and can affect groups protected under equalities law. In the West, young people face higher unemployment. In the East, there is less access to apprenticeships and training, which can particularly impact young people and disabled residents. A 2UA model could target these local issues more directly, but splitting resources may make it harder to run countywide programmes to reduce these gaps.	
	B) Prioritises vulnerable residents and community-level regeneration.	The scale of need, particularly in the West, may place more pressure on local finances and delivery unless partnership structures or funding mechanisms are established. There is a risk that different parts of Gloucestershire could become aligned to different combined authorities fragmenting influence and complicating engagement with regional priorities.	G

		• **Closer integration with local VCFSE networks** – Smaller councils could embed local community organisations (e.g. GL Communities in the West, Cotswold Friends in the East) directly into regeneration planning, improving reach and trust • **Exposes resource gaps** – The West's higher need may not be matched by local income, making it harder to fund regeneration and preventative work without external support. • **Requires robust local commissioning** – Each council would need strong capability to identify, fund, and measure interventions, which was a challenge raised in ASC and housing disaggregation discussions with service professionals, where market capacity varies significantly between East and West.	
	C) Ensures that financial sustainability is not achieved at the expense of service levels.	With two independent MTFSs, each council would control its financial decisions, giving flexibility to align budgets with local priorities. However, without shared reserves or risk pooling, cost pressures in high-demand services could lead to service reduction, particularly in the West. • **Enables local control over budgets** – Each authority can shape its own financial strategy to align with its values and priorities. • **Enables targeted financial planning** – East could direct reserves toward rural health access; West could prioritise safeguarding and early intervention in high-need urban areas. • **Potential to attract different funding streams** – Separate authorities could pursue distinct grant opportunities, widening the overall pool of external investment brought into Gloucestershire. • **Increases pressure on high-cost services** – The West, with higher ASC and CSC spend per resident, may face difficult decisions if cost pressures outpace funding. • **Creates risk of service variation** – One council may be able to protect frontline services more easily than the other.	**A**

		• **Could require trade-offs** – Without pooled reserves or cross-council subsidy, service levels may be more exposed to short-medium- and long-term budget constraints. • **High Needs funding uncertainty** – Stakeholders raised concerns about how Gloucestershire's current countywide High Needs deficit would be apportioned fairly, warning that uneven settlement could undermine education support in one area. • **Countywide Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit projected to reach ~£234m by vesting day (1 April 2028).** If statutory override is not maintained or an alternative solution implemented, then both a 1UA and 2UA would face significant financial risks. • **Impact of the Fair Funding Review -** This also remains unknown at this time presenting further financial uncertainty to both 1UA and 2UA scenarios.	

Appendix 6: Proposed Service Delivery Models

Scope of services considered

Corporate services

- Digital & ICT
- Asset Management & Property
- Strategic Finance
- Pension Fund
- Insurance & Counter Fraud
- HR
- Transactional Services incl. Payroll, AP / AR
- Legal Services (Incl. One Legal)
- Democratic Services & Elections
- Communications
- Transformation
- Planning, Performance & Insight (Data)
- Information Governance
- Customer Management

Front-line upper tier services (only county council services currently)

- Public Health
- Adult Social Care
- Children's & Education
- Transport & Highways
- Archives
- Fire & Rescue
- Trading Standards
- Coroners
- Libraries
- Registrars
- Employment and Skills

Front-line lower tier services OR both (only districts OR both county and districts currently)

- Public Protection
- Emergency Planning
- Revenue & Benefits
- Housing Strategy, Maintenance & Homelessness
- Leisure & Culture
- Economy & Sustainability (incl. Tourism & Visitor Economy)
- Planning & Building Control
- Development & Regeneration
- Waste & Environmental Services
- Parking
- Cemetery and Crematoria

Defining the key parameters used

	High	Medium	Low
Change Required - Transformation or alignment needed to realise the benefit.	**Fundamental redesign of team structure, roles, and processes; introduction of new systems or services; significant cultural change.**	**Moderate restructuring, role changes, or process improvements; some new tools or systems introduced.**	**Minor adjustments to workflows or responsibilities; no structural or system-wide changes.**
One - off Costs - The upfront investment required to implement the change	**Over £1,000,000 – Includes major IT systems, infrastructure, consultancy, or large-scale training programmes.**	**£500,000–£1,000,000 – Includes moderate system upgrades, recruitment drives, or targeted training.**	**Under £500,000 – Includes minor equipment, short-term consultancy, or small-scale training.**
Recurring Cost - Ongoing annual expenses to maintain or operate the new arrangement.	**Over £500,000 annually – Ongoing staffing, licensing, or service delivery costs.**	**£250,000–£500,000 annually – Include staffing, subscriptions, or maintenance.**	**Under £250,000 annually – Minimal ongoing costs such as software licences or admin support.**
Aggregation Benefits - The benefits of aggregating services based on both financial and non financial benefits	**Strong efficiencies and strategic gains from combining services; consistent delivery and reduced duplication.**	**Some coordination and savings achieved, but benefits are limited**	**Minimal improvement realised through aggregation**

Corporate Services

Corporate Services | Summary (1 of 3)

			1UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
Joint Officers meeting	**Digital & ICT**	Different delivery models across the Councils. County / Tewkesbury / Glos City / Stroud - In-House Cotswold / Forest of Dean / Chelt - Publica	**In-house digital service within the new unitary council** *(Noting that some specialist functions e.g. cyber security, hardware and software, may still be outsourced).*	**High**	**High**	**N/A**	**High**
Joint Officers meeting	**Asset Management & Property**	**All councils currently deliver property and asset services largely in-house.** *However, there are external consultants and framework partners utilised for specialist services by councils.* *Note services previously delivered by Publica were brought in house with the exception of one health and safety advisor.*	**Hybrid:** The new unitary council retains strategic and compliance functions in-house with external framework consultants for specialist skills e.g. valuations. Note: This excludes commercial property	**High**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**High**
County Council Officer meeting	**Pensions**	**Operated and administered in-house via the Gloucestershire Pension Fund within GCC for all councils in Glos**	**Remains operated in-house in the new UA** The new unitary council takes on the role of the administering authority via the Gloucestershire Pension Fund	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**Low**
No discussions so far	**Strategic Finance**	**In House**	**Single in-house team**				
No discussions so far	**Insurance & Counterfraud** ***CFEU*** ***ARA*** ***SWAP – South West Audit Partnership***		**Single in- house team** with traded services Note: bring corporate fraud together				

Corporate Services | Summary (2 of 3)

			1UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
Joint Officers Template	**Democratic Services**	**In-House across all councils**	**Single in-house function** with local delivery teams. Also combined Democratic services and elections teams into one team.	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**High**
	Elections	**In-House across all councils**	**Single in-house function** with local delivery teams. Also combined Democratic services and elections teams into one team.	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**High**
No discussions so far	**Legal Services** **Incl. One Legal**	**Mixed –** One Legal between 4 councils, quasi shared service between 2 councils and in-house for county	*One Legal service in house with traded services*				
No discussions so far	**Comms**	**In house**	**Single in-house team**				
No discussions so far	**HR**		**Single in-house team**				
No discussions so far	**Transactional Services incl. Payroll, AP / AR**		**Single in-house team with traded services**				

Corporate Services | Summary (3 of 3)

			1UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
No discussions so far	**Planning, Performance & Insight (Data)**	**In house**	**Single in-house team**				
No discussions so far	**Information Governance**	**In house**	**Single in-house team**				
No discussions so far	**Transformation**	**In house**	**Single in-house team**				
No discussions so far	**Customer Management**	In house	**Single in-house team**				
No discussions so far	**Internal audit**	**Tewkesbury** – In-House **Cheltenham, Cotswold and Forest of Dean** – South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) **Gloucestershire County** – In-house service which is also provided to Gloucester City Council and Stroud.	**Delivery model to be determined following an options analysis of the different options.**				

Front-line upper tier services

Front-Line Upper Tier Services | Summary (1 of 2)

			1UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
Joint Officers meeting	**Public Health**	**In-House management & advisory with a range of commissioned services**	**In-House management & advisory with a range of commissioned services**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**Medium**
Joint Officers meeting	**Adult Social Care**	ASC is **delivered in-house by GCC**, and the care market is managed centrally, with countywide contracts and provider relationships	**A single in-house ASC service** under the new unitary authority, retaining the current DASS structure and statutory responsibilities, with all delivery, commissioning, and safeguarding functions managed centrally and delivered locally	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**Medium**
Joint Officers meeting	**Childrens**	**Mixed Delivery Models** The service is managed overall in-house but there are also a number of elements of the service commissioned out e.g. Family and Youth Hub development	**Overall Children's Services are managed in house** but continue to commission specific areas as needed	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**Medium**
	Education	**In-house** *Note: Cross-authority music service*	**A single in-house education service** retained within the new unitary authority	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**Medium**

Front-Line Upper Tier Services | Summary (2 of 2)

			1UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
County Council Officer meeting	**Archives**	**In-house**	**Remains In - house**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Joint Officers meeting	**Transport & Highways**	**In-House** With outsourced service delivery	In-House with outsourced delivery	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**Low**
County Council Officer meeting	**Fire & Rescue**	**In-House -** GCC currently holds the governance and service responsibilities.	**Remains In-House -** Supported by Unitary Council (not a county council)	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**N/A**
County Council Officer meeting	**Trading Standards**	**In-House**	**Remains In-House -** Supported by Unitary Council (not a county council)	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**N/A**
County Council Officer meeting	**Coroners**	**In-House**	**Remains In-House**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**N/A**
County Council Officer meeting	**Libraries**	**In-House**	**Remains In-House**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**Low**
County Council Officer meeting	**Registrars**	**In-House**	**Remains In-House**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**N/A**
County Council Officer meeting	**Employment and Skills**	**In-House**	**A single in-house Employment and Skills team is established within the new unitary council**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**N/A**

Front-line lower tier services OR both (only districts OR both county and districts currently)

Front-Line Lower Tier Services | Summary (1 of 4)

			1UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
Joint Officers meeting	**Public Protection**	**Mixed.** Most services are delivered in-house by district councils though Publica provides services for Forest of Dean and Cotswold with some local differences. There are also some services (in some councils) contracted out e.g. stray dogs, contaminated land.	**Single In-House Countywide Service** (Noting that some specialist or very low volume functions e.g. stray dogs may still be outsourced).	**High**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**High**
Discussed under Public Protection	**Emergency Planning** *Discussed briefly under Public Protection but was not a detailed discussion – Ratings therefore may need to be refined*	**In-House across all councils currently**	**Single in-house team**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**Low**
Joint Officers meeting	**Revenue & Benefits**	**In-House** Cotswold and FoD via Publica	**Single In-House Countywide Service** Unlikely to be in place for day 1 but this would be the longer-term aspiration.	**High**	**High**	**N/A**	**High**
Joint Officers Template	**Cemetery and Crematoria**	**In – House** across all 7 councils	**Single in-house delivery team**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**Medium**
Joint Officers meeting	**Housing Strategy, Maintenance & Homelessness**	Mixed - All councils have some elements in-house but note: Stroud and Chelt have in-house DLOs and their own housing stock. FoD and Cotswold have shared housing staff in Publica (shared with West Oxfordshire too) Glos City host the Strategic Housing Partnership which is countywide across all 7 councils. All councils commission some services externally	**Hybrid Model –** Merge 2 HRA's, have a single head, delivery by east and west teams.	**High**	**High**	N/A	**High**

Front-Line Lower Tier Services | Summary (2 of 4)

			1UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
Joint Officers meeting	**Economy & Sustainability -** *Climate & Sustainability*	In-House teams in each council but there is also a county-wide Climate Leadership Gloucestershire Team managed by Glos City. o be updated on 31.07.25	**In-House Strategic Climate Function** *with local delivery of specific projects as required*	**High**	**Medium**	N/A	**Medium**
Joint Officers meeting	**Economy & Sustainability -** *Economic Development*	All councils have in-house ED capabilities noting variations in terms of scope of services, structures and extent of partnership working	**Single Strategic Economic Development Function with Local Delivery Presence**	**High**	**Medium**	N/A	**High**
Joint Officers meeting	**Economy & Sustainability -** *Tourism & Visitor Economy*	All Councils have small in-house local tourism teams but they are all also part of (and put varying amounts of funding towards) the Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).	**Single Visitor Economy Function with Local Place Marketing** *Not yet been determined if the strategic element would be in-house or as a separate organisation*	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**High**
Joint Officers meeting	**Leisure**	Stroud - **In-House model** **5 of the 6 councils outsource provision** *(3 to Freedom Leisure; CBC to the Chelt Trust and Tewkesbury to Places Leisure)*	**Harmonisation of current contractual positions over time to move to a sustainable and aligned model**	**High**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**Medium**
Joint Officers meeting	**Culture & Heritage**	**Mixed** A number of councils have this in-house; Cotswold outsource running of museum to Freedom Leisure; A lot of partnership working e.g. Glos City have a strategic partnership with Gloucester Culture Trust	**Codesigned future delivery models with the sector and communities with a consideration of future implications related to devolution**	TBD based on delivery models that are chosen	TBD based on delivery models that are chosen	TBD based on delivery models that are chosen	TBD based on delivery models that are chosen

Front-Line Lower Tier Services | Summary (3 of 4)

			1UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
Joint Officers meeting	**Planning & Building Control**	**Planning:** In-house	**Single in-house planning service with central strategic functions and area-based DM teams for local planning permission.**	**High**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**High**
		Building Control: **Mixed -** Some in-house and some with shared arrangements e.g. - Gloucester City and Stroud partnership / Cheltenham and Tewkesbury	**Single in-house countywide service with local delivery teams and central coordination for compliance.**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**High**
Joint Officers meeting	**Development & Regeneration**	In house	**Single in-house team**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**High**
Joint Officers Template	**Parking**	**Mixed.** Most services are delivered in-house by district councils though Publica provides services for Forest of Dean and Cotswold with some local differences. . All enforcement activities at GCC are outsourced	**Mixed:** In-house management and notice processing. Outsourced physical enforcement. Consolidate charging policies including EV charging	**High**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**High**

Front-Line Lower Tier Services | Summary (4 of 4)

			1UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
Joint Officers meeting	**Waste & Environmental Services (Incl. Ubico)**	**Waste Disposal and HRCs: Mixed Delivery -** Through in house teams and contractors such as Ubico and FCC (Javelin Park)	**Disposal**: In-House Strategic Service, and Disposal Authority Role for the new UA **HRCs:** Ubico continue to manage HRC Operations	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**High**
		Waste Collection: Delivered via Ubico	**Remains delivered by Ubico**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**Low –** *Consistency and standardisation*
		Environmental Services - Mixed Delivery - in house team with some elements contracted out, some delivered by Ubico e.g. tree planting	**Single in house team**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**High**

Appendix 7: Equalities Impact Assessment (1UA)

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty which states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

This document demonstrates how the Council is meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty by setting out the findings of an equality analysis that has been undertaken in relation to a proposed change to assess whether it has a disproportionate impact on people who share a protected characteristic. The Council's Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) process covers additional groups not 'protected' by section149 of the Equality Act 2010, including care leavers and care experienced adults.

Background

Title of the proposed change being assessed i.e. the policy, service or other development	Local Government Reorganisation

Describe the purpose of the proposed change and the intended outcomes
This Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been developed to support the consideration of proposals to restructure local government in Gloucestershire, assessing both the single unitary authority (1UA) and two unitary authorities (East / West) (2UA) options. This document focuses on the 1UA option only, the proposed makeup of which would comprise the whole of Gloucestershire and is based on the footprint of Gloucestershire County Council:

Table 8: Structure and 2023 Population of Option 1[65]

Gloucestershire Option	
Cheltenham	120,255
Cotswold	91,490
Forest of Dean	89,104
Gloucester	134,991
Stroud	124,540

[6565] Mid 2023 Population Estimates, ONS

Tewkesbury	98,896
Gloucestershire Total	659,276

The purpose of this assessment is to understand and evaluate the potential impacts of these changes on all service users and council staff with protected characteristics.

The reorganisation of local government is a significant change that could affect how services are delivered, how decisions are made, and how residents engage with their local councils.

This assessment aims to:

- Identify any potential positive or negative impacts on service users with protected characteristics
- Consider how these impacts might differ between the one-unitary and two-unitary models
- Highlight opportunities to promote equality and mitigate any adverse effects

It is intended for this EqIA to be a live document, updated as proposals are refined and further engagement with stakeholders takes place. Additionally, after a decision has been made by Government on the chosen model for Gloucestershire, to inform implementation.

Who is affected by the proposals?	
Service users:	Yes
Wider community:	Yes
Workforce:	Yes
Other (please specify):	

Decision to be taken and decision maker	The decision under consideration is whether the local government structure in Gloucestershire is replaced by either: • A single unitary authority; or • Two unitary authorities (East / West) This decision will significantly impact how local services are delivered, how residents engage with local government, and how resources are allocated across the county. Although the ultimate decision will be made by Government, councils in Gloucestershire are able

	to make a local decision on their preferred model to present to Government.

Information and Data Collection

Summarise how you have collected the information and data required to assess the current situation (section 3.1 below) and the potential or actual impact of the proposed change (section 3.2 below) on those who share the protected characteristics and the additional groups (e.g. survey of services users, running community focus groups, analysing service usage data, engaging with staff networks). The actual information and data should be set out in Appendix 1 (Service Users) and Appendix 2 (district & county staff in Gloucestershire).

If there are any gaps, include an action in section 4 to fill these. This does not mean that you cannot complete the equality impact assessment, but you need to follow-up the action and revisit as part of the monitoring and review arrangements set out in section 5.

Stakeholders	Engagement and Consultation	Other Sources
Service Users / Wider Community	Workshops with services across the county council and district councils to understand the risks and opportunities associated with aggregation and disaggregation of each service. A public local engagement process has also been undertaken across Gloucestershire, designed and delivered by an independent, external engagement company - Cratus. The engagement process includes an online survey with both structured and open-ended questions, a dedicated microsite, 12 in-person events (two per district), and two online webinars. A total of 3,112 survey responses were received.	Outputs of disaggregation / aggregation service workshops. Cratus engagement report.

Workforce	A workforce pulse survey has been undertaken across all councils. Top line outputs from the survey are: • 86% of staff understand what LGR might mean in Gloucestershire • 82% of staff understand what devolution might mean for Gloucestershire • 63% understand the difference between LGR and devolution • 75% of staff think messages are being well communicated • Email and staff briefings are the most popular ways staff like to hear messages about LGR/devo • 46% of staff don't feel confident their views will be listened to • 78% feel confident to ask questions • 69% have felt no impact on morale • 78% feel supported by leadership and management • 90% feel they can discuss with their line manager	Staff engagement outputs from the pulse survey on LGR and Devolution across the seven councils in Gloucestershire
Partners	To support the wider local engagement being delivered across Gloucestershire to inform the development of LGR proposals, Gloucestershire County Council's (GCC) senior leadership conducted meetings with key stakeholders, with whom they had	LGR Stakeholder Engagement report

	established relationships, across June – August 2025. The meetings addressed the following, with some stakeholders choosing to provide further feedback via email or letter: • Update stakeholders on how LGR Full Proposals and Devolution discussions are progressing in Gloucestershire. • Update stakeholders on the LGR policy position of GCC's new Cabinet to be agnostic and evidence-led in considering both a one unitary and two unitary model. • Provide information on the timetable and key processes underway. • Understand more about how LGR / Devolution could impact specific stakeholders / organisations, what is important to them in relation to this topic and address any concerns or issues for them. • Gauge interest in further collaboration and engagement (as appropriate). Stakeholders engaged includes: • Various members of the business community • Gloucestershire Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) • Gloucestershire VCSE Alliance	

	• Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) • The Bishop of Gloucester, joined by senior Clergy including Deans of the Diocese. • Gloucestershire's schools associations • Gloucestershire College • Hartpury University • National Star College • SG & Stroud College • Bromford Housing • Adults Collaborative Board • Gloucestershire Care Providers Association	
Other		

Equality Assessment

Indicate the impact on each group and explain how you have reached your conclusions (i.e. through analysis of the information and data that was collected through the engagement, consultation and other sources / methods that were set out in section 2).

Consider sub-categories (e.g. different kinds of disabilities) and how the groups are interconnected (e.g. young women) resulting in particular needs or types of disadvantage and discrimination (sometimes known as intersectional or combined discrimination).

The Proposed Change

Summarise your assessment of the likely or actual impact of the proposed change on each of the groups. If an action is required, this should be recorded in Section 4.

Service Users						
Protected Characteristics / Additional Groups	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Not Sure	Summary of Impact	Action Required (Y/N)?
Age				X	Gloucestershire has an ageing population. Demographics are projecting a dependency ratio of 0.69 by 2047. An increase from 0.65 in 2022. Under a 1UA arrangement the impact on demands to council services would remain unchanged. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Detailed summary of Impact	Potential disproportionate impact: • There is potential for impact to services, dependant on the ways of working and delivery model that is agreed under the new authority. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to review					

	impacts to services such as: SEND, early years, education, children's specialist placements, some public health services, e.g. public health nursing, sexual health Potential positive proportionate impact • Potential for positive impacts on early help services (though greater in 1UA than 2UA) as separated functions would be brought together in a unitary arrangement. • Under 1UA, working as clusters under a locality model would bring benefits to schools and bring potential benefits to service users by an improved service delivery. • Planning implications for new schools could improve under 1UA option. Where these decisions are currently taken in district councils, meaning that decisions should be made collaboratively for the county to ensure new schools are developed in the best location depending on the needs of the local geographical area. Therefore, bringing a positive impact to groups of school age.					
Disability				X	There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Sex				X	There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Race				X	There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA.	Y

					Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	
Gender reassignment				X	There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Pregnancy & maternity				X	There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Religion and/or belief				X	There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	Y

Sexual orientation				X	There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Marriage & civil partnership				X	There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Armed Forces community				X	There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Carers				X	Parent-carer forums and networks are already established as county-wide. There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA.	Y

					Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	
Care leavers / care experienced adults	X				It is considered that would be a positive impact under a 1UA model where it is thought that there is scope for enhanced working relationships with key partners, therefore positively impacting service users. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users and workforce.	Y
Detailed Summary of Impact	• Under a 1UA arrangement there is more potential for improved relationships, working practices and processes for those teams who provide accommodation and support for care leavers and care experienced adults					
Digital exclusion				X	There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users and workforce.	Y
Geography, for example, urban and rural areas		X			There is potential for a balanced / neutral impact under a 1UA model, with mitigants needing to be considered for the potential negative impacts.	Y

					Where the disproportionate impacts can be mitigated through an appropriate delivery model, such as a locality model. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users and workforce.	

Potential disproportionate impact:

- There is concern that local representation, location of service delivery, and local knowledge could be lost. However. as part of implementation planning, further analysis will be undertaken to ensure appropriate mitigants are considered. For example: planning, delivery of adult social care services, licensing decisions etc.

Potential positive proportionate impact:

- It is likely that there will be minimum risk to service continuity and provision in this option. This in turn means that there is potentially a lower risk of disruption or significant changes in access or provision for the most vulnerable residents across Gloucestershire.
- Commissioning services on a countywide footprint (under 1UA) with additional locality provision aligned with population needs, is more likely to create the economies of scale required to maintain breadth of service delivery across urban and rural areas and avoid differential access or provision.
- Under the existing two-tier structure, services can be concentrated on the county's urban centres, with a lack of knowledge about practicalities and difficulties of delivery in more rural and isolated communities, who have more limited access to services. A 1UA or 2UA arrangement will provide opportunity for shared knowledge and expertise to improve service delivery and access across these communities.
- Planning implications for new schools could improve under 1UA option. Where these decisions are currently taken in district councils, meaning that decisions could be made collaboratively for the county to ensure new schools are developed in the best location depending on the needs of the local geographical area.
- A single council offers critical mass to support rural service delivery, including exploring micro-enterprises and technology-enabled care for hard-to-reach populations.

• Opportunities arising through unitarisation for integrating current functions of districts; housing, planning, environmental health with countywide public health functions to address wider determinants of population health at scale.						
Socio-economic disadvantage				X	There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Vulnerable groups of society		X			There are potential opportunities for improvements when services are aggregated under a 1UA. Opportunity through 1UA to improve co-ordination of support for inclusion health groups who may touch on multiple services, notably health and housing, through the integration of district and county functions. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users.	Y

Council Workforce							
Moving to a One Unitary Authority (1UA) will bring big changes to how we work and how teams are set up. Further assessment is needed to understand how these changes will affect different groups of staff across services.							
Protected Characteristics / Additional Groups		Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Not Sure	Summary of Impact	Action Required (Y/N)?
Age					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • As the biggest age demographic for staff falls within the 45-59 age range, consideration will need to be given to this group • When jobs are reorganised or changed, there's a risk that older people might be treated unfairly in hiring. • There's a risk that HR policies and practices might not be consistent across councils that will be making up the new authority Potential for positive impact: • As roles change and teams are reorganised, younger staff might have more opportunities for promotion.	Y

						• The new council could create policies that support staff of all ages, including training and flexible retirement options. • As implementation plans are agreed, there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Disability					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • Staff with disabilities might be more affected by changes in location, especially if transport or building access isn't properly planned. • When the new council is created, there may be delays or gaps in providing workplace adjustments (like special equipment, flexible hours, or software) during team or office moves. • Changes to how people work or being moved to a new employer (TUPE) may disproportionately affect staff with mental health needs or neurodiverse conditions.	Y

						Potential for positive impact: • The new council has a chance to build accessible workplaces, systems, and flexible working options from the start. • This is an opportunity for the councils to harmonise policies and create strong inclusion policies for the new council, leading to better support and visibility for staff with hidden disabilities or mental health conditions. • As part of implementation, efforts will be made to make sure staff policies around workplace adjustments are in place and that workspaces are accessible. However, the exact impact may vary between services, and a more detailed review will be needed. • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Sex					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration:	

						As with other personal characteristics, the impact of changes will vary depending on the makeup of each team. However, changes that affect frontline staff and team leaders are likely to affect women more, where they make up a large part of these roles. It will be important to consider this when planning any potential staff restructures linked to LGR. Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • There's a higher risk of women being affected unfairly, as they make up over 70% of the workforce. Consideration should be given when affecting any contractual changes to ensure individuals are not disproportionately affected due to sex. • There is a risk that new pay structures do not provide equity for those of any sex. Potential for positive impact: • The new council could use this to improve gender balance, especially in leadership, management, and technical roles. • The opportunity to ensure there is an equal pay policy and structure • As implementation plans are agreed, there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs.	

						• As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent and further consideration will be needed as part of implementation planning. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Race					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Like with other personal characteristics, the impact of changes will vary depending on the makeup of each team or service. However, there is risk that staff from ethnic minority backgrounds are impacted: Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • Communication could be harder during the transition for staff who don't speak English as their first language. • There's a risk that anti-racism work or equality efforts might lose focus if priorities shift. Potential for positive impact: • The changes could be an opportunity to improve how staff are included and	

						supported, by reviewing engagement policies to better reflect the local community. • This is an opportunity for the councils to harmonise policies and create strong inclusion policies for the new council that improve how staff are included and supported. • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Gender reassignment					X	There is no data available on staff who declare that they are going through or have gone through gender reassignment. Consideration will be needed to ensure there are no disproportionate impacts on staff with this characteristic. Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Considerations for disproportionate impacts:	

						• There's a risk that HR policies and practices might not be consistent across councils that will be making up the new authority. For example, how names and pronouns are recorded, dress codes, or access to support. Some councils may have different policies that will need to be aligned during the TUPE process. Potential for positive impact: • Setting up the new council is a chance to improve support for trans staff. This should include better training, updated policies on gender identity, and more inclusive facilities. • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Pregnancy & maternity					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • Staff on maternity leave during the transition might feel concern about job	

						security, changes in their manager, or changes to their role. • Through this process, working hours or locations might change. This could be difficult for pregnant staff or new mothers, especially if it's different from what they agreed before going on maternity leave. • There is a risk that HR policies and practices are not consistent across councils that will be making up the new authority. There will be a need to harmonise HR policies. • As the new council is set up, there could be problems with managing leave, pay, or flexible working during the change. Potential for positive impact: • With service redesign, the new council might be able to plan their workforce in a more local and flexible way. • This could lead to better support for returning to work, more flexible working options, and improved arrangements for staff with caring responsibilities. • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs – such as physical space for breastfeeding	

						Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Religion and/or belief					X	Like with other personal characteristics, the impact will vary depending on the makeup of each team. Consideration will be needed to ensure there are no disproportionate impacts on staff with this characteristic. Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • There is a risk that religious needs might be missed during potential office moves or when new policies are created. For example, staff may need prayer rooms or multi-faith spaces if they're asked to work in a new location. • There is a risk that HR policies and practices are not consistent across councils that will be making up the unitary authority. There will be a need to harmonise HR policies. Potential for positive impact: • Any changes to office spaces as part of creating the new councils should be a	

						chance to design more inclusive workplaces. This might include multi-faith rooms, culturally appropriate food options, or more flexible leave policies. • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Sexual orientation					X	Like with other personal characteristics, staff don't have to share their sexual orientation, so data is limited on this characteristic. Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • There's a risk that existing LGBTQ+ support networks or allies could be lost if teams are split up or moved. Potential for positive impact: • The new councils should show strong support for LGBTQ+ inclusion from the start	

						by creating new networks, policies, and support systems for LGBTQ+ staff. • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups, such as LGBTQ+ groups to understand their needs. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Marriage & civil partnership					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent and further consideration will be needed as part of implementation planning. As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs.	

						Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Armed Forces community					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected. Considerations for disproportionate impacts: There is a risk that HR Polices and practices are not consistent across councils that will be making up the unitary authority. There will be a need to harmonise HR policies. As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Carers					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration:	

						As with other personal circumstances, consideration will be needed to ensure there are no disproportionate impacts on staff with this characteristic. Including options for leave and flexible or hybrid working. Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • Staff who care for others may feel additional pressures if they're worried about job security or increased workloads. • There is potential for loss of informal support, like understanding managers or flexible arrangements, during team changes. • Moving to a new work location, if required, could mean longer travel times and higher costs, making it harder to manage their caring duties. • There is a risk that HR policies and practices are not consistent across the councils that will be making up the unitary authority. There will be a need to harmonise HR policies. Potential for positive impact: • The new council could use this opportunity to improve support for carers by creating fair and consistent policies. For example, carers' leave and flexible working, across all areas.	

						• As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Care leavers / care experienced adults					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	

Digital exclusion					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Geography, for example, urban and rural areas					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected.	

						As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Socio-economic disadvantage					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected. Some general points for consideration are: Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • Staff on lower incomes may struggle more with potential changes if moving to a new location, longer travel, or job uncertainty. • If there are redundancies or changes in pay, those already financially stretched could be disproportionately affected. However, based on the experiences of	

						other local authorities who have already gone through this process, redundancies have been minimal and mostly limited to senior leadership roles (such as Chief Executives, Directors etc). Potential for positive impact: • The reorganisation and TUPE process should be used to reduce inequalities, for example, by improving access to training, career progression, or digital tools. • As implementation plans are agreed, there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Vulnerable groups of society					X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to	

						ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	

Action Plan

Set out the key actions that will be undertaken, following the equality assessment in section 3, to further maximise the positive impact or mitigate the negative impact of the proposal on the protected characteristics and additional groups prior to implementation (any negative consequences should be eliminated, minimised or counter-balanced by other measures):

Identified Potential or Actual Impact	Recommended Action(s)	Owner	Target Completion Date

Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users and workforce.	As part of implementation planning, each LGR programme will need to complete an EqIA to consider the impact of proposed changes to service delivery and ways of working on those with protected characteristics and inform decision making.	Programme Managers	Nov ’25 - Aug ‘26
Depending on the implementation plan chosen, there is potential for equalities impact on workforce with protected characteristics. Mostly likely to be Geography and disability, should any change in working location be needed.	People & Culture workstream to ensure all workforce risks are mitigated against through policy.	People & Culture LGR Workstream	Nov ’25 – Apr ‘28

Monitoring and Review

Public bodies must have regard to the aims of the duty not only when a policy, service or development is being created and decided upon, but also when it is implemented and at regular intervals thereafter. The Equality Duty is a continuing duty.

Lead officer(s):	Gareth Edmundson, Chief Executive – Cheltenham Borough Council Jane Portman, Chief Executive, Cotswold District Council Nigel Brinn, Chief Executive, Forest of Dean District Council Jon McGinty, Managing Director, Gloucester City Council Jo Walker, Chief Executive – Gloucestershire County Council Kathy O’Leary, Chief Executive – Stroud District Council Alistair Cunningham, Chief Executive – Tewkesbury Borough Council

Part 1 – Initial arrangements (up to around six months following implementation)

Date of the post implementation review:	October 2028
Approach to measuring the impact of the change to enable a comparison between the anticipated impact (as set out in section 3) with the actual impact: ▪ What mechanisms will be used? ▪ How will service users / the wider community / GCC staff and other stakeholders be involved?	Review on implementation to be completed by each LGR Programme as agreed under finalised implementation plans. Each programme will need an individual EqIA to ensure there is consideration of equalities and ownership of actions throughout the process.

Part 2 – Ongoing arrangements (from around six months onwards)

Frequency of monitoring and review:	Ongoing monitoring via individual LGR programmes.
What mechanisms will be used? How will service users / the wider community / GCC staff and other stakeholders be involved?	Via individual programme EqIAs.

Appendix 1: Service User Data and Information

Details of service users affected by the proposed activity:

Groups	Service User Data and Information
Age	Dependency ratios are a measure that indicate the level of support that needs to be provided by the working age (16-64) population to the younger and older population, people aged 0-15 or 65+. A low dependency ratio indicates that there is a sufficient ratio of the working-age population to the dependent population. In contrast, a high dependency ratio indicates there may be more financial burden on the working population to support the dependent population. The West has a higher overall population than the East, it has a slightly lower proportion of those aged 65 and over, which are likely to require more targeted support. *Table 5: Age distribution of the mid 2023 Population, by the proposed unitaries*[1]

	Gloucestershire		East		West	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Total Population	659,276	100.0%	310,641	100.0%	348,635	100.0%
0-16	115,485	17.5%	53,920	17.4%	61,565	17.7%
16-64	398,322	60.4%	186,241	60.0%	212,081	60.8%
65+	145,469	22.1%	70,480	22.7%	74,989	21.5%

Table 8 shows the projected dependency in 2047. The East area is projected to have a greater dependency ratio than the West and Gloucestershire as a whole. For every 100 people the East will be supporting around 5 more dependents than the West, which could translate to higher demands on council services, and more people who are not in the workforce than those who are working, potentially constraining growth in the local economy.

Table 8: Projected dependency ratio, 2047, by the proposed unitaries[2]

	Dependency ratio
Gloucestershire	0.69
East	0.72
West	0.67

Figure 2 looks at the projected population across the three areas in more detail, breaking it down by sex and 5 year age band. Across all areas the largest 5 year cohort is those aged 55-59. All areas have a similar age profile, although the West area has a higher proportion of those aged 35-59, and a lower proportion of older people than other areas.

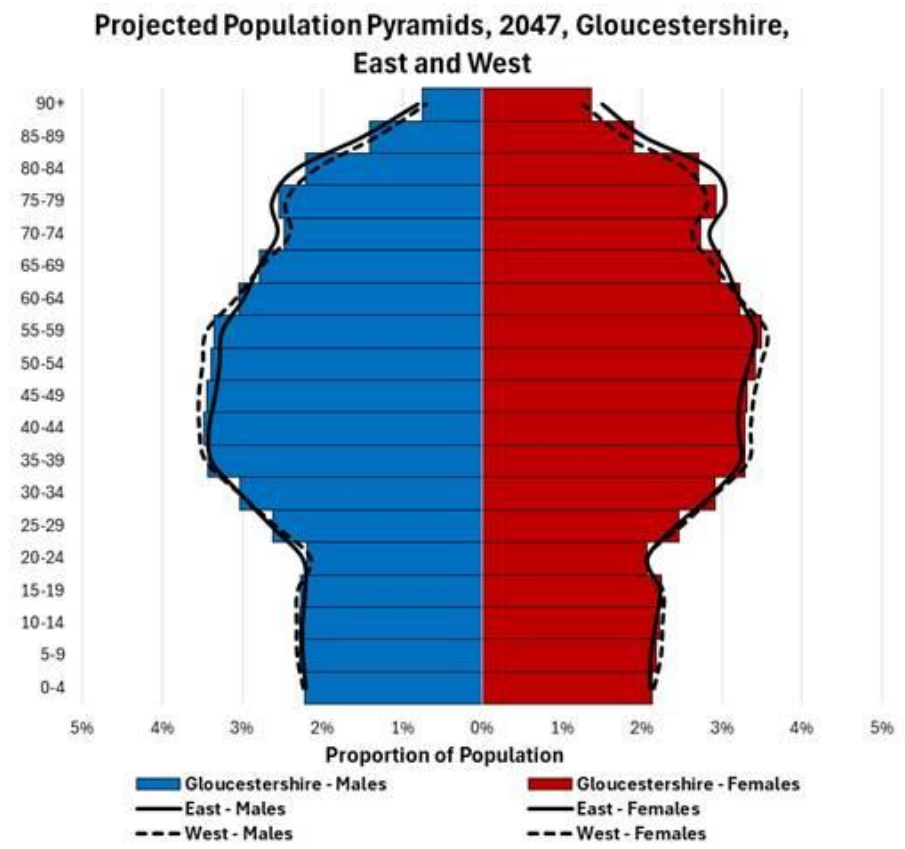


Figure 2: Projected Population Pyramids, 2047, Gloucestershire, East and West[3]

Adult Social Care

The information below shows a break down of the Adult Social Care case cohort by age groups, Gloucestershire, East and West areas and the component districts.

Table 9 shows the caseload for age groups over 75 are the highest across all areas. The West area has greater overall demand than the East.

Table 9: Adult Social Care Service Users by age, Gloucestershire, East and West, as at 31st March 2025 (DRAFT)[4] [5]

East Unitary

	Under 18	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85+	Grand Total
Cheltenham	0	56	80	99	81	167	165	319	328	1271
Cotswold	0	16	25	22	28	69	99	217	307	770
Tewkesbury	0	40	57	44	44	119	99	203	239	836
	0	**112**	**162**	**165**	**153**	**355**	**363**	**739**	**874**	**2877**

West Unitary

	Under 18	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85+	Grand Total
Gloucester	<5	159	190	156	179	302	220	371	333	1865
Stroud	<5	82	101	79	87	187	164	294	340	1313
Forest of Dean	0	65	87	72	73	157	156	257	278	1113
	0	**306**	**378**	**307**	**339**	**646**	**540**	**922**	**951**	**4291**

Countywide

	Under 18	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85+	Grand Total
Cheltenham		56	80	99	81	167	165	319	328	1271

Cotswold		16	25	22	28	69	99	217	307	770
Tewkesbury		40	57	44	44	119	99	203	239	836
Gloucester	<5	159	190	156	179	302	220	371	333	1865
Stroud	<5	82	101	79	87	187	164	294	340	1313
Forest of Dean		65	87	72	73	157	156	257	278	1113
Out of County or Unknown	<5	18	24	50	54	60	42	55	49	349
Grand Total	**7**	**425**	**559**	**512**	**533**	**1042**	**939**	**1710**	**1871**	**7433**

Vulnerable Children

The information below shows a break down of the vulnerable children across Gloucestershire, East and West areas and the component districts.

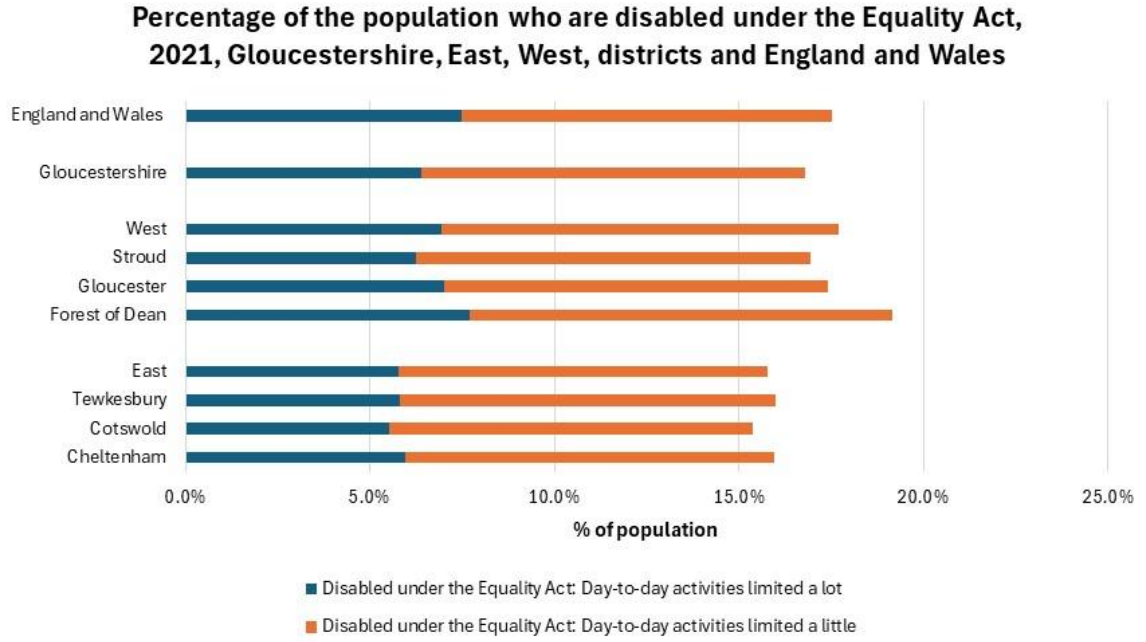
The West has a higher population of children than the East. The West also has a higher level of child safeguarding activity, and a greater rate of children subject to Education, Health and Care Plans.

Table 10: Service demand for children's services as at 09/07/2025[6]

	Population aged 17 and under (MYE 2023)	All open referrals/cases[7]		CiN / CP / CIC[8]		CYP with EHCP[9] [10]	
Area	***Number***	***Number***	***%***	***Number***	***%***	***Number***	***%***
Cheltenham	23,777	662	2.80%	333	1.40%	1,106	4.70%
Cotswolds	16,623	419	2.50%	270	1.60%	733	4.40%
Tewkesbury	20,515	575	2.80%	346	1.70%	1,235	6.00%
East	60,915	1,656	2.70%	949	1.60%	3,074	5.00%

Forest of Dean	16,192	460	2.80%	301	1.90%	867	5.40%
Gloucester	29,192	1,196	4.10%	617	2.10%	1,708	5.90%
Stroud	24,173	596	2.50%	308	1.30%	1,294	5.40%
West	69,557	2,252	3.20%	1,226	1.80%	3,869	5.60%
Gloucestershire	130,472	3,908	3.00%	2,175	1.70%	6,943	5.30%

[1] Mid 2023 Population Estimate, ONS
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] DAIT, GCC
[5] The tables are based on our Client Level Dataset (CLD), representing a distinct count of individuals by age and postcode at the point of service commencement. Please be aware that the CLD is currently undergoing a comprehensive review and enhancement process, which may lead to future refinements in the data. All service types are included in this snapshot—this encompasses Health, Fully-Funded, Part-Funded, and selected Self-Funded services. No services have been excluded.
[6] DAIT, GCC
[7] Figures refer to all open Social Care referrals, as of 09/07/2025. Address information refers to Home Address as of 09/07/2025. Totals may not add up to 100% as either address information not being recorded or child residing outside of Gloucestershire at that time.
[8] Of the above children, those who were either subject to a CiN plan, CP plan or were a Child in Care, as of 09/07/2025
[9] Figures include children and young people aged 0-25 with an EHCP maintained by the LA and are a snapshot as at 09/07/2025. Based on the child / young person's home postcode.

	[10] * EHCP runs from 0 to 25, but the majority of plans are for under-18's, so the same population (0 to 17) is used for the % for consistency
Disability	In 2021, 16.8% of Gloucestershire residents were classified as having a disability under the Equality Act. Looking at the East and West areas, the West area has the highest proportion of residents with a disability (17.7%) exceeding the figure for the county as a whole and the national average. The East area has the lowest proportion of residents with a disability (15.8%) below the county and national average. 

Sex

According to the 2023 population estimates, 51.1% of Surrey's population is female. This is in line with the national average. The East and West areas are also broadly similar to the national and county average with 51.2% and 51.0% of the population being female respectively.

Table 13: Sex breakdown of the mid 2023 Population, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales[1]

	Number			Percentages	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Cheltenham	59,011	61,244	120,255	49.1%	50.9%
Cotswold	43,963	47,527	91,490	48.1%	51.9%
Tewkesbury	43,698	45,406	89,104	49.0%	51.0%
East	**146,672**	**154,177**	**300,849**	**48.8%**	**51.2%**
Forest of Dean	66,984	68,007	134,991	49.6%	50.4%
Gloucester	60,868	63,672	124,540	48.9%	51.1%
Stroud	47,832	51,064	98,896	48.4%	51.6%
West	**175,684**	**182,743**	**358,427**	**49.0%**	**51.0%**
Gloucestershire	**322,356**	**336,920**	**659,276**	**48.9%**	**51.1%**
England and Wales	29,835,992	31,018,735	60,854,727	49.0%	51.0%

As age increases, females outnumber males by an increasing margin. In Gloucestershire in 2023, 52.8% of people aged 65-84 were female, whilst for people aged 85+ the difference was more marked with females accounting for

	61.4% of the total population; this difference is observed across the East and West areas as well as at a national level. *Table 14: Sex and breakdown of the mid 2023 Population, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales*[2]

									0-15		16-64		65-84		85+	
									Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
East	50.6%	49.4%	49.1%	50.9%	46.8%	53.2%	38.3%	61.7%								
West									50.9%	49.1%	49.7%	50.3%	47.6%	52.4%	38.8%	61.2%
Gloucestershire									50.8%	49.2%	49.4%	50.6%	47.2%	52.8%	38.6%	61.4%
England and Wales									51.2%	48.8%	49.3%	50.7%	47.1%	52.9%	38.1%	61.9%

[1] Mid 2023 Population Estimates, ONS

[2] *Ibid.*

Race	The Equality Act states that race includes colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins. The government refers to ethnicity and not race; this is because surveys usually ask people for their ethnicity and not their race, and using consistent terms helps people to understand the data. In Gloucestershire 87.7% of residents identified as White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British, which was considerably higher than the national average of 74.4%. The East and West have a similar proportion of

	residents who identified as White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British to Gloucestershire with 88.1% and 87.4% respectively. White Other accounts for the second largest proportion of residents in Gloucestershire, East and West. In Gloucestershire 5.3% of residents fall into this category, lower than the national average of 7.3%. In the East area 5.9% of residents are classified as White Other, slightly higher than the Gloucestershire figure but lower than the national figure, while in the West area 4.8% of residents fall into this category, higher than the Gloucestershire and national figure. The Asian, Asian British and Asian Welsh category made up the largest percentage of the non-White Gloucestershire, East and West population and represented 2.9% of Gloucestershire residents, lower than the national average of 9.3%. The East and West areas have a similar proportion of Asian, Asian British and Asian Welsh as Gloucestershire as 2.6% and 3.1% respectively. There are minimal differences in the proportion of Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African residents and Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups across Gloucestershire, East and West areas.

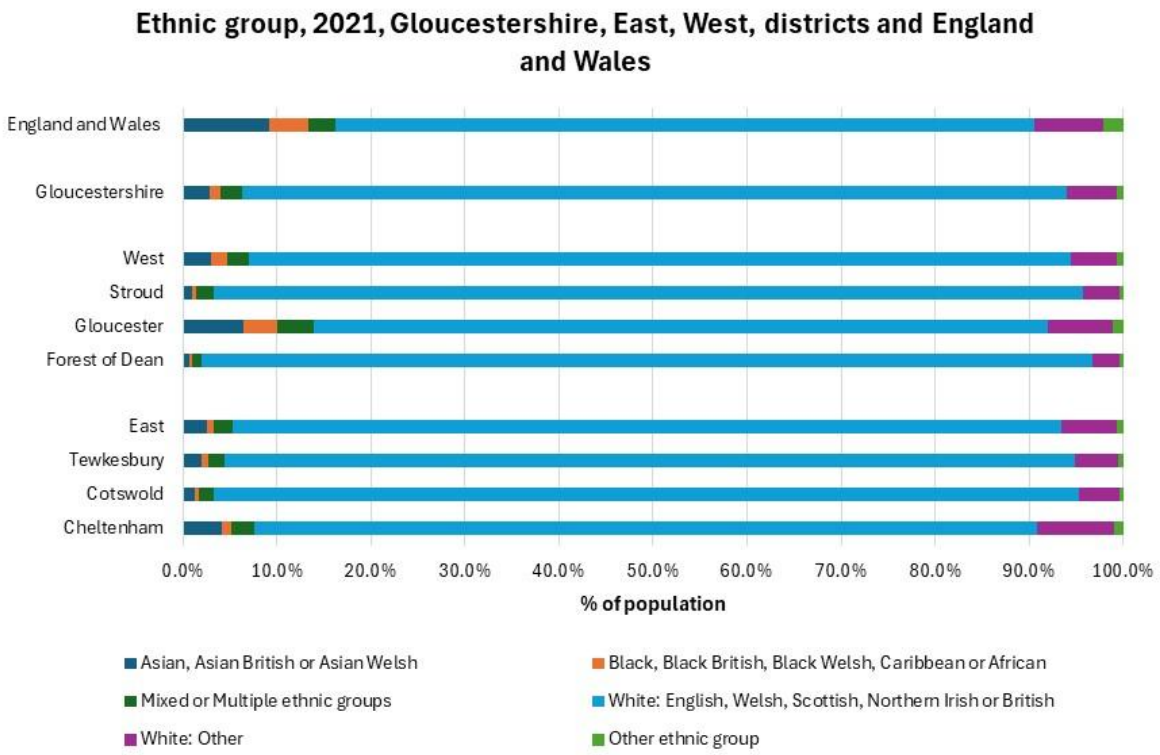
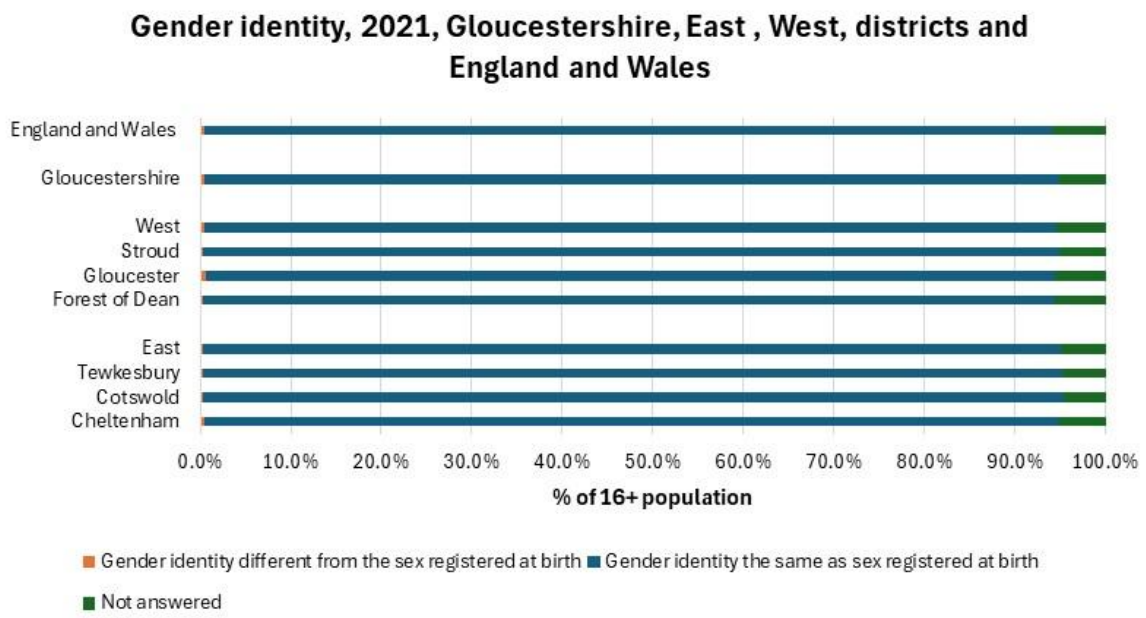


Figure 6: Ethnic group, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales[66]

Gender reassignment	The Census 2021 has provided the first set of official data on gender identity in England and Wales. In the 2021 Census there was a new question around gender identity, asking 'is your gender the same as the sex you were registered at birth?'. The question referred to a person's sense of their own gender. It was directed only at people

[66] 2021 Census, ONS

	aged 16 and over, and answers were voluntary. However, as of November 2024, the Census 2021 data on gender identity no longer hold the accredited official statistics designation and have been reclassified as official statistics in development. ONS states: There are some patterns in the data that are consistent with, but do not conclusively demonstrate, some respondents not interpreting the question as intended; given other sources of uncertainty, not least the impact of question non-response, we cannot say with certainty whether the census estimates are more likely to be an overestimate or an underestimate of the total number of trans people aged over 16 years in England and Wales. Census estimates on gender identity are, however, broadly consistent with the best available comparator of the GP Patient Survey and international comparators. Overall, 94.8% of residents in Gloucestershire aged 16 and over answered the question. Of these, almost 2,200 people (0.4%) regarded their gender identity to be different from the sex registered at birth. The East and West areas also saw 0.4% of their population stating their gender identity was different from the sex registered at birth. However, in the East 95.1% of residents answered the question this was slightly higher than the 94.5% in the West.

	 *Figure 7: Gender identity, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales*[67]
Pregnancy & maternity	There were 5,839 live births in Gloucestershire in 2023, this equates to a crude fertility rate of 8.9 live births per 1,000 people of all ages. This was lower than the national average of 9.7 live births per 1,000 people of all ages. Looking at the East and West areas, the highest crude birth rate was in the West (9.1), which exceeded the county average but was lower than the national average. The East had a crude birth rate of 8.6 live births per 1,000 people, this was lower than the county and national average. Crude birth rates are affected by the demographic

[67] *Ibid.*

make-up of an area. Gloucestershire's relatively older population means it has proportionally less women of childbearing age than England, which may explain its lower crude birth rate.

Table 9: Crude birth rates, 2023[68]

	Live births	Total Population	Crude Birth Rate per 1,000 population
Cheltenham	1,009	120,255	8.4
Cotswold	657	91,490	7.2
Tewkesbury	1,001	98,896	10.1
East	**2,667**	**310,641**	**8.6**
Forest of Dean	709	89,104	8.0
Gloucester	1,448	134,991	10.7
Stroud	1,015	124,540	8.1
West	**3,172**	**348,635**	**9.1**
Gloucestershire	**5,839**	**659,276**	**8.9**
England and Wales	591,072	60,854,727	9.7

The limitation of crude birth rates is that it doesn't account for the age and sex structure of the population. General Fertility Rates account for this by expressing live births per 1,000 females aged 15-64, this adjusts for women of childbearing age in an area. A higher general fertility rate (GFR) means that, on average, more children are being born to women of reproductive age. The General Fertility Rate in Gloucestershire stands at 50.4 live births per

[68] Live births in England and Wales, ONS

<table>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,000 females aged 15-44, which is slightly higher than the national average. Looking at the East and West areas, the highest general fertility rate was in the West (51.9), which exceeded the county average but was lower than the national average. The East had a general fertility rate of 48.8 live births per 1,000 females aged 15-44, this was lower than the county and national average.
Table 10: General Fertility Rates, 2023[69]
<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Live births</th><th>15-44 year old female population</th><th>General Fertility Rate per 1,000 population</th></tr>
<tr><td>Cheltenham</td><td>1,009</td><td>23,432</td><td>43.1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cotswold</td><td>657</td><td>13,724</td><td>47.9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tewkesbury</td><td>1,001</td><td>17,525</td><td>57.1</td></tr>
<tr><td>East</td><td>2,667</td><td>54,681</td><td>48.8</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Forest of Dean</td><td>709</td><td>14,206</td><td>49.9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Gloucester</td><td>1,448</td><td>26,915</td><td>53.8</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stroud</td><td>1,015</td><td>19,969</td><td>50.8</td></tr>
<tr><td>West</td><td>3,172</td><td>61,090</td><td>51.9</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Gloucestershire</td><td>5,839</td><td>115,771</td><td>50.4</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>England and Wales</td><td>591,072</td><td>11,879,690</td><td>49.8</td></tr>
</table>
</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion and/or belief</td>
<td>The 2021 Census asked about religion, but this question was voluntary and ‘no religion’ was a common answer, a proportion of people also chose not to answer the question.</td>
</tr>
</table>

[69] Live births in England and Wales, ONS

	According to the 2021 Census, 49.2% of residents in Gloucestershire were Christian, making it the most common religion, the proportion of residents selecting this religion was higher than the national average (46.2%). The East and West have a broadly similar proportion of residents who identified as Christian to Gloucestershire with figures of 50.2% and 48.3% respectively. No religion accounts for the second largest proportion of residents in Gloucestershire, East and West. In Gloucestershire 41.4% of residents fall into this category, higher than the national average of 37.2%. In the East area 41.0% of residents are classified as having no religion, slightly lower than the Gloucestershire figure but higher than the national figure, while in the West area 41.7% of residents fall into this category, higher than the Gloucestershire and national figure. Islam was the second most common religion in Gloucestershire, East and West Areas, Muslims represented 1.4% of Gloucestershire residents considerably below the national average of 6.5%. In the East area 0.8% of residents are classified as Muslim, slightly lower than the Gloucestershire figure and considerably lower than the national figure, while in the West area 2.0% of residents fall into this category, higher than the Gloucestershire figure but lower than the national figure.

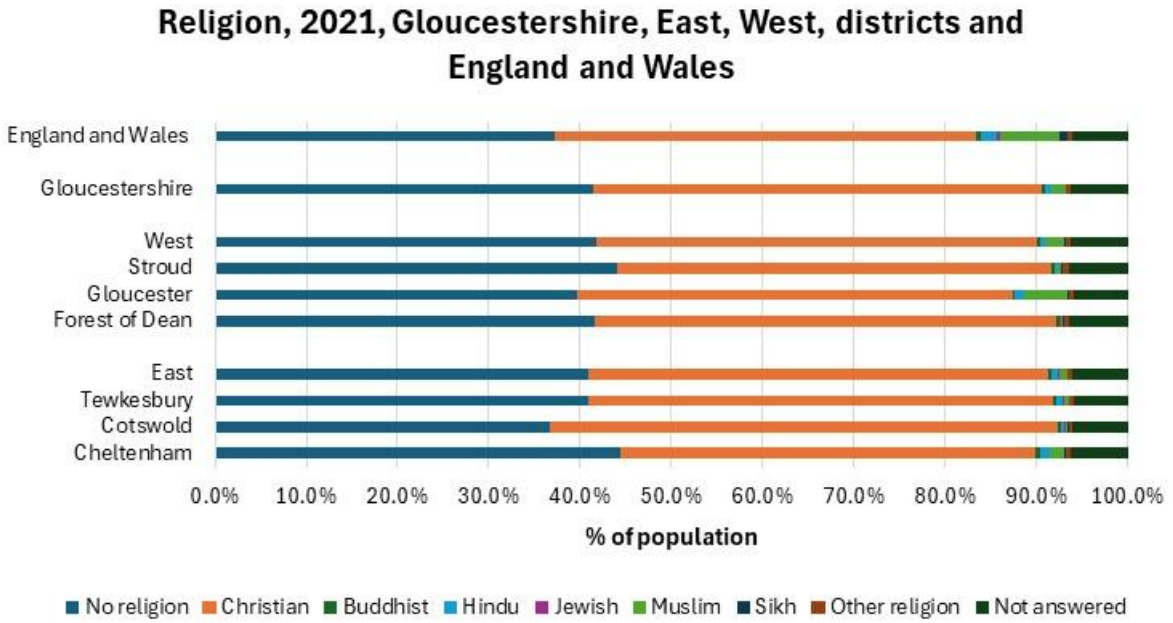
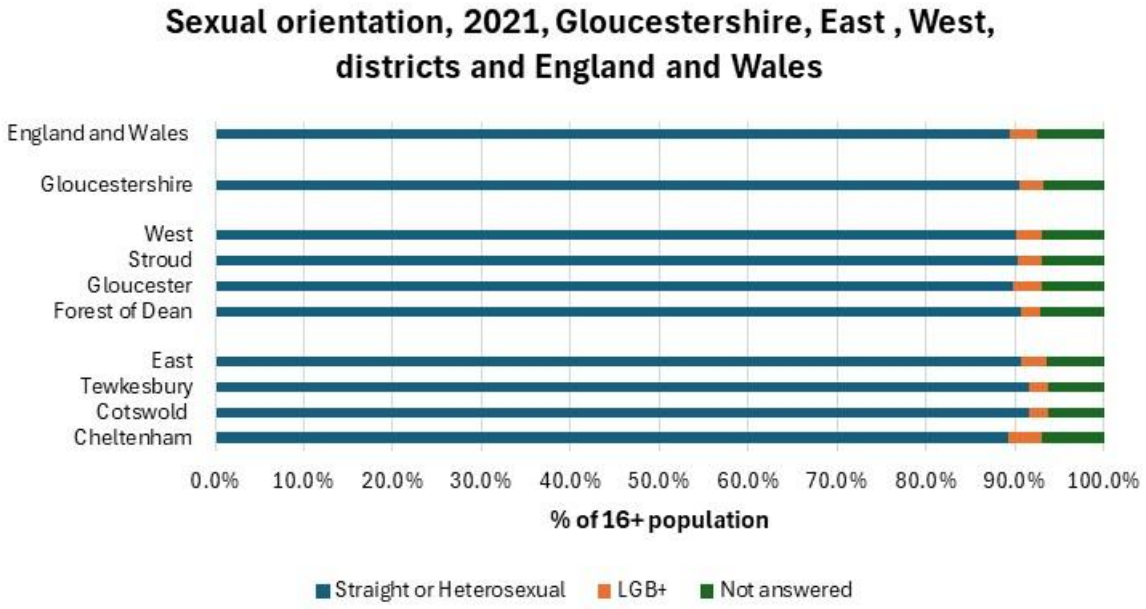


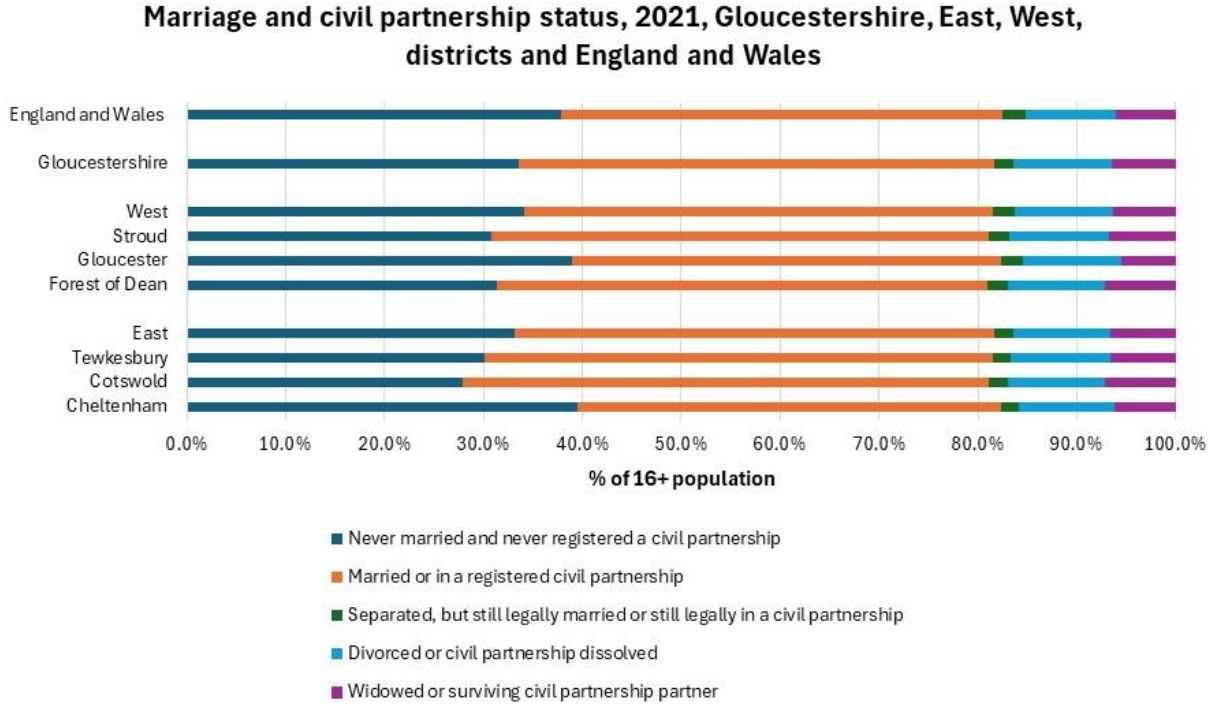
Figure 8: Religion, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales[70]

Sexual orientation	As with gender identity, the Census 2021 has provided the first set of official data on sexual orientation in England and Wales. In the 2021 Census there was a new question around sexual orientation, asking 'which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?', and providing a list of options. It was directed only at people aged 16 and over, and answers were voluntary. Overall, 93.2% of residents in Gloucestershire aged 16 and over answered the question. The majority of people who answered described their sexual orientation as 'straight or heterosexual', at 90.4% of the population. This is slightly higher than the national average of 89.4%. In the East area 90.6% of

[70] *Ibid.*

	residents described their sexual orientation as 'straight or heterosexual', marginally higher than the county average and the figure for the West (90.2%).  *Figure 9: Sexual orientation, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales*[71]
Marriage & civil partnership	*Figure 10* shows the breakdown of the 16+ population by marriage and civil partnership status. There are minimal differences between Gloucestershire, the East and West areas. The East area has a slightly lower proportion of people who have never married and never registered a civil partnership (33.1%) than the West (34.1%) with the county sitting in the middle of the two areas (33.6%). Conversely the West area has a slightly lower proportion of

[71] *Ibid.*

	people who have married or are in a registered civil partnership (47.5%) than the East (48.6%) with the county again sitting in the middle (48.0%).  *Figure 10: Marriage and civil partnership status, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales*[72]
Armed Forces community	Local authorities, national government, businesses, local authorities, charities and the public have committed to support the Armed Forces community through the Armed Forces Covenant. It was adopted in 2011 and articulated

[72] *Ibid.*

the principles of no disadvantage and special consideration; that no current or former member of the armed forces, or their families, should be at a disadvantage compared to other residents in the provision of public and commercial services. This was followed by the Armed Forces Act 2021 introduced a new requirement for some public bodies, including the NHS and local authorities, to pay due regard to the principles of the Covenant when carrying out specific public functions in the areas of housing, healthcare and education.

The information captured relates to armed forces veterans rather than current personnel and was captured by the 2021 Census. In 2021 there were there 27,418 people who had previously served in the UK armed forces resident in Gloucestershire. This equates to 5.2% of the 16+ population. The proportion of armed forces veterans was higher in Gloucestershire than it was across England and Wales (3.8%). The East has a slightly higher proportion of armed forces veterans (5.4%) than the West (4.9%) and the county as a whole, but the difference is minimal.

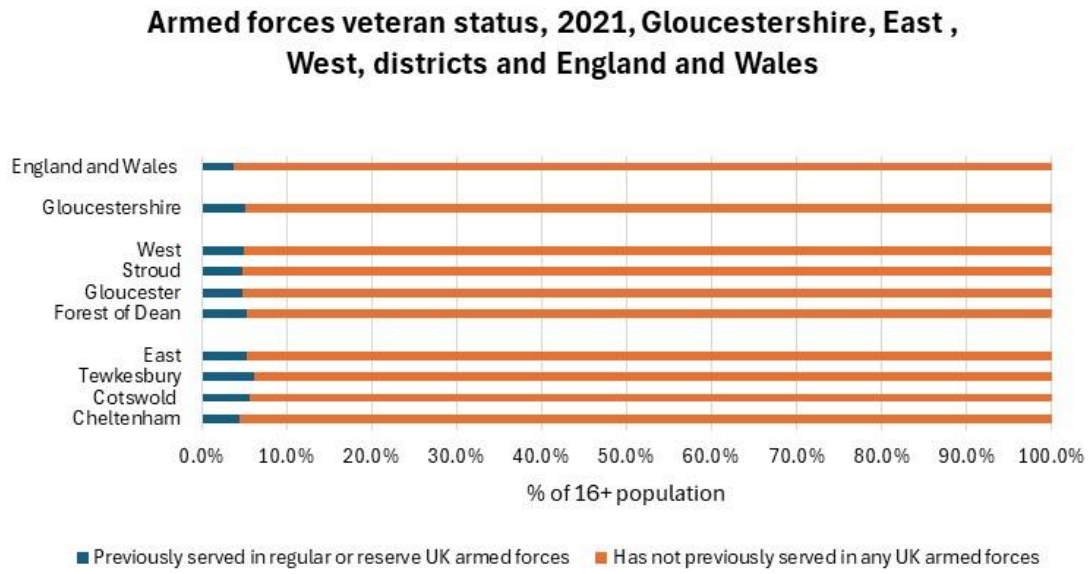


Figure 11: Armed Forces Veteran Status, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales[73]

Carers

This information is based on self-reported caring status according to the 2021 Census, this means figures will be different from sources which look at registered carers.

In 2021, there were 51,862 people aged 5+ providing unpaid care in Gloucestershire, this is equivalent to 8.5% of the population. In comparison, a slightly higher proportion of the population in England and Wales (8.9%) said they provided unpaid care. In the East area 8.0% of residents aged 5+ provided unpaid care higher slightly higher than the county average and the figure of 8.9% seen when looking at the West area. There are minimal differences observed in the levels of care provided by the East, West and Gloucestershire total.

Table 11: Residents aged 5+ by caring status, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales[74]

	Percentage of 5 + Population				
	Provides no unpaid care	**Proved some unpaid care**	**Provides 19 hours or less unpaid care a week**	**Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week**	**Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week**
Cheltenham	92.6%	7.4%	4.2%	1.3%	1.9%
Cotswold	91.9%	8.1%	4.7%	1.2%	2.2%
Tewkesbury	91.5%	8.5%	4.7%	1.4%	2.4%
East	**92.0%**	**8.0%**	**4.5%**	**1.3%**	**2.1%**
Forest of Dean	90.3%	9.7%	5.1%	1.7%	2.9%
Gloucester	91.6%	8.4%	4.2%	1.8%	2.4%
Stroud	91.1%	8.9%	5.3%	1.4%	2.2%

[73] 2021 Census, ONS
[74] *Ibid.*

West	**91.1%**	**8.9%**	**4.8%**	**1.7%**	**2.4%**
Gloucestershire	**91.5%**	**8.5%**	**4.7%**	**1.5%**	**2.3%**
England and Wales	**91.1%**	**8.9%**	**4.3%**	**1.8%**	**2.7%**

Care leavers / care experienced adults

This information is based on self-reported caring status according to the 2021 Census, this means figures will be different from sources which look at registered carers.

In 2021, there were 51,862 people aged 5+ providing unpaid care in Gloucestershire, this is equivalent to 8.5% of the population. In comparison, a slightly higher proportion of the population in England and Wales (8.9%) said they provided unpaid care. In the East area 8.0% of residents aged 5+ provided

unpaid care higher slightly higher than the county average and the figure of 8.9% seen when looking at the West area. There are minimal differences observed in the levels of care provided by the East, West and Gloucestershire total.

Percentage of 5 + Population Provides no unpaid care Proved some unpaid care Provides 19 hours or less unpaid care a week Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week

	Percentage of 5 + Population				
	Provides no unpaid care	**Proved some unpaid care**	**Provides 19 hours or less unpaid care a week**	**Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week**	**Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week**
Cheltenham	92.6%	7.4%	4.2%	1.3%	1.9%
Cotswold	91.9%	8.1%	4.7%	1.2%	2.2%
Tewkesbury	91.5%	8.5%	4.7%	1.4%	2.4%
East	**92.0%**	**8.0%**	**4.5%**	**1.3%**	**2.1%**

	Forest of Dean	90.3%	9.7%	5.1%	1.7%	2.9%
	Gloucester	91.6%	8.4%	4.2%	1.8%	2.4%
	Stroud	91.1%	8.9%	5.3%	1.4%	2.2%
	West	**91.1%**	**8.9%**	**4.8%**	**1.7%**	**2.4%**
	Gloucestershire	**91.5%**	**8.5%**	**4.7%**	**1.5%**	**2.3%**
	England and Wales	**91.1%**	**8.9%**	**4.3%**	**1.8%**	**2.7%**

Digital exclusion

Very little information is collected about this group. The latest information taken from the Participation Survey is at district level and covers the period from May 2023 to March 2024. The results show that in Gloucestershire an estimated 95.6% of respondents have used the internet either at home or elsewhere which is higher than England average of 92.7%. The West area (94.4%) has a lower rate than the East (96.8%) and the county average, but still exceeds the national average.

Table 12: Percentage of respondents aged 16 and over who have used the internet either at home or anywhere else, Gloucestershire, East and West, districts and England, 2023-2024[75]

	Percentage of 16+ Population
Cheltenham	96.9%
Cotswold	94.4%
Tewkesbury	95.8%
East	**96.8%**
Forest of Dean	91.3%

[75] Participation Survey, DCMS

<table>
<tr><td></td><td>
<table>
<tr><td>Gloucester</td><td>92.3%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stroud</td><td>95.9%</td></tr>
<tr><td>West</td><td>94.4%</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Gloucestershire</td><td>95.6%</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>England</td><td>92.7%</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
<tr><td>Geography, for example, urban and rural areas</td><td>This includes specific areas and rural/urban geographies and how this can make it difficult for some people to access the services they need.

The 2021 Rural-Urban Classification (RUC) is a statistical classification system used to categorise geographies based on the form and characteristics of the settlements present within them. It aims to provide a consistent and standardised method for classifying areas as Rural or Urban, based on address density, physical settlement form, population size, and relative accessibility.

Gloucestershire has a significantly higher proportion of its population living in rural areas than the national average (17.5%). The East area has a higher proportion of its residents living in rural areas (32.6%) than the West (26.2%) and the county average.</td></tr>
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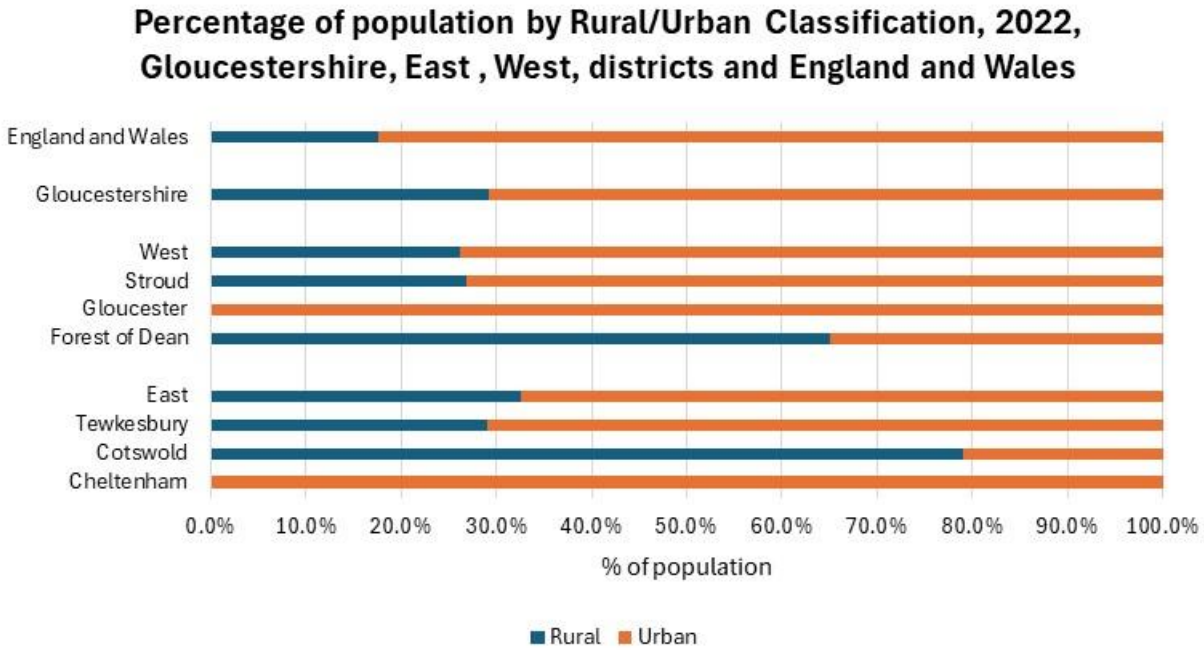
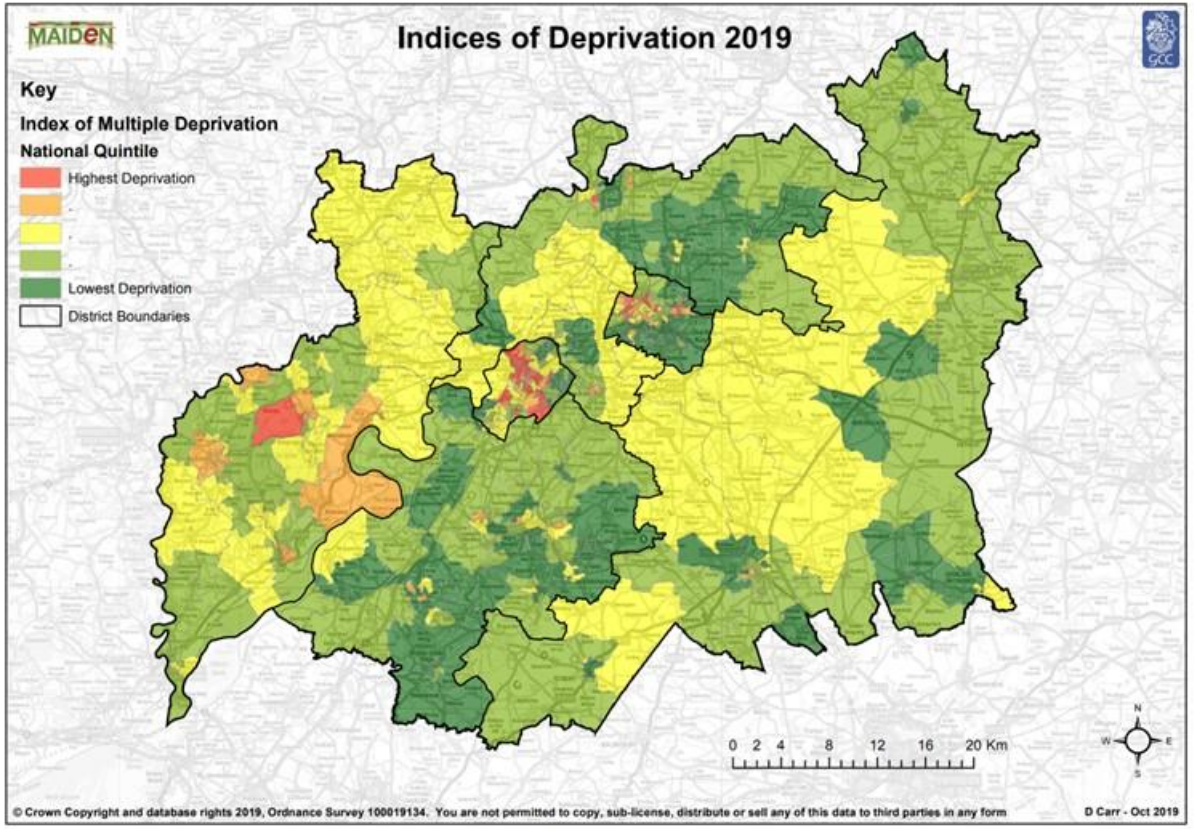


Figure 12: Percentage of population by Rural/Urban Classification, 2022, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales[76]

Socio-economic disadvantage	The main measure for this is the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. In general, Gloucestershire is not a very deprived county, ranking 126 out of 151 (where 1 is the most deprived) county and unitary authorities, putting it in the least deprived 20% of authorities across England. At district level, even the most deprived districts in the county (Gloucester City, and Forest of Dean) are amongst the middle 20% of districts for deprivation out of 317 English authorities. Tewkesbury, Cotswold, and Stroud

[76] Rural Urban Classification, 2021 and 2022 Mid Year Estimates, ONS

districts are in the least deprived 20% of districts nationally. Cheltenham is in the second least deprived 20% of districts nationally. However, there are pockets of deprivation, 31 out of 373 small areas in Gloucestershire are amongst the 20% most deprived in England with 7.9% residents of Gloucestershire living in these areas[77].



[77] Indices of Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG

Figure 13: Indices of Deprivation, 2019[78]

Figure 14 shows the proportion of the population in each deprivation quintile for Gloucestershire the East and West area. The West area has a higher proportion of residents living in the most deprived 20% nationally (10.9%) than the East (4.5%) and the county as a whole (7.9%)

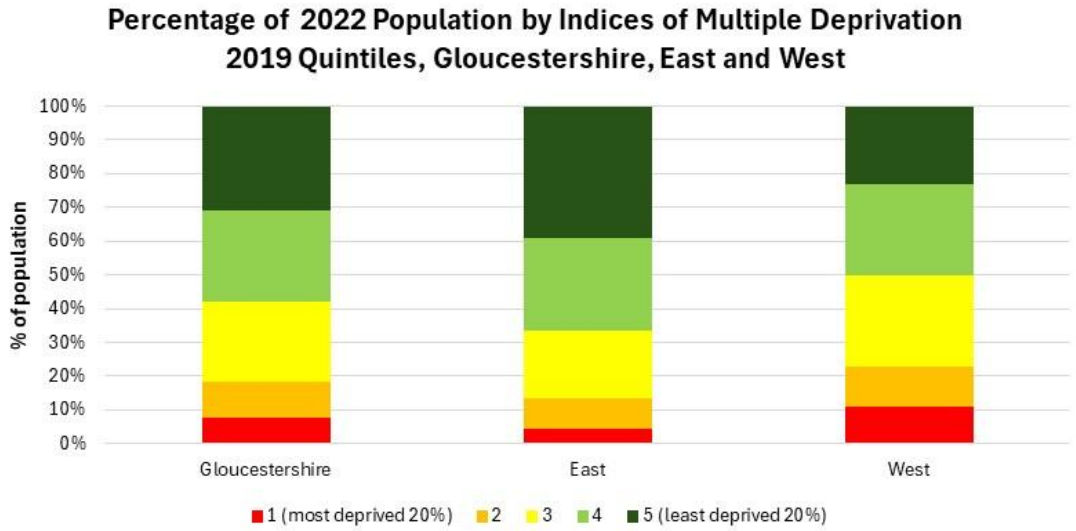


Figure 14: Percentage of 2022 population by Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 Quintiles, Gloucestershire, East and West[79]

[78] *Ibid.*
[79] Indices of Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG and Mid 2022 Population Estimates, ONS

Vulnerable groups of society	No specific data held on this characteristic. Where vulnerable groups are addressed through other characteristics.

Appendix 2: Council Staff Data and Information

Details of staff affected by the proposed activity:

Groups	Workforce Data and Information

Age

The table below summarises the most recent publicly available workforce figures for the councils.

Organisation	Snapshot date	Headcount / FTE	Age profile	Source
Gloucestershire County Council	1 Jul 2024	4,369 (excl. schools)	45–54 largest (32.4%)	GCC-EDI-2024
Stroud District Council	Apr 2022	379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual	50–59 largest group	SDC-Workforce-2022
Cheltenham Borough Council	Mar 2023	238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual	50–59 largest group	CBC-Workforce-2023
Tewkesbury Borough Council	31 Mar 2022	216	—	TBC-GPG-2022
Cotswold District Council	2024	Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica. Data provided represents 127 individuals.	50–59 largest group (36.2%)	CDC-Publica-2024
Forest of Dean District Council	2024	Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return. Data	50+ largest group (43.8%)	FODDC-Publica-2024

			provided represents 112 individuals.		
	Gloucester City Council	2022	261	56+ largest group (26.1%)	GC-EDI-2022

Disability

The table below summarises the most recent publicly available workforce figures for the councils.

Organisation	Snapshot date	Headcount / FTE	Disability	Source
Gloucestershire County Council	1 Jul 2024	4,369 (excl. schools)	4.80%	GCC-EDI-2024
Stroud District Council	Apr 2022	379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual	5.0%	SDC-Workforce-2022
Cheltenham Borough Council	Mar 2023	238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual	10.1%	CBC-Workforce-2023
Tewkesbury Borough Council	31 Mar 2022	216	—	TBC-GPG-2022
Cotswold District Council	2024	Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica	1.57%	CDC-Publica-2024
Forest of Dean District Council	2024	Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return	2.36%	FODDC-Publica-2024
Gloucester City Council	2022	261	6.1%	GC-EDI-2022

Sex

Organisation	Snapshot date	Headcount / FTE	Gender split	Source
Gloucestershire County Council	1 Jul 2024	4,369 (excl. schools)	70.1% F / 29.9% M	GCC-EDI-2024

	Stroud District Council	Apr 2022	379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual	58.6% F / 41.4% M	SDC-Workforce-2022
	Cheltenham Borough Council	Mar 2023	238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual	52.9% F / 47.1% M	CBC-Workforce-2023
	Tewkesbury Borough Council	31 Mar 2022	216	70.4% F / 29.6% M	TBC-GPG-2022
	Cotswold District Council	2024	Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica	70.87% F/ 29.13% M	CDC-Publica-2024
	Forest of Dean District Council	2024	Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return	65.18% F/ 34.82% M	FODDC-Publica-2024
	Gloucester City Council	2022	261	60.9% F / 39.1% M	GC-EDI-2022

Race

The table below summarises the most recent publicly available workforce figures for the councils.

Organisation	Snapshot date	Headcount / FTE	Ethnicity	Source
Gloucestershire County Council	1 Jul 2024	4,369 (excl. schools)	White British 86.6%; DEC 7.5%	GCC-EDI-2024
Stroud District Council	Apr 2022	379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual	89.7% White British	SDC-Workforce-2022
Cheltenham Borough Council	Mar 2023	238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual	210 White British; 11 Other; 17 Unknown	CBC-Workforce-2023
Tewkesbury Borough Council	31 Mar 2022	216	—	TBC-GPG-2022
Cotswold District Council	2024	Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica	White - British: 29.92%	CDC-Publica-2024
Forest of Dean District Council	2024	Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return	White – British: 36.61%	FODDC-Publica-2024

	Gloucester City Council	2022	261	White 70.5%; Unstated 21.5%; BME 8.0%	GC-EDI-2022
Gender reassignment	No data is publicly available regarding gender reassignment for any of the councils.				
Marriage & civil partnership	The table below summarises the most recent publicly available workforce figures for the councils.				

	<table><tr><th>Organisation</th><th>Snapshot date</th><th>Headcount / FTE</th><th>Marriage & Civil Partnership</th><th>Source</th></tr><tr><td>Gloucestershire County Council</td><td>1 Jul 2024</td><td>4,369 (excl. schools)</td><td>Divorced/Dissolved Civil Partnership 5.8%; Married/Civil 48.2%; Separated 2.4%; Single/Never Married 35.3%; Widowed 0.6%; Prefer not to say 7.7%</td><td>GCC-EDI-2024</td></tr><tr><td>Stroud District Council</td><td>Apr 2022</td><td>379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual</td><td>—</td><td>SDC-Workforce-2022</td></tr><tr><td>Cheltenham Borough Council</td><td>Mar 2023</td><td>238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual</td><td>—</td><td>CBC-Workforce-2023</td></tr><tr><td>Tewkesbury Borough Council</td><td>31 Mar 2022</td><td>216</td><td>—</td><td>TBC-GPG-2022</td></tr><tr><td>Cotswold District Council</td><td>2024</td><td>Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica</td><td>Married: (7.56% Single: 14.17% Divorced: 3.94% Living with Partner: 0.79% Widowed: 0.79%</td><td>CDC-Publica-2024</td></tr><tr><td>Forest of Dean District Council</td><td>2024</td><td>Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return</td><td>Married: 16.07% Single: 6.25% Divorced: 0.89%</td><td>FODDC-Publica-2024</td></tr><tr><td>Gloucester City Council</td><td>2022</td><td>261</td><td>-</td><td>GC-EDI-2022</td></tr></table>
Pregnancy & maternity	No data is publicly available regarding Pregnancy & Maternity for any of the councils.

Religion and/or belief	The table below summarises the most recent publicly available workforce figures for the councils.

Organisation	Snapshot date	Headcount / FTE	Religion	Source
Gloucestershire County Council	1 Jul 2024	4,369 (excl. schools)	Buddhist 2.1%; Christian 32.2%; Hindu 0.0%; Jewish 0.0%; Muslim 3.4%; None 52.1%; Other 4.1%; Sikh 0.7%; Prefer not to say 5.5%	GCC-EDI-2024
Stroud District Council	Apr 2022	379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual	—	SDC-Workforce-2022
Cheltenham Borough Council	Mar 2023	238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual	—	CBC-Workforce-2023
Tewkesbury Borough Council	31 Mar 2022	216	—	TBC-GPG-2022
Cotswold District Council	2024	Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica	No religious belief: 20.47% Christian: 3.94% Some other religion or belief: 0.79% Prefer not to say: 74.80%	CDC-Publica-2024
Forest of Dean District Council	2024	Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return	Christian: 2.68% No religious belief: 1.79% Prefer not to say: 0.89% Protestant: 0.89% Blank / Not Provided: 93.75%	FODDC-Publica-2024
Gloucester City Council	2022	261	-	GC-EDI-2022

<table>
<tr>
<td>Sexual orientation</td>
<td>The table below summarises the most recent publicly available workforce figures for the councils.
<table>
<tr><th>Organisation</th><th>Snapshot date</th><th>Headcount / FTE</th><th>Sexual orientation</th><th>Source</th></tr>
<tr><td>Gloucestershire County Council</td><td>1 Jul 2024</td><td>4,369 (excl. schools)</td><td>Bi-sexual 2.6%; Gay/Lesbian 2.1%; Heterosexual/Straight 86.0%; Prefer not to say 9.4%</td><td>GCC-EDI-2024</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stroud District Council</td><td>Apr 2022</td><td>379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual</td><td>—</td><td>SDC-Workforce-2022</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cheltenham Borough Council</td><td>Mar 2023</td><td>238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual</td><td>—</td><td>CBC-Workforce-2023</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tewkesbury Borough Council</td><td>31 Mar 2022</td><td>216</td><td>—</td><td>TBC-GPG-2022</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cotswold District Council</td><td>2024</td><td>Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica</td><td>Heterosexual: 32.28%
Not stated: 2.36%
Bisexual: 0.79%
Blank / Not Provided: 66.93%</td><td>CDC-Publica-2024</td></tr>
<tr><td>Forest of Dean District Council</td><td>2024</td><td>Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return</td><td>Heterosexual: 41.07%
Blank / Not Provided: 58.93%</td><td>FODDC-Publica-2024</td></tr>
<tr><td>Gloucester City Council</td><td>2022</td><td>261</td><td>-</td><td>GC-EDI-2022</td></tr>
</table>
</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed Forces community</td>
<td>No data is publicly available regarding the Armed Forces Community for any of the councils.</td>
</tr>
</table>

Carers	No data is publicly available regarding Carers for any of the councils.
Care leavers / care experienced adults	No data is publicly available regarding Care leavers / care experienced adults for any of the councils.
Digital exclusion	No data is publicly available regarding Digital exclusion for any of the councils.
Geography, for example, urban and rural areas	No data is publicly available regarding Geography of the workforce for any of the councils.
Socio-economic disadvantage	No data is publicly available regarding Socio-economic disadvantage of the workforce for any of the councils.
Vulnerable groups of society	No data is publicly available regarding Vulnerable groups of society disadvantage of the workforce for any of the councils
References used for Staffing Data	GCC-EDI-2024: Gloucestershire County Council – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Report 2024/25 https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2126661/edi-report2024_workforce_final_.pdf SDC-Workforce-2022: Stroud District Council – Workforce Statistics (April 2022) https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/2103085/workforce-statistics-2022.pdf CBC-Workforce-2023: Cheltenham Borough Council – Workforce Statistics (March 2023) https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/downloads/file/6208/workforce-statistics-march-2023

	TBC-GPG-2022: Tewkesbury Borough Council – Gender Pay Gap Report 2022 https://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk/media/fzxhofgv/gender-pay-gap-report-2022-final.docx.pdf CDC-Publica-2024: Cotswold District Council – Council spending / staffing details (Publica model) https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/about-the-council/transparency-and-open-data/council/spending/ FODDC-Publica-2024: Forest of Dean District Council – News release (July 2024) https://news.fdean.gov.uk/news/local-authorities-to-consider-moving-forward-with-plans-to-take-greater-control-of-council-services GC-EDI-2022: Gloucester City Council Workforce Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Report (Sept 2022) https://www.gloucester.gov.uk/media/4m3p0bpy/city-workforce-equality-diversity-inclusion-report-final-2022.pdf LGA-GPG-2025: Local Government Association – The gender pay gap in English local authorities 2024/25 https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/gender-pay-gap-english-local-authorities-20242

Local Government Reorganisation in Gloucestershire

Two Unitary Authority (2UA) Full Proposal

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Executive Summary

Gloucestershire is poised for a bold transformation in local governance. This proposal recommends replacing the current two-tier system of county, district, borough, and city councils with a **Two-Unitary Model (2UA)** as follows:

- **East** - comprising the districts of Cheltenham, Cotswold, and Tewkesbury (population 310k)
- **West** - comprising the districts of Gloucester, Forest of Dean, and Stroud (population 349k)

At this stage, the two new unitary councils are referred to as 'East' and 'West' for clarity. Names for each authority will be agreed as part of the reorganisation process.

The 2UA model will streamline decision-making, reduce duplication, and unlock significant financial and operational efficiencies - while strengthening local identity and empowering communities through innovative **Neighbourhood Partnerships**.

This reorganisation is not just structural, it's strategic. It aligns with Ministerial criteria for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and positions Gloucestershire as a national leader in regional devolution, ready to shape the future of public service delivery.

Economic and Demographic Context

- Gloucestershire's economy generated **£22.1bn GVA** in 2023, with strengths in **advanced manufacturing, cyber, aerospace, and agri-tech**
- **The population is projected to grow by 17.6% by 2047**, with a sharp rise in residents aged 65+
- Pressing challenges include **housing affordability**, **rural isolation**, and **climate resilience.**

Our Vision and Ambition

We're building on what makes Gloucestershire great to create a sustainable place with thriving communities, bold ideas, and opportunities for everyone. LGR is the enabling change that allows us to meet these challenges and deliver a ***smarter, fairer, and greener Gloucestershire***. Our six key ambitions that give life to this commitment are:

1. **Driving breakthrough innovation for national resilience**

2. **Harnessing digital to tackle inequality, improve services, and drive innovation**
3. **Empowering communities through co-design and local decision-making**
4. **Putting wellbeing, housing, and nature recovery at the heart of growth**
5. **Unlocking talent, skills, and housing for inclusive growth**
6. **Using data to transform transport and public services**

These ambitions are designed to unlock Gloucestershire's full potential and deliver tangible benefits for residents.

The 2UA Financial Case

Potential day one financial position (c. 1st April 2028)	**East UA**	**West UA**
Total income	£410.5m	£440.9m
Total expenditure	£388.6m	£462.8m
Net position	**£21.9m (surplus)**	**-£21.9m (deficit)**
Total revenue implication of Fire & Rescue (i.e. additional pressures for the new UA)	-£1.35m	-£1.45m
Net position (incl. impact of Standalone Fire & Rescue Authority)	**£20.5m (surplus)**	**-£23.3m (deficit)**
Reorganisation Costs and Benefits	**East UA**	**West UA**
Gross annual reorganisation savings	£8.6m	£10.3m
Ongoing annual disaggregation costs	£3.7m	£4.4m
Net annual savings	£4.9m	£5.9m
One-off transition costs	-£13.2m	-£15.8m
One-off Fire and Rescue disaggregation costs	£0.5m	£0.6m
Total one-off transition costs	-£13.7m	-£16.4m
Payback period	4.9 years	4.9 Years
Cumulative net saving after 5 years	£0.5m	£0.5m
Cumulative net saving after 10 years	£26.3m	£28.5m

Transformation benefits	East UA	West UA
Recurring annual transformation savings fully delivered by year 5 – **Base**	£7.4m	£8.8m
Recurring annual transformation savings fully delivered by year 5 – **Stretch**	£12.0m	£14.4m

Governance, Democracy, and Place

- **110 councillors** for Gloucestershire (52 in the West, 48 in the East)
- A unified electoral cycle and **streamlined decision-making**
- Strong locality working via **Neighbourhood Partnerships** (7-12 neighbourhoods within each authority, 20k–50k population each)
- **Trusted, innovative partnerships** with Town and Parish Councils and the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sectors.

Digital, Data, and Technology (DDaT)

- A **digitally enabled council** with inclusive, responsive services
- Investment in **AI**, **predictive analytics**, and **cloud platforms**
- Focus on **digital inclusion** and robust infrastructure.

Built together, backed by evidence

Our proposals have been developed by **all Gloucestershire councils working together** in setting the vision, using a common evidence-base, and working within a single financial model and option appraisal process.

Our **public and stakeholder engagement has enriched and improved our proposals**. We are committed to delivering better outcomes for and with local people and making **LGR the platform for a better Gloucestershire.**

Both the single unitary (1UA) and two unitary (2UA) proposals have been developed using a common evidence base, shared data sources, and consistent analytical methods. As a result, there are significant similarities across both proposals.

In addition to the geographic footprints, key differences between the 1UA and 2UA proposals are highlighted within the shared options analysis and the respective financial cases.

Introduction and Context

Gloucestershire isn't like anywhere else in the UK.

From postcard-perfect Cotswold villages to codebreaking at GCHQ and the roar of the Shed at Gloucester Rugby, this is a county where history fuels a thriving present. Our culture, economy, and identity are deeply rooted yet rapidly evolving.

We're not defined by a single centre. Gloucestershire is a proud network of city, towns, villages, and rural communities, each with its own pulse. Cheltenham leads in innovation, Stroud bursts with creativity, the Forest of Dean harnesses natural assets, Tewkesbury drives manufacturing, Gloucester powers civic life, and the Cotswolds are shaping the future of sustainable energy.

Our diverse places have built a rich patchwork of industries, cultures, and stories. And now, with a bold vision for the future, a single tier of local government could unlock even more. A devolved Gloucestershire would be decentralised, interconnected, and resilient - ready to turn its unique strengths into shared success.



This document sets out the case for change for a new model of local government in Gloucestershire – a model that will enable us to build on what makes Gloucestershire great, to create a sustainable place with thriving communities, fresh ideas, and opportunities for everyone.

About Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire sits at the northern edge of the South West - perfectly placed and powerfully connected. It borders three unitary authorities - South Gloucestershire, Swindon, and Wiltshire - and links to Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, and Monmouthshire. Sitting to the north of the M4 / M5 crossroads, with the M5 weaving northwards through the county, Gloucestershire links north and south, east and west, and connects several major UK cities Cardiff, Bristol, Birmingham, Oxford, and London. The River Severn winds through the county's core, shaping both landscape and life.

Though 87.5% of the county is rural, **over 70% of residents live in urban areas**[1]. Cheltenham and Gloucester are the beating hearts of business, education, culture, and commerce, supported by a network of vibrant market towns that fuel local economies and serve rural communities.

- The population of Gloucestershire is currently 659,276[2]
- Gloucestershire spans 265,253 hectares[3]
- We are proud to have two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): the Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean
- Gloucestershire also has 12 National Nature Reserves and some 120 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within its borders
- According to the 2011 Census, 83.1% of Gloucestershire residents also work in the county[4].

Population Change

Gloucestershire is growing, and fast. Between 2014 and 2024, the county's population has risen by 7.8%, outpacing the national average of 5.9%. But growth hasn't been even. Districts like Tewkesbury are booming, with a staggering 16.6% population increase, ranking in the top 10% of fastest-growing local authorities six times since 2014[5].

At the same time, **Gloucestershire is ageing.** People aged 65+ make up 22.1% of the population, well above the national average of 18.8%. In rural areas like the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean, that figure climbs above 25%. The county also has fewer children and working-age adults than the national average.
Gloucester and Cheltenham have the highest proportions of young people within

[1] Rural Urban Classification 2021
[2] Mid 2023 Population Estimates, ONS
[3] SAM 2023, ONS Area to Mean High Water Excluding Area of Inland Water (Land Area) (AREALHECT)
[4] 2011 Census, ONS
[5] Mid Year Population Estimate. ONS

the county, reflecting their urban character and the presence of educational institutions.[6]

Looking ahead, the population is projected to grow by **113,929 people by 2047** - a 17.6% increase, far above the 12.7% forecast for England and Wales. Tewkesbury and Stroud are set for even greater projected growth of 29.6% and 22.2% respectively, driven by more available land for development. Cheltenham, by contrast, is expected to see the smallest rise at 10.1%[7].

Economy

Gloucestershire's natural beauty is both a challenge and a magnet. With AONBs covering large parts of the county, development can be constrained, but this same environmental quality makes the county a magnet for talent, investment, and tourism.

The economy is strong, diverse, and resilient. In 2023, Gloucestershire's economy generated £22.1 billion in GVA - 12.8% of the South West's output and 1% of the UK total[8]. It's a county where quality of life meets business opportunity.

Gloucestershire offers a powerful mix: **a skilled workforce, strong connectivity, available land, and a high-quality environment.** That's why it's home to major players like GE Aviation, Safran, Renishaw, EDF Energy, Ecotricity, Unilever-Walls and St. James's Place, alongside a thriving ecosystem of entrepreneurs and innovators.

With deep roots in defence and aerospace, the county remains a manufacturing powerhouse, especially in advanced engineering. It's also a national centre for cyber and intelligence, anchored by GCHQ, the National Cyber Security Centre, and a growing cyber business park.

Despite its specialisms, **Gloucestershire's economy is diverse and balanced.** In 2023, the top employment sectors were wholesale and retail (14.8%), health and social care (13.8%), and manufacturing (10.6%)[9] - a mix that supports stability and adaptability.

Challenges Facing Gloucestershire

But Gloucestershire isn't without its challenges. Demographic change, widening inequalities, pockets of deprivation, environmental pressures, and rural isolation all pose serious hurdles to inclusive, sustainable growth.

[6] Mid Year Population Estimate. ONS
[7] 2022 based Subnational Population Projections, ONS
[8] Regional gross value added (balanced) per head and income components, ONS
[9] BRES, ONS

Demographic Change

Gloucestershire's population is ageing, and faster than the national average. By 2047, the number of residents aged 65+ is projected to surge by 43.4% (compared to 38.6% nationally), making up over a quarter (26.8%) of the county's population. Tewkesbury is set to see the sharpest rise at 54%, while even the lowest increase - 32.4% in the Forest of Dean - is significant[10].

At the same time, the working-age population (18-64) is barely growing, and the number of children and young people is expected to decline. This shift is reshaping the county's social and economic landscape.

More people are living with disabilities and long-term conditions across all age groups. There's also a rise in single-person households with limited family support, and a growing number of children with special educational needs (SEN) since 2015, all adding pressure to already stretched health and social care services.

By 2047, Gloucestershire's **dependency ratio** (the number of dependents per 100 working-age people) is projected to rise from 65 to 70[11]. That means fewer people supporting more, placing increasing strain on services, budgets, and the local economy.

The challenge is clear: how do we continue delivering high-quality care and support while maintaining a healthy, productive economy in the face of rapid demographic change?

Inequalities and Deprivation

Gloucestershire performs well overall, but averages hide deep inequalities. While county-wide outcomes often exceed regional and national benchmarks, they mask stark local disparities. 12 neighbourhoods across Gloucester, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, and the Forest of Dean (home to a combined 3.2% of the county's population) rank among the **10% most deprived in England[12]**.

Some communities face even greater barriers to inclusion and opportunity, including **rough sleepers, non-white and non-English speaking residents, traveller communities, and asylum seekers**. For these groups, access to healthcare, education, and skills development is often harder, and outcomes are worse.

[10] 2022 based Sub-national Population Projections, ONS
[11] 2022 based Sub-national Population Projections, ONS
[12] Indices of Deprivation 2019

Access to Housing

Housing in Gloucestershire is expensive, and getting on the property ladder is tough. In 2025, the average home cost **8.6 times the median salary**, higher than the national average (7.5) and just above the South West average (8.5). But this affordability varies widely: in Gloucester, the ratio is 7.3 and, in the Cotswolds, it soars to 13.8.

With mortgage lenders typically capping loans at 4.5 times income, many residents are priced out, forced into unsuitable housing, or pushed out of the county altogether. This makes it harder to attract and retain young people, key workers, and future talent[13].

Despite these pressures, housing supply has grown. Between 2019 and 2024, the number of dwellings in Gloucestershire rose by **5.2%**, outpacing both the regional (4.6%) and national (4.7%) averages[14].

Yet unlocking further housing and growth remains a major challenge. Much of Gloucestershire doesn't have a five-year housing supply, increasing the likelihood of speculative planning applications, misalignment with local priorities, and unsustainable growth. Planning constraints, infrastructure limitations, and the need to protect Gloucestershire's natural and historic environment all create friction. Balancing growth with sustainability, affordability, and community needs will be critical to the county's future.

Recent updates to the National Planning Policy Framework and the anticipated Planning and Infrastructure Bill promise a step change in housing delivery. The Bill will introduce a statutory Spatial Development Strategy, giving Gloucestershire a powerful new tool to shape future growth. Combined with the streamlining of the planning system via unitarisation, this could unlock significant sustainable development across the county. We must seize this opportunity, while being conscious of possible environmental and democratic risks.

Rural Isolation

Gloucestershire's rural charm is one of its greatest strengths, but also one of its biggest challenges. With 87.5% of the county classed as rural and nearly 30% of residents living in these areas, access to essential services isn't always easy[15]. Nearly **one in five people** live in areas ranked among the **20% most deprived in England** in terms of Barriers to Housing and Services[16].

[13] Median House Prices to Median Workplace Earnings, ONS
[14] Live tables on dwelling stock, MHCLG
[15] Rural/Urban Classification, 2022, ONS
[16] Indices of Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG

Travel times to key services - whether by public transport, car, or active travel - are longer than both regional and national averages[17]. And while high-speed broadband now reaches almost every address, **digital exclusion persists**: 4.4% of residents didn't use the internet at all between May 2023 and March 2024. In rural areas, where public internet access points can be over 45 minutes away by bus, those without a car face real digital isolation[18].

The challenge is clear: we must ensure Gloucestershire's most vulnerable and isolated residents stay connected - to services, to support, and to opportunity.

Climate Change and Flooding

Gloucestershire is making strides on sustainability, but the climate crisis is accelerating. Despite strong progress by county and district councils in cutting emissions and embedding greener practices, the risks to our communities, infrastructure, and economy are growing.

Climate Leadership Gloucestershire has been established as a strategic partnership of public sector bodies - including local councils, the NHS, police, and academic institutions - to coordinate and lead the county's response to the climate and ecological emergency.

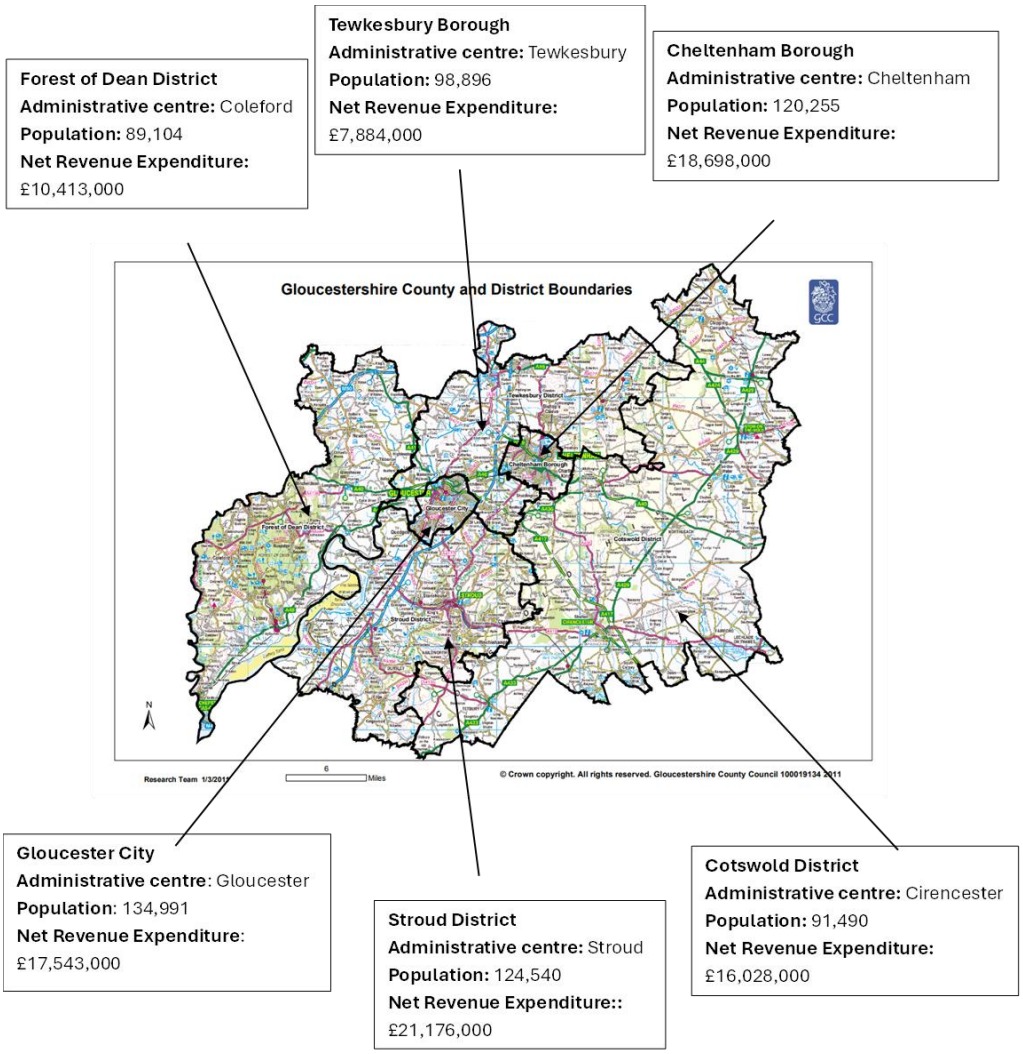
Extreme weather is becoming more frequent and more severe. Gloucestershire is impacted by severe flooding, droughts, and heatwaves. A growing risk of wildfires has also been highlighted by agencies including the Forestry Commission, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust.

Flooding remains one of Gloucestershire's biggest climate threats. The devastating 2007 floods damaged around 5,000 homes and 500 businesses, leaving 135,000 people without water for two weeks. Even less intense events in 2012 and 2013 caused widespread disruption. But the impact goes far beyond damaged buildings. **Flooding hits lives, livelihoods, and mental health, especially for the most vulnerable.** That's why climate resilience must be front and centre in our housing strategy and growth plans.

The Current Model of Local Government in Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire operates under a two-tier system: a single county council alongside five district and borough councils and one city council. Most of the county is also covered by a network of **267 parish and town councils**, adding a third layer of local governance in most areas.

[17] Journey Time Statistics 2019, DfT
[18] Participation Survey, DCMS



Political Landscape

With each council on a different electoral cycle, Gloucestershire holds local elections every year, creating a constantly shifting political landscape.

Cheltenham Borough Council	Leader and Cabinet model	Liberal Democrat majority administration
Cotswold District Council	Leader and Cabinet model	Liberal Democrat majority administration
Forest of Dean District Council	Leader and Cabinet model	No overall control; Green minority administration
Gloucester City Council	Leader and Cabinet model	No overall control; Liberal Democrat minority administration

Stroud District Council	Committee system	No overall control; Green minority administration
Tewkesbury Borough Council	Committee system	No overall control; Liberal Democrat minority administration
Gloucestershire County Council	Leader and Cabinet model	No overall control; Liberal Democrat minority administration

Table 1: Current political control across Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire's seven councils have 295 councillors, 37 of whom serve at both county and district/borough levels. In many areas, overlapping ward boundaries mean residents can be represented by up to **four different councillors**: one at the county level and three at the district or borough level. This layered system can create complexity in local representation and decision-making.

Number of councillors	**Gloucester City**	**Cheltenham Borough**	**Tewkesbury Borough**	**Stroud District**	**Cotswold District**	**Forest of Dean District**	**Gloucestershire County Council**
Liberal Democrats	17	36	16	2	21	1	27
Labour / Labour and Co-operative	7			18		4	1
Conservative	11		9	6	10	6	6
Green		3	4	24	2	15	9
Independents / Other	4	1	8	1	1	10	1
Reform			1			2	11

Table 2: Current political make up of Gloucestershire's councils

Partnerships and Joint Working

Gloucestershire thrives on strong partnerships within the county and beyond. We have a proven track record of coming together to tackle big

challenges, and unitarisation offers a powerful opportunity to build on that foundation, strengthening collaboration and delivering even greater impact.

Statutory Partners

Gloucestershire's public sector is unusually coterminous. A single police constabulary and one police and crime commissioner serve the entire county. The county council also acts as the fire and rescue authority, with Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service fully integrated. While the county is currently served by a single NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB), this arrangement is set to evolve with the formation of a new cluster alongside Bristol, North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) ICB, marking a shift in how integrated care is coordinated across the South West region.

Some smaller units of delivery, such as primary care networks, fit within current district boundaries. There are three universities, the largest of which is the University of Gloucestershire, and over 300 schools.

Reducing the current two-tier system of seven principal councils to two unitary councils for Gloucestershire would provide a simplified local government structure for public services alignment.

Joint Working

Gloucestershire already has a strong foundation for joint working, backed by a range of formal and informal governance arrangements**.** These reflect the close ties between different parts of the county and a shared commitment to collaboration.

Key structures include:

- **Leadership Gloucestershire:** a strategic alliance of senior public sector leaders - spanning councils, health, police, and key agencies - providing unified direction on cross-cutting issues to benefit communities countywide.
- **Gloucestershire City Region Board**: a joint committee of all seven councils, driving a shared vision for strategic growth and economic success, and championing Gloucestershire with partners, such as the Western Gateway Partnership, to attract further investment and growth.
- **Joint Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee:** a joint scrutiny committee which holds the Gloucestershire City Region Board to account - reviewing decisions, tracking the impact of economic investments, and shaping future growth priorities.
- **Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) and a Health and Wellbeing Integrated Care Partnership (ICP):** the HWB leads strategic coordination across health, social care, and public health services, bringing together leaders to tackle health inequalities and improve population wellbeing. The ICP develops and delivers the five-year integrated care strategy to improve

health and care outcomes, aligning efforts across partners to reduce disparities and improve access and experience.

- **Strategic Local Plan**: when finalised, this will shape future housing and employment growth across three local planning authority areas.
- **Climate Leadership Gloucestershire**: an innovative public sector partnership of councils, NHS, police and academia institutions, developing solutions to tackle the climate emergency.
- **Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool:** Gloucestershire boosts local growth by pooling business rates to keep more revenue circulating within the county.
- Other informal arrangements exist to enable joint working on other areas of shared responsibility, e.g. **Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Partnership**, **Gloucestershire Strategic Migration Partnership**, **Gloucestershire Housing Partnership**, and the **Gloucestershire Children and Young People's Coalition**.

Beyond formal governance, collaboration is also embedded in service delivery:

- **Ubico**: a local authority-owned company delivering a range of environmental services across Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire, including waste, recycling, and street cleansing.
- **Publica**: a shared services partnership owned by Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Cheltenham, and West Oxfordshire councils. The councils work together through Publica to share skills and resources, including services such as ICT, customer services, benefits administration, housing, and car park enforcement.
- **Shared services**: various arrangements between different groups of councils for sharing back-office services, such as internal audit and risk (ARA) and legal services (One Legal).
- **Co-located services**: the Public Services Centre in Tewkesbury brings together the county council, borough council, police, health services, and the voluntary sector to provide a single access point for customers, pioneering the first Jobcentre Plus co-location in a local authority building.

These partnerships show what's possible but also highlight existing complexity. A more streamlined governance model could build on this strong collaborative culture, reducing duplication, and unlocking even greater impact for Gloucestershire's communities.

Economic Partnerships

Strong economic partnerships are the backbone of Gloucestershire's success - and devolution can take them even further.

Gloucestershire's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), GFirst, established in 2011, has played a key role in uniting business, public, and voluntary sectors to secure government funding and drive job creation. Its **Strategic Economic Plan** (SEP) has supported business growth and skills development and maximised the county's strategic location along the motorway corridor. In 2024, its functions transitioned to the county council, marking a new chapter with the creation of the **Gloucestershire City Region Board**.

Gloucestershire is actively shaping a bold, county-wide vision for inclusive and sustainable prosperity through the development of a **Local Growth Plan (LGP)**.

Although not mandated as for mayoral authorities, Gloucestershire's public sector leaders are stepping up with a LGP that reflects a **shared ambition to unlock the county's full economic potential and improve life for everyone who lives here**. Co-created by all local authorities and shaped through extensive collaboration with businesses, education providers, the voluntary sector, and local communities, the LGP sets out a clear, compelling roadmap for long-term growth and resilience.

By aligning with national frameworks, the plan positions **Gloucestershire as a key contributor to the UK's economic and social missions**, ready to attract investment and drive innovation.

Across the county, **district councils are leading bold, community-driven innovation**, including:

- **Cheltenham**: partnered with Hub8 by Plexal to launch the **MX Innovation Centre**, a workspace for the local tech community.
- **Cotswold:** rolled out a **low-income family tracker** to target support for households in financial difficulty.
- **Forest of Dean**: Forest of Dean District Council, the Centre for Sustainable Energy, and local resident-led group Forest Community Energy have partnered to roll out the AURORA project in the area. This project, supported by several European universities, **promotes energy saving** awareness through inspiring events, a carbon tracker app, and community-owned solar panels.
- **Gloucester:** acknowledged by Nesta and others as sector-leading in asset-based community development, including the establishment of an innovative community development organisation.
- **Stroud:** introduced a **crowdfunding platform** to empower community-led projects and access a share of funding from the council.
- **Tewkesbury**: the **Growth Hub** offers fully funded business support in partnership with the borough council.

A unitary model would supercharge this local innovation, strengthening place-based leadership, aligning economic strategy, and making it easier to deliver joined-up, community-focused growth.

VCFSE Partnerships

Gloucestershire's voluntary, community, faith, and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector, powered by over 4,000 organisations, is vibrant and vital. At its heart is the **Gloucestershire VCS Alliance**, the independent voice that informs, strengthens, and develops the sector. The alliance promotes equal partnerships between VCSE (voluntary, community, and social enterprise) groups and the public and private sectors, supporting VCSE groups and organisations to become more sustainable.

The Know Your Patch (KYP) networks, launched in 2018, are another standout success. Led by local VCSE organisations in each district, they bring together community groups, service providers, and public sector partners around a shared belief: **strong, connected communities are the foundation of resilient lives**.

The Strategic Case (Vision & Ambition)

Local Government Reorganisation Enabling **a Smarter, Fairer, Greener Gloucestershire**

Local government reorganisation (LGR) gives Gloucestershire the chance to deliver more for its residents and to play a stronger role – together - in supporting national priorities. Current structures can be complex and duplicative, making it harder to deliver the best outcomes for our residents and to join up decisions across planning, housing, transport, health, skills, and the environment. **Reorganisation offers the opportunity to simplify accountability and cut duplication, offering our residents greater clarity and improved services.**

This change is what makes our ambitions deliverable. Breakthrough innovation can be scaled when investment, land use and regulation are aligned. Digital inclusion can be advanced when infrastructure, skills, and social support are considered together. Communities can have a stronger role when co-design is embedded consistently across local services. Wellbeing, housing, and nature recovery can be treated as interconnected priorities rather than separate silos. Talent and skills can be directly linked to affordable homes and clear career pathways. Underpinning this is how data can be used effectively across the system to improve services, strengthen transport connectivity, and prevent people from falling through the cracks of a widely dispersed county.

Gloucestershire brings major strengths; we have a world-class economy rich in both heritage and future innovation, outstanding natural capital, and a collaborative civic culture. We also face challenges: 19% of our residents live in the lowest national quintile for access to housing and services, our population has distinct and diverse needs, and opportunities are unevenly shared. LGR is the enabling change that allows us to meet these challenges and deliver a ***smarter, fairer and greener Gloucestershire***. Our six ambitions set out how:

- **Driving breakthrough innovation for national resilience**: harnessing Gloucestershire's industrial and research strengths to create resilience-focused solutions in cyber, aerospace, agri-tech, advanced manufacturing, and natural capital.
- **Harnessing digital to tackle inequality, improve services, and drive innovation**: ensuring every resident has the skills, connectivity, and confidence to access services, education, training, and work.
- **Empowering communities through co-design and local decision-making:** giving residents a stronger role in shaping services, with tools and partnerships that make delivery more responsive to local needs.

- **Putting wellbeing, housing, and nature recovery at the heart of growth:** treating health, affordable homes, and environmental recovery as the foundations of prosperity.
- **Unlocking talent, skills, and housing for inclusive growth:** linking education and training pathways directly to housing and careers that help people stay and thrive in Gloucestershire.
- **Using data to transform transport and public services:** creating trusted, joined-up intelligence to improve safeguarding, support early and anticipatory intervention, and deliver more effective integrated transport.

Our Vision: **We're building on what makes Gloucestershire great to create a sustainable place with thriving communities, bold ideas, and opportunities for everyone.**

Our Six Ambitions for Gloucestershire

Ambition 1: Driving breakthrough innovation for national resilience

Gloucestershire will build on its established strengths in cyber, aerospace, defence, agri-tech, and advanced manufacturing to become a national leader in resilience-led innovation. We will draw on pioneering anchors such as GCHQ, Golden Valley[19] and the proposed Severn Edge project[20] along with our agricultural research centres at Hartpury University[21] and the Royal Agricultural University[22]. By fostering clusters of excellence and supporting research and development (R&D), the county will generate high-value jobs, attract private and public investment, and contribute solutions in areas such as energy security, sustainable food systems, secure supply chains, and the restoration of natural capital. With the upcoming Western Forest[23], alongside our ambition that the Forest of Dean achieves biosphere status[24], we can work at scale on innovation in land management, biodiversity recovery, and climate adaptation.

With our landscapes working alongside our technological advancements, we can ensure that Gloucestershire's resilience is rooted in both its environment and its economy. LGR will strengthen this by removing fragmentation across planning, investment, and regulation, allowing innovation to move from pilots and single clusters to an at-scale resilient economy. This

[19] www.goldenvalleyuk.com
[20] https://western-gateway.co.uk/news-and-blogs/news/severn-edge-sites-potential-home-new-smr-technology/
[21] www.hartpury.ac.uk
[22] www.rau.ac.uk
[23] www.nationalforest.org
[24] www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/biosphere

integration means that innovation breakthroughs in our resilience led sectors are both developed here but deployed consistently, ensuring benefits are felt not only by residents and businesses in Gloucestershire, but the whole of the UK.

Example benefits:

- **A start-up in Cheltenham's Golden Valley innovation district collaborates with local universities and industry partners to develop new cyber-security tools.** With LGR removing fragmentation across investment and regulation, the start-up can scale faster, attract national contracts, and create high-value local jobs - further anchoring Cheltenham's role in responding to the UK's cyber resilience requirements.
- **A farmer in the Cotswolds adopts new agri-tech tools developed in county innovation hubs.** By using soil sensors and precision irrigation, they improve soil health and resilience to climate change while reducing water and fertiliser use and costs. This not only strengthens the farm's long-term viability but also contributes to Gloucestershire's national reputation in sustainable food systems.
- **A small manufacturer in Tewkesbury trials AI-driven production planning in a regulatory sandbox, enabled by LGR.** The new system helps them cut waste, lower emissions, and respond more flexibly to supply chain pressures. Located near Ministry of Defence and defence sector supply chains, the firm boosts competitiveness and secures new contracts in low-carbon defence and aerospace markets. This demonstrates how resilience-led innovation can be scaled across advance manufacturing - the sector responsible for Gloucestershire's largest Gross Value Added (GVA) - while connecting with other resilience led sectors, both locally and nationally.
- **A STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) student in Stroud takes part in placements within Gloucestershire's clean energy sector, working directly on projects linked to the Severn Edge site.** They gain hands-on experience that secures their future career within their own community, while local employers benefit from a pipeline of home-grown talent that supports the county's transition to net zero and enhances the energy security of the UK.

Ambition 2: Harnessing digital to tackle inequality, improve services, and drive innovation

Digital inclusion remains inconsistent across Gloucestershire. Digital access is no longer optional – it is essential in ensuring opportunity and engagement with services. Residents, especially those living in rural areas, can suffer limited access to employment opportunities, education, or care, further exacerbating the hidden

poverty in the county. Building on projects such as the county-wide DigiHubs[25], based in GP surgeries and community centres, **Gloucestershire will ensure that every community has the infrastructure, connectivity, and skills to benefit from the world that digital offers.**

By tackling digital exclusion, we can ensure that residents who struggle to access services, training, or employment are not left behind. LGR offers the opportunity to align responsibility for infrastructure and respond to diverse demand across a complex geography, ensuring digital investment benefits are shared fairly across all communities. This also means all can match the pace of our most advanced future-facing sectors, as we offer support for those at risk of being left behind, so that innovation moves forward inclusively. Improved digital confidence will empower residents to participate fully in their communities, access vital support, and offer increased visibility of opportunity. **Digital innovation will drive the sustainable growth agenda, creating jobs and wealth for the county.**

Example benefits:

- **An older adult in Deerhurst, a rural village in Tewkesbury, manages chronic conditions from home using virtual healthcare tools.** Through secure video consultations and remote monitoring, they reduce hospital visits. LGR can enable this by aligning NHS and council investment in digital infrastructure, so rural areas have the same access to connectivity and digital services as urban centres.
- **A young person in Coleford, a market town in the Forest of Dean, accesses digital skills bootcamps**, gaining confidence and new opportunities in cyber, coding, and creative industries.
- **Carers can use predictive care tools to anticipate needs, freeing time to focus on personal interaction.** By receiving alerts when the person they support may need intervention, they are less reliant on emergency services and more able to plan ahead. This is only possible when health and social care data are brought together, made easier by LGR through creating a single system for sharing data securely and consistently.
- **One of Gloucestershire's many micro businesses uses digital tools to reach new customers and improve their service capability**, e.g. through online ordering or remote collaboration with suppliers. With coordinated county-wide investment in digital connectivity, even the smallest firms in rural areas can compete in wider markets, driving inclusive economic growth.

[25] Delivery of Digi-hubs | Gloucestershire County Council

Ambition 3: Empowering communities through co-design and local decision-making

LGR offers Gloucestershire the opportunity to expand co-design across the county by strengthening the role of the VCFSE sector in service design and delivery. **By giving communities real influence over budgets, priorities, and data, services will be more inclusive, locally responsive, and sustainable.**

Gloucestershire has already demonstrated how effective this approach can be: carers have shaped new support pathways through the Carers Hub[26], and the Gloucestershire Gateway Trust[27] has reinvested profits from the M5 services into projects in Gloucester and Stroud that tackle poverty and improve skills. Local groups in Stroud[28] and the Forest of Dean[29] have influenced health and wellbeing initiatives through community hubs.

With 19% of our population living in the lowest national 20% for access to housing and services[30], empowering communities to shape services based on their local needs is critical to both equity and prevention. Neighbourhood Partnerships are just one example of how LGR could provide a clear framework for convening services with residents – they would sit alongside a wider set of tools to ensure community voices are embedded in decision-making. This approach is founded on building trust and ensuring outcomes are shaped not only by those closest to the challenges, but those experiencing them.

Example benefits:

- **Local residents, councillors, and health practitioners in a Neighbourhood Partnership work together to reduce social isolation in Newent, a Forest of Dean market town.** By combining professional expertise with insights from local people, the Partnership develops community-led activities and accessible support. LGR enables this by aligning funding and decision-making, so neighbourhood priorities can be resourced and embedded within wider service planning.
- **A young carer in Cheltenham is able to provide input into the development of a digital tool with schools and youth services to balance education and caring responsibilities.** The tool provides tailored reminders, wellbeing check-ups and links to local peer support groups. Because LGR enables education, health and social care data to be better connected, the young carer's lived experience regarding the previous systems' lack of navigability are reflected. This makes services easier to

[26] https://gloucestershirecarershub.co.uk
[27] https://gloucestershiregatewaytrust.org.uk
[28] https://cscic.org/programmes/community-hubs/
[29] www.inclusiongloucestershire.co.uk/engagement/community-hubs/
[30] Accessibility - Transport | Inform Gloucestershire

find and use, ensuring their needs are met quickly without having to repeat their story to multiple service providers.

- **A community group in Gloucester collaborates with health providers to design culturally sensitive wellbeing services, improving uptake and trust.** By co-creating mental health support, for example, that recognises diverse cultural practices, more residents feel confident seeking help. LGR supports this by embedding the VCFSE sector within local decision-making frameworks, ensuring community voices are heard alongside statutory providers.
- **Families co-produce services in a local family hub in Tetbury, a Cotswold market town, which provides a family-friendly space.** Parents can take part in shaping early years support, parenting programmes, and wellbeing provision while their children are supported in a safe environment. This is possible because LGR brings together children's services, public health, and community development under one coordinated approach, so family hubs can act as genuine centres for co-creation and prevention.

Ambition 4: Putting wellbeing, housing, and nature recovery at the heart of growth

Wellbeing – with housing and nature recovery at its roots – will be a guiding principle in all policy and investment decisions. From affordable homes and transport to skills and public health, growth plans will be designed to reduce inequalities, improve access to green and blue spaces, and boost Gloucestershire's natural capital. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity, improving land use, and supporting nature-based solutions will strengthen resilience against climate change and create healthier environments for future generations.

Gloucestershire's natural assets also underpin a strong visitor economy. By linking tourism with wellbeing and nature recovery, communities benefit from thriving local businesses while ensuring green spaces remain accessible for residents. Aligning local priorities with Integrated Care System (ICS) prevention goals and CORE20PLUS5[31] frameworks targeting the most deprived 20% of the population (as well as groups experiencing worse-than-average outcomes), will help narrow health and wellbeing gaps across the county.

LGR would make this ambition deliverable by enabling a clear line of accountability across health, housing, and the environment. This coordinated approach can act to turn investment and service delivery into better outcomes for residents. This integration will allow decisions about new housing, green infrastructure, and public services to be planned together - ensuring that residents

[31] www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/national-healthcare-inequalities-improvement-programme/core20plus5/

have both the secure homes and healthy environments they need. In Stroud, community-led housing and green infrastructure projects have already shown how affordable homes and access to nature can be developed hand-in-hand. With devolved powers, these approaches could be embedded and scaled county-wide, linking wellbeing, housing, and nature recovery as the foundation for genuinely inclusive growth.

Example benefits:

- **In the Forest of Dean, a community-led housing scheme integrates affordable homes with woodland management and local energy generation.** Residents not only gain secure housing but also benefit from reduced fuel bills, shared green spaces, and volunteering opportunities that strengthen community ties. This model reflects the Forest's long tradition of working with its natural assets and could be replicated across Gloucestershire, where LGR enables housing, environment, and community to be planned together.
- **A family in Northleach, a Cotswold market town, regularly uses redesigned green spaces that combine play areas, biodiversity planting, and community facilities.** These spaces give children safe places to play and create opportunities for families to meet neighbours, take part in local activities, and benefit from cleaner air. With wellbeing and social connection at their core, such spaces help reduce isolation and improve health outcomes across generations.
- **A disabled resident in Minchinhampton, a semi-rural town, moves into newly built affordable housing designed with accessibility and sustainability at its core.** The home is energy-efficient, reducing bills, and is linked to inclusive transport and nearby green infrastructure, such as sensory trails and accessible walking routes. This combination gives the resident greater independence, reduces their reliance on more intensive services, and enhances their quality of life. By ensuring housing is planned together with transport and green spaces, these wellbeing outcomes become part of everyday provision rather than specialist exceptions.
- **A landowner in South Cerney, a Cotswold village, participates in a countywide nature recovery scheme that restores habitats, improves flood resilience, and generates long-term natural capital value.** By adopting regenerative practices and working in partnership with local authorities and communities, they help protect biodiversity while strengthening the resilience of nearby housing and infrastructure. Crucially, this in turn enhances residents' wellbeing through multi-faceted environmental improvements that contribute to healthier, more secure day-to-day lives. The wellbeing gains are felt both immediately – through safer,

greener environments – as well as in the longer term, as communities experience less disruption and stress from climate-related risks.

Ambition 5: Unlocking talent, skills, and housing for inclusive growth

Gloucestershire will be able to establish a countywide skills and careers pathway to support lifelong learning and inclusive economic growth. By linking education providers, industry, and employers, residents of all ages and backgrounds will have access to training, apprenticeships, and reskilling opportunities. Tourism and hospitality provide major entry routes into work for young people and career changers. In aligning training pathways with this sector, LGR can help us ensure residents can build stable futures in one of Gloucestershire's most significant industries. Affordable and secure housing will be central to this ambition, providing the stability people need to seize learning opportunities and grow with the confidence that comes from a safe, stable home.

LGR would enable this ambition by aligning housing, skills, and economic development within the same framework. Currently, responsibilities are spread across multiple agencies, making it more difficult to ensure that new homes are built where they connect to training opportunities and local employment. **Gloucestershire can create a coordinated system where homes, learning hubs, and jobs are planned together.** There are strong examples to build on. In Gloucester, the University of Gloucestershire's City Campus Development is bringing new teaching and community space into the heart of the city, while the Forwards Employment Service[32] shows how employers, colleges, and community groups can collaborate to support residents into sustainable work. With LGR, these successes can be scaled across the county, **ensuring that talent is not only retained but is skilled to face the future, knowing their own is secure.**

Example benefits:

- **A Year 12 student in Highnam explores immersive career pathways at a local skills hub**, linking them to mentors in future-focused industries, such as cyber security, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, and engineering. These hubs make it easier for young people to see a future in Gloucestershire, rather than having to move away to build a career. In Gloucester, the University of Gloucestershire's new City Campus development strengthens this offer by providing teaching and community space in the heart of the city, connected to wider affordable housing and employment initiatives. Together, these projects make it easier for young people to see a future in the county rather than moving away. With LGR, this integrated approach to housing, education, and employment can be

[32] www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/disabilities/forwards-employment-service/

scaled across Gloucestershire, ensuring that all students - including those in rural areas - can access the same opportunities.

- **A mid-career learner in Winchcombe, a market town in Tewkesbury, retrains in low-carbon construction through flexible programmes**, improving their earning potential while supporting the transition to clean energy. Thanks to housing, public transport, and skills being planned together, they can study locally without facing long commutes or the insecurity of poor-quality rental housing. With stability at home, they are free to focus on building new skills and contributing to Gloucestershire's net zero economy.
- **A young mother in Cheltenham accesses a tailored learning pathway in sustainable construction and materials innovation**, supported by a family-friendly environment and counselling services at a local Family Hub. Over time, she develops expertise and becomes a mentor to others - showing how inclusive pathways strengthen both individual resilience and community cohesion. LGR makes this possible by coordinating housing, skills, and wraparound services under one framework – removing barriers so talent can both flourish and contribute.
- **A young family in Stroud secures affordable housing linked to training opportunities,** allowing them to pursue new careers without instability. Freed from the instability of high housing costs, they can take up retraining and new jobs without the stress of insecure tenancies or long journeys. This stability directly supports wellbeing and ensures Gloucestershire retains and grows its talent base by linking housing delivery with economic inclusion.

Ambition 6: Using data to transform transport and public services

LGR offers Gloucestershire the chance to bring together fragmented data from across multiple authorities and agencies. With devolved powers, this can be turned into usable intelligence that supports earlier intervention and ensures no one is left behind. This separation makes it harder to spot risks early or to design services that reflect real needs. Reorganisation would provide a framework for data use, allowing us to introduce a trusted, secure data infrastructure that can enable services to anticipate needs, respond in real time, and act preventatively.

Linking education, health, housing, transport, and social care data could improve safeguarding measures, reduce waiting times, and ensure fair provision across urban and rural areas. Open data initiatives and live mobility platforms will offer improved journey options, reduce congestion, and promote more sustainable travel choices.

The Robin demand-responsive bus service[33] shows how transport data can connect rural residents to jobs and services, but integration with housing and employment data would make it far more effective. Family hubs can link education, health, and social care data to improve safeguarding and ensure families access support at the right time. Flood management schemes in the Severn Vale already rely on environmental data to protect communities in real time. With LGR, these initiatives could be joined together, scaled across the county and embedded into **a trusted, secure data infrastructure that works for every resident.**

Example benefits:

- **Residents in flood-prone areas receive early warnings through live data platforms.** By combining real-time river levels with local emergency planning, households are given practical, trusted alerts that improve safety, reduce disruption, and protect lives. With devolved powers, these systems could be scaled across Gloucestershire to cover multiple risks, from flooding in the Severn Vale to wildfire risk in the Cotswolds.
- **A commuter in Frampton on Severn, a rural village in Stroud, uses a transport app with real-time data, reducing journey times and supporting sustainable travel.** Backed by devolved powers, the system can ensure affordable fares, reliable rural coverage, and accessible journey options. This also allows councils to use data on passenger demand and road conditions to prioritise road maintenance.
- **At a family hub in Gloucester, a family sits down with staff and views a joined-up record that brings together information from school and health services.** It shows that their child has had a recent dip in attendance and that the parents have both reported stress to their GP. The family are able to identify that they need extra learning support and access to parenting advice before the situation requires a more acute response. The hub uses the data infrastructure to coordinate the right support quickly, reducing pressure on the family and preventing escalation.
- **Farmers can access county-wide soil moisture and yield-forecasting data that helps them to adapt to dry weather conditions and protect arable production.** By bringing agricultural, environmental, and water data together under one system, it fills a current evidence gap and allows farmers to take preventative steps, boosting Gloucestershire's food security and the wider country's resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Ambition in Action: Towards a Resilience-led Economy

The Golden Valley Development (GVD) is a nationally significant innovation powerhouse, **recognised by government as driving the UK's cyber and**

[33] www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/transport/the-robin/

secure technology ambitions. By bringing together industry, academia, and the public sector, GVD is advancing national security and resilience - supporting the UK's mission to embed resilience in critical supply chains infrastructure.

Anchoring Gloucestershire at the heart of the UK's resilience economy, and creating a ripple effect of prosperity across the South West and the nation, the GVD will support supply chains, jobs, and long-term competitiveness.

To unlock its full potential and deliver lasting benefits for local communities and the nation, **we are seeking Designated Area (DA) status for the GVD** - enabling Gloucestershire to retain 100% of business rates growth generated in this area, worth around £385.6m over the designation period. **This locally retained investment will accelerate infrastructure, boost investment, and drive a virtuous cycle of prosperity across the county and beyond.**

DA status means more funding for local infrastructure, skills, and public services - supporting our vision and ambitions for Gloucestershire. Nationally, it will help power UK growth, strengthen resilience, and spark prosperity and innovation across the country.

Summary

We have a bold vision for Gloucestershire - rooted in our heritage and driven by our innovation, shaped by the ambitions of our people, and designed to make every community ***smarter, greener, and fairer***. Through our six ambitions we have shown how services, places, and opportunities can be reimagined to meet the needs of today while preparing for tomorrow.

To bring this vision to life, we have developed a number of personas (see Appendix 1) that illustrate what our ambitions would mean in practice for residents and communities across Gloucestershire. These personas help ground our strategy in real experiences, making clear the tangible benefits of transformation.

The opportunities before us are clear: breakthrough innovation, inclusive digital access, thriving talent pipelines, stronger communities, wellbeing-focused growth, and data-enabled services. **Together they show how Gloucestershire can lead nationally and transform lives locally.**

We know what we need to do. LGR gives us the means to do it through simplifying structures, aligning priorities, and enabling decisions that connect ambition with delivery. With the right reform, Gloucestershire can bring its economic, social, and natural strengths together to create a future where every resident has the chance to succeed.

LGR will allow us to continue **building on what makes Gloucestershire great to create a sustainable place with thriving communities, bold ideas, and opportunities for everyone.**

Future Devolution

LGR is an opportunity for Gloucestershire to reach its full strategic potential, locally and nationally. **As England moves towards wider regional governance, Gloucestershire is well-placed and eager to contribute.**

Our Economic Distinctiveness

Gloucestershire is notably resilient to economic shocks[34]. It has significant strengths in advanced manufacturing and engineering and food security innovation (a combined 23.7% GVA)[35] and is exceptional in the high-growth sectors that utilise emerging technologies[36]. **Our strongest sectors align closely with the priority sectors of the 2025 Industrial Strategy**. Gloucestershire's strong industrial roots in aerospace and engineering, combined with innovation driven by GCHQ, help it **outperform neighbouring areas in productivity, new business creation, and entrepreneurship**. We also host a skilled population, supported by strong universities, colleges, and research networks that have proactively reached out into regional networks.

Inherent to Gloucestershire is our natural capital. From the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean to the Severn Vale, Gloucestershire's landscapes give us the space and resources to lead on the challenges of the 21st century. As part of the Severn Estuary corridor, we can offer clean energy, sustainable food, water management, and climate adaptation. **Few places can match the combination of industrial heritage, high tech growth, and natural assets that define Gloucestershire's offer.**

Gloucestershire blends its landscapes, cultures, and economy into a unique identity that draws on west country heritage and lifestyle to inform future thinking. From the invention of the jet engine to pioneering hydrogen flights at Cotswold Airport[37]; from the Wheatstone Bridge to the Golden Valley; from being home to the invention of the lawnmower to hosting one of the deepest water research sites in the world in Tidenham[38], **our economy is a major asset for regional and national partners in the devolution context.**

Devolution is the key to realising this potential. With greater funding flexibility, joined-up services, and empowered local decision-making, **Gloucestershire can play its full role as a regional engine of growth at the crossroads of the South West, the Midlands, the South East, and Wales.**

[34] Economic Strategy Evidence base
[35] Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry, ONS
[36] Gloucestershire's Economic Strategy 2024–2034 Summary
[37] ZeroAvia completes initial Dornier 228 flight test campaign - Pilot
[38] DEEP - Engineering Wonder

Our Potential Devolution Partners

Gloucestershire is actively exploring three strategic partnerships to the north, south, and east[39]. Of these, we found each offer unique opportunities to accelerate growth and influence:

- West of England Combined Authority (WECA)
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Swindon and Oxford

Our Devolution Option Analysis

A range of metrics were assessed against economic, legislative, cultural, and implementation criteria to identify which partnership could deliver the greatest impact in line with national devolution goals.

Option 1: West of England Combined Authority (WECA)

Geography and Governance

- Existing combined authority with metro mayor which is fully compliant with the Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill 2025 and December 2024 Devolution White Paper.
- Combined population (Gloucestershire + WECA *with North Somerset* rises above the minimum 1.5 million threshold guidance for strategic authority formation).

Strategic Authority Alignment

- Highest degree of alignment across the English Devolution Bill's seven statutory areas of competence, particularly health and care integration, transport and infrastructure, economic development, environment, and public safety.
- Pre-existing governance, transport corridors, NHS integration, and multi-agency delivery capacity provide a rapid implementation route.

Economic Geography Alignment

- Strong alignment in advanced manufacturing, digital/cyber, green technologies, and creative industries.
- Strong worker migration pattern across the borders.
- Potential to position Gloucestershire as an agri-tech leader within a wider innovation economy, offsetting WECA's urban focus.
- Gloucestershire may become a junior partner in the highest growth R&D sectors without a clearly defined role in bringing forward its strengths (e.g. agri-tech).

WECA holds the path to the most immediately deliverable option and offers the broadest alignment with national reform priorities, strongest sector alignment, and the fastest route to full strategic authority status.

[39] Not an exhaustive list – three options were selected according to the shared length of boundary with Gloucestershire and consideration of whether agreements had been made for bordering counties to join alternative partners.

Option 2: Swindon and Oxfordshire

Geography and Governance

- No current combined authority membership so would require LGR and mayoral combined authority formation.
- Joint population threshold met with 1.6 million combined.

Strategic Authority Alignment

- High capability in economic development, skills, and net zero, but weaker in health, care, and integrated public service reform.
- Existing regional partnerships are largely informal or nascent.

Economic Alignment

- Significant longer-term potential in R&D partnerships (AI, life sciences, clean tech).
- Synergy in advanced manufacturing and cyber, but less alignment with agri-tech and rural economy; greater focus on life sciences than securing emerging technologies in the innovation sectors.
- Lower short-term economic integration due to weaker commuting links and business interdependencies.

Swindon and Oxfordshire offer strong innovation potential for the long term but would be slower to establish full statutory competencies with less immediate integration in health and rural sectors.

Option 3: Herefordshire and Worcestershire

Geography and Governance

- No current combined authority and therefore would require LGR and mayoral combined authority formation.
- Population slightly below the threshold so may require additional partners or special consideration.

Strategic and Policy Alignment

- Medium alignment across statutory competencies with strengths in environment, rural transport, and agri-tech, but limited in digital innovation and large-scale economic growth.
- Less alignment with national reform agenda's focus on integrated care and high-growth sectors.

Economic Alignment

- Closest match in current rural economic strengths and historical cultural context.
- Gloucestershire would likely lead on scale and innovation, but partners offer limited capacity in high-growth digital and tech sectors.

Options Analysis Summary

1. West of England Combined Authority (WECA)

- **Why:** Existing governance, metro mayor, statutory compliance, strong sectoral fit (advanced manufacturing, cyber, green tech), and clear commuting / economic flows; existing regional partnerships across arts, culture, health, and the broadest range of services of all options; similar urban / rural profile, reflecting shared challenges in housing and transport planning.
- **Risk:** Gloucestershire risks becoming a junior partner unless it defines a distinctive role (e.g. agri-tech leader completing a 'whole of tech' future economy).
- WECA provides the high-growth innovation engine, Gloucestershire complements the ecosystem with agri-tech and natural capital.

2. Herefordshire and Worcestershire

- **Why:** Close match in rural economy, heritage, and agri-tech; natural cultural legacy fit; scope for Gloucestershire to play a leading role in innovation and scaling up; slightly under population threshold, but culturally congruent and offers Gloucestershire leadership space.
- **Risk:** Limited digital / tech capacity in partners and weaker alignment with national reform priorities.
- Rooted in shared rural economy and heritage, with Gloucestershire as a natural partner to inject innovation and scale.

3. Swindon and Oxfordshire

- **Why:** Strong in R&D, life sciences, AI, and clean tech; good synergies in advanced manufacturing and cyber, but requires completely new governance; has weaker cultural alignment, and less short-term integration with Gloucestershire's rural and health economies.
- **Risk:** Longer-time horizon to deliver; innovation is research-led and urban, less aligned with Gloucestershire's wider economic identity; very few established regional partnerships.
- Offers long-term potential in global-facing R&D and science but less immediate and less place-congruent.

Gloucestershire has the assets and ambition to contribute strongly within any of the potential partnerships. WECA provides the most immediately deliverable and policy-aligned option, while the Herefordshire and Worcestershire option offers an alternative in which Gloucestershire could play a leading role. The partnership with Swindon and Oxfordshire remains a credible longer-term prospect, particularly for research-led collaboration, but is less immediately aligned to Gloucestershire's wider economic and governance priorities.

Gloucestershire's Aims for Devolution

Through LGR and further devolution, Gloucestershire can unlock the tools to drive a high-growth, resilience-focused economy and smarter services for residents.

Devolution would allow Gloucestershire to:

- **Power growth through innovation:** using devolved economic powers to create the Severn Resilience Corridor, bringing together cyber, advanced manufacturing, agri-tech, and clean energy. This will attract major private investment, generate high-value jobs, and cement Gloucestershire's role as a national growth engine.
- **Strengthen resilience for the 21st century:** with greater control over housing, health, skills, and transport, Gloucestershire can deliver joined-up solutions for climate resilience, energy security, and sustainable food systems.
- **Put data to work for residents:** a county-wide data platform, anchored in Golden Valley's cyber infrastructure could integrate transport, housing, health, and utilities in real time. This will reduce duplication, cut costs, and provide residents with more personalised, responsive services, from flood alerts to smart mobility and integrated healthcare.

Summary

Gloucestershire's strengths in advanced manufacturing, securing emerging technologies, agri-tech, and clean energy, combined with our strategic location and cultural identity, position us as a valuable partner in building a balanced and high-growth regional economy. To achieve this potential, we are now seeking active cooperation from Government and regional partners.

	WECA	Herefordshire and Worcestershire	Swindon and Oxfordshire
Governance and Deliverability	• Existing combined authority with metro mayor • Fully compliant with Devolution Bill • Immediate path to strategic authority.	• Would require new mayoral combined authority • Population below threshold, may need extra partners.	• Would require new mayoral combined authority • Threshold met but no existing structures.
Strategic Alignment	• Highest alignment across all statutory areas: health / care integration, transport, economic development,	• Medium alignment: strong in environment, rural transport, and agri-tech; weaker in digital and national reform priorities.	• Strong in economic development, skills, and net zero; weaker in health and integrated public services.

	environment, and public safety.		
Economic Synergy	• Strong overlaps: advanced manufacturing, cyber, green tech, and creative industries • Clear commuter flows • Gloucestershire could specialise in agri-tech.	• Strongest rural economy and cultural fit • Gloucestershire likely to lead innovation • Partners weaker in high-growth sectors.	• High R&D and research potential: AI, life sciences, and clean tech • Lower commuting / business interdependencies • Less rural alignment.
Risks	• Gloucestershire may be junior partner in innovation without defined agri-tech/natural capital role.	• Weak tech / digital sector capacity • Weaker alignment with national reform.	• Long time horizon • Urban R&D focus less congruent with Gloucestershire's broader identity • Weak regional partnerships.
Overall Takeaway	• Most deliverable, innovation engine, culturally and economically aligned.	• Strong cultural / rural fit • Gloucestershire can lead • Weaker on growth / reform.	• Long-term R&D potential • Least deliverable in short term • Weaker identity fit.

Table 3: Strategic partnerships options analysis summary table

Options Analysis

Our options analysis is an objective assessment of the reorganisation options being explored for Gloucestershire[40]. Each option has been assessed using ministerial criteria, supplemented by local criteria – drawing on a range of both qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered throughout this proposal's development. Additionally, challenge and consensus sessions were held with council leaders and chief executives from across the seven councils.

This analysis provides some key considerations which should inform any overall conclusions. However, in the interests of objectivity and respect for the democratic process, the analysis does not provide a concluding recommendation of a preferred option.

The options analysis presented in this proposal mirrors that submitted for the single unitary authority option.

All the analysis undertaken in this options analysis is subject to the policy decisions of whichever new authority / authorities are established as a result of LGR in Gloucestershire. This analysis is also contingent on the outcome of the national Fair Funding Review, which remains uncertain at this stage.

This analysis assumes there are no modifications to the boundary between East and West Gloucestershire. Should boundary modifications arise, the underpinning evidence – particularly the financial case and RAG ratings – would need to be revisited.

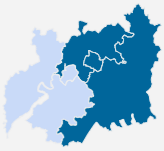
Option	Description	Geography		Population
Option 1: Single Unitary Authority (1UA)	**One new council delivering all local government services across Gloucestershire.**		Based on current **Gloucestershire County Council** boundary	**~ 659,276**
Option 2: Two Unitary Authorities (2UA – East and West)	**Two new councils: one for East Gloucestershire, one for West Gloucestershire. Each delivers all services within its area.**		**East:** currently **Cheltenham, Cotswold and Tewkesbury** districts	**~310,641**
			West: currently **Gloucester, Stroud and Forest of Dean** districts	**~348,635**

Table 4: Options analysis summary table

[40] Not including 'Greater Gloucester/Gloucester Unitary' which has not been subject to a shared process of development

Demographic and Economic Context

The following tables present a side-by-side comparison of key demographic, financial, and economic indicators for Gloucestershire as well as East and West Gloucestershire.

Population and Ageing Trends

This table provides an overview of demographic patterns across Gloucestershire and East, and West, focusing on population size and age-related growth to inform future service planning and statutory obligations.

Measure	Glos.	East	West	Implications
Population (2024)	**~659,276**	~310,641	~ 348,635	The West has a larger population, which may affect baseline service volumes and statutory responsibilities.
Growth in 65+ population (2026–2030)[41]	**+2.32%**	+2.39%	+2.26%	Gloucestershire overall faces a challenge in relation to a population ageing faster than national averages, raising considerations around potential future supply for long-term care.
Growth in 0-19 population	**Declining**	Neutral	Declining	The West may see declining demand pressures on school places in the future.

Table 5: Demographic comparison

Financial Resilience and Income Base

This table compares financial indicators across the regions, offering insight into household income levels and the fiscal position of each area, to assess long-term financial sustainability.

Measure	Glos.	East	West	Implications
Gross disposable household	£23,527	£26,149	£21,191	Residents in the East have higher disposable income.

[41] Population projections, 2022, ONS

income per capita[42]				
Council debt per capita (2023/24)[43]	£819	£674	£948	The West would be created with a higher per-resident council debt burden*, potentially impacting its financial sustainability. **General fund not Housing Revenue Account (HRA)*
Net assets per individual[44]	£1,454	£1,810	£1,137	The East would hold significantly more assets per resident, offering greater long-term financial flexibility.

Table 6: Financial indicators comparison

Service Demand and Social Vulnerability

This table highlights variations in social care spending and indicators of vulnerability, helping to identify areas with greater baseline need and potential service demand.

Measure	Glos.	East	West	Implications
Adult social care spend per resident[45]	£522	£405	£629	Adult social care spend per resident would be significantly higher in the West.
Children's social care spend per resident[46]	£142	£129	£156	Children's social care spend per resident would be higher in the West.
Children in low-income families (per 100k)[47]	14,594	12,274	16,609	The West has a much higher rate of child poverty, potentially requiring it to provide more targeted early help and support.

[42] GDHI Per Capita, 2022/2023, Nomis
[43] LA Debt per capita, 2023/2024, GOV.UK
[44] Net Assets Per Capita, 2023/2024, District Councils
[45] ASC Spend per resident, 2024, Newton
[46] CSC spend per resident, 2025, Newton
[47] Children in Low Income Families per 100k, 23/24, DWP

Household benefit claim rate[48]	15.82%	13.8%	17.9%	The West has a larger proportion of residents reliant on benefits, potentially indicating higher baseline need.
Deprivation index score (higher = worse)[49]	15.1	12.7	17.2	Deprivation is significantly higher in the West, potentially driving greater demand on multiple services.

Table 7: Social care spending and indicators of vulnerability comparison

Economic Activity and Infrastructure

This table examines differences in employment, productivity and digital infrastructure, providing context for economic performance and access to opportunity.

Measure	Glos.	East	West	Implications
Job density (jobs per working-age person)[50]	0.9	1.0	0.8	The East has a more active labour market, potentially creating better access to employment and economic mobility.
Gross value added[51]	£39.0	£41.9	£35.7	Productivity is higher in the East, potentially reflecting a stronger economic base.
Business growth rate[52]	-0.1	+1.1%	–1.2%	The East has seen modest growth in its business base, while the West has experienced decline; this is likely to be localised to the Forest of Dean.
5G availability (% area covered)[53]	68.0%	58.1%	83.0%	The West outperforms the East in mobile coverage,

[48] Household benefit claim rate, 23/24, GOV.UK
[49] Deprivation, 19/20, MHCLG
[50] Job Density, 23/25, ONS
[51] GVA per hour worked, 22/23, ONS
[52] Business Growth (%), 23/24, ONS
[53] % of High Digital Connectivity, 24/25, OFCOM

				reflecting the larger rural footprint in the East.

Table 8: Employment and productivity comparison

Implications for Reorganisation

The baseline differences between East and West highlight demographic and economic imbalances that will shape the financial operating environment for either council that would be created in a two unitary authority scenario:

- A **single unitary authority (1UA) scenario** would need to manage these variations internally, redistributing resources and planning across areas with different levels of income, need, and growth.
- A **two unitary authority (2UA) scenario** would crystallise the variations between East and West, requiring each council to plan for its own financial and service challenges from Vesting Day, with a smaller scale of internal pooling of risk.

Criteria Analysed

This analysis is structured around nine criteria; these include six statutory criteria issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG), and three additional criteria that reflect Gloucestershire's local priorities and values (criteria 7-9).

Each criterion has been broken down into sub-criteria to allow structured assessment across both models. We have assessed how 1UA and 2UA would potentially perform at the point of implementation and over time.

Only those elements of the published ministerial criteria which are relevant to a RAG (red, amber, green) rating and comparative analysis in Gloucestershire are included in the tables below. In most cases we have summarised the full text of the criteria.

KEY	**MHCLG criteria**	
	Gloucestershire-specific criteria	

1	**Sensible single tier of local government** This criterion assesses whether the model removes two-tier governance, creates a coherent single-tier structure,	A) Establishes a single tier of local government for the whole of the area concerned
		B) Sensible economic breakdown, with a tax base which does not create undue inequalities

	and reflects a logical financial and spatial footprint.	C) Sensible geographic breakdown, which will help increase housing supply and meet local needs
2	**Right-sized local government** This criterion assesses whether the model is large and resilient enough to deliver effective government. It considers population size, potential for efficiency, organisational capacity, and the complexity of transition.	A) A population of 500,000 or more (unless specific local factors make this unreasonable)
		B) Supports efficiencies and value for money for council taxpayers
		C) Improves capacity and supports the council to withstand financial shocks
		D) Manageable transition costs
3	**High quality, sustainable services** This criterion assesses whether the model supports effective, long-term service delivery. It considers integration, transformation potential, and the ability to improve outcomes in complex, high-need areas.	A) Improves local government and service delivery, avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation
		B) Opportunity for public service reform including where this will lead to improved value for money
		C) Improves delivery of, or mitigates risk of negative impact on, crucial services
4	**Meets local needs** This criterion assesses whether the model responds to the needs, identities, and priorities of local communities. It considers civic identity, community variation, and responsiveness to engagement.	A) Meets local needs and is informed by local views
		B) Improves / mitigates risk to issues of local identity, cultural, and historic importance
		C) Addresses local concerns
5	**Supports devolution arrangements** This criterion tests whether the model supports Gloucestershire's ability to unlock devolution powers and funding, and whether it creates a strategic authority footprint with appropriate population scale, coherence, and alignment to regional structures	A) Helps to support devolution arrangements / unlock devolution
		B) Sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority
6	**Local engagement and empowerment**	A) Enables stronger community engagement

	This criterion assesses whether the model can support stronger local democracy and provide practical tools for neighbourhood-level decision-making.	B) Delivers genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment
7	**Environmental and climate protection** This criterion assesses whether the model strengthens the council's ability to lead on climate and environmental goals.	A) Ensures the new authority / authorities have clear capabilities to deliver existing and future climate and nature plans
		B) Reflects local priorities in areas with sensitive landscapes (e.g. Forest of Dean, Cotswolds AONB)
		C) Builds on existing commitments (e.g. Fairer Greener Forest, Climate Emergency responses)
8	**Civic engagement and participative democracy** This criterion assesses whether the model provides meaningful democratic representation at community level.	A) Promotes civic engagement and strengthens participative democracy
9	**Inclusive growth and equity** This criterion assesses whether the model enables inclusive economic development, supports vulnerable residents, and maintains service levels while pursuing financial sustainability.	A) Tackles disparities in wealth, employment, and service access
		B) Prioritises vulnerable residents and community-level regeneration
		C) Ensures that financial sustainability is not achieved at the expense of service levels

Each option has been consistently assessed against these nine criteria. RAG ratings have been used to summarise alignment and are supported by detailed commentary.

Scoring Method

To support comparison between the two options, this analysis uses a structured **Red–Amber–Green (RAG) rating system**.

The RAG system provides a simple, visual way to understand how well each option aligns with each criterion and sub-criterion.

Rating	Meaning
G	Meets the criteria
A	Partially meets the criteria / could meet the criteria, with mitigations

R	Does not meet the criteria

- Ratings are applied to each **sub-criterion.**
- No weighting is applied; all criteria are treated equally.
- Each rating is accompanied by narrative commentary, drawing on qualitative and quantitative evidence, if available

Evidence Base

This analysis applies a structured, consistent approach to assess how well each reorganisation model aligns with the nine agreed criteria.

The analysis draws on a wide evidence base, as outlined below, bringing together quantitative analysis, professional insight, and stakeholder perspectives. Evidence has been applied consistently across both models to support an impartial and transparent comparison.

Phase 1 options analysis (completed as part of the interim plan submission in March 2025)

- Developed the original RAG scoring framework used in this analysis.
- Set out the early comparison of structural options based on feasibility, financial scale, and policy alignment.
- Established baseline assumptions around governance design, service footprint, and transition cost implications.
- Informed the scoring approach and structure of commentary.

Demographic and Economic Analysis

- Provided a detailed comparison between the proposed East and West Gloucestershire councils, across:
    - Population trends and age profiles.
    - Financial resilience (e.g. council tax base, gross disposable household income (GDHI), debt levels).
    - Demand for adult and children's social care.
    - Deprivation, employment, and digital access.
    - Economic activity and infrastructure.
- Highlights the different starting points for each authority under a 2UA model, and the internal variation that a 1UA model would need to manage.
- Forms the main statistical evidence base used throughout this options analysis.

Service-level disaggregation and aggregation discussions

- Provided detailed, operational insights from service leads across core upper and lower tier services including (but not limited to): adults, children's and education, transport, revenues and benefits, housing, leisure, and parking.
- Considered issues including:
    - Shared systems and data platforms (e.g. Liquidlogic, Capita, Uniform).
    - Workforce and statutory leadership duplication.
    - Locality delivery and place-based presence.
    - Contracting, service level agreements (SLAs), and external provider arrangements.
    - Gloucestershire-specific practical and technical issues

Stakeholder engagement feedback

- Reflective of responses from partners involved in local services and governance.
- Provided insight into perceptions of:
    - Strategic leadership.
    - Democratic representation and identity.
    - Integration of housing, care, and place-based services.
- Helped assess both models against criteria related to public engagement, identity, and local responsiveness.

Overall Summary of Options Analysis

Summary of Option 1: Single Unitary Authority (1UA)

This option would replace the current two-tier council system with one single council for all of Gloucestershire's ~659,000 residents. This is a size that's been successful in other areas like North Yorkshire and meets government guidelines. Having one council means **decisions can be made more quickly and clearly** and **the county can speak with one voice** when it comes to funding, transport, and big projects.

A 1UA maximises opportunities to retain existing county-wide systems and services (like core service case management systems), which **minimises the cost and disruption associated with splitting things up and any potential duplication.** This is especially important for services like adults' social care (ASC), children's (CSC) social care, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and safeguarding, where **keeping teams and systems together helps protect and maximise service continuity for the most vulnerable people across the county.**

Local services would still be shaped around communities, in line with the proposed locality arrangements for Gloucestershire. This includes local partnerships and

boards, budgets that are managed locally, and retaining local identity through ward names, events, and branding.

There are differences between the east and west of the county, e.g. in income levels, spending on ASC, and levels of deprivation. With 1UA, **financial resources are pooled and can be shared and targeted where they're needed most** - increasing overall financial resilience (noting there are still unknowns around the dedicated schools grant deficit and fair funding which impact all LGR options being considered).

The main risk is around ensuring that local voices are heard from the start – this can be managed by setting up strong local governance early on.

Summary of Option 2: Two Unitary Authorities (2UA)

The 2UA model **prioritises local visibility, civic identity, and flexibility** by creating two councils based on existing district clusters: East (~310k) and West (~348k). Smaller footprints (in comparison with a 1UA) may make members and officers seem more accessible, which some stakeholders, especially parish councils, may see as a strength.

However, the model introduces significant **duplication and disaggregation challenges**. Systems like Liquidlogic, SAP, and Capita One would need to be split or reprocured; safeguarding boards, SEND services, and commissioning frameworks would require parallel governance. Service leads warned this could increase cost, slow transformation, and risk divergence in quality or access. The Fire and Rescue Service in a 2UA model would be legally required to disaggregate from local authority structures and finances, creating additional cost and risk.

The West's higher demand (particularly in relation to social care services) and lower income could constrain its investment capacity without sustained external funding and there may be concerns around longer-term financial sustainability for the West UA (with current estimates projecting a c.£21.9m deficit on day one).

Like the 1UA, local services would still be shaped around communities, in line with the proposed locality arrangements. This includes local partnerships and boards, budgets that are managed locally, and keeping local identity through ward names, events, and branding.

Comparative (RAG) scoring summary by **main criteria**

Criteria	1UA	2UA
1. Sensible single tier of	• Creates a single tier of local government.	• Creates a single tier of local government.

local government	• Enables pooled resources and redistribution to address potential imbalances countywide, e.g. in homelessness and housing supply. • Aligns with existing partner boundaries.	• Similar tax bases across both UAs but potential fiscal disparities in LA debt (£ per capita (23/24) of £948 in West compared to £674 in East) and service cost (ASC spend per resident of £405 in East vs £629 in West).
2. Right-sized local government	• Exceeds MHCLG expected population threshold of 500,000 (1UA population is ~659,000). • Economies of scale across a single larger UA. • Improved capacity and resilience (financial and workforce). • Lower transition costs (one-off costs ~£21.3 million).	• Meets viability threshold of 300k but below 500k (East: ~315,349, West: ~354,031). • Reduced duplication across lower tier services; duplication of upper tier services. • Opportunities to put in place targeted shared service arrangements. • Higher transition costs (with two programmes, one-off cost ~£30.1 million).
3. High quality, sustainable services	• Maintains integrated ASC, CSC, and public health. • Innovation opportunities at scale. • Protects multi-agency safeguarding and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) arrangements.	• May fragment countywide services which could cause challenges with quality and cost of service delivery e.g. ASC, CSC, public health etc. • Fire and rescue will need to move to a non-local authority governance, financial, and service arrangement (i.e. the creation of an independent fire and rescue authority), which will incur additional costs (estimated to be c.£2.8m net total additional pressure for year one) and may increase risk of sustainable service provision.
4. Meets local needs	• Local stakeholder support for retaining single voice and shared infrastructure. • Concerns around merging distinct local identities. • Perception of overcentralisation, which can be	• Builds on existing district boundaries. • Retains a sense of place identity for the two largest urban centres (Cheltenham and Gloucester) but could risk alienating other more rural areas.

	managed with continued place-based delivery.	• Risks financial imbalance in West which could compromise ability to meet local needs.
5. Supports devolution arrangements	• Simplifies engagement with partners. • Increased scale and negotiating influence. • Meets 1.5m Combined Authority (CA) population benchmarks.	• Allows tailored devolution asks. • Each UA could join different CAs. • Some scenarios risk falling below 1.5m population benchmark.
6. Local engagement and empowerment	• Can deliver countywide engagement structures. • Embeds neighbourhood partnerships consistently. • Needs deliberate design to avoid remoteness.	• Smaller footprints could improve councillor visibility. • As for 1UA, effective engagement depends on deliberate design.
7. Environmental and climate protection	• Countywide environmental plans, but with the ability to still retain tailored, local strategies where needed. • Unified stewardship of landscapes. • Scales up local climate initiatives.	• Ability to still retain tailored, local strategies where needed. • Retain joint governance for shared assets.
8. Civic engagement and participative democracy	• Scales up digital tools and participatory decision-making countywide. • Risk of democratic deficit.	• Two smaller councils could feel more accessible, with closer member-resident link in comparison with a 1UA. • Risk of democratic deficit.
9. Inclusive growth and equity	• Increased countywide resilience to drive growth and equity. • Unified regeneration. • Consolidation savings can be reinvested back into front line service delivery.	• Potential risk or difficult decisions needed in the West if current demand and cost trajectories for ASC continue.

Summary of Options Appraisal Against Criteria and Sub-Criteria

This section sets out a summary view of the options appraisal against the six MHCLG criteria and three additional local context criteria and sub-crtieria; with ratings in RAG format providing a simple, visual way to understand how well each

option aligns with each criterion and sub-criterion. A more detailed description against each sub-criteria can be found in Appendix 5: Detailed Options Analysis.

When assessing each option against the MHCLG criteria, we note that the potential impact of the government's fair funding review remains unknown. This creates a degree of uncertainty for both options, as future funding allocations could materially affect relative financial sustainability and capacity. As a result, no definitive assessment of fair funding implications has been included within the criteria analysis for either the 1UA or 2UA option.

This options analysis has been prepared based on the current Gloucestershire boundaries. No boundary changes have been proposed or modelled at this stage. Any suggested boundary modification could significantly alter population totals and financial profiles, which in turn would affect assessment against several criteria and may change the RAG ratings presented.

Comparative (RAG) Scoring Summary by **Main Criteria and Sub-Criteria**

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
1. Sensible single tier of local government	A) Establishes a single tier of local government for the whole of the area concerned	**G**	• Removes two-tier structure and creates one accountable body.	**G**	• Removes two-tier structure and creates two accountable bodies in a single tier.
	B) Sensible economic breakdown, with a tax base which does not create undue inequalities	**G**	• Allows pooled resources and supports appropriate redistribution from East to West.	**A**	• 2024 tax base (band D equivalents after council tax support) suggest similar tax bases across both authorities (49% in the West and 51% in the East) with clear sectoral priorities to drive economic growth within each UA. • However, there are potential fiscal disparities in LA debt (£ per capita (23/24) of £948 in West compared to £674 in East) and service costs, particularly in ASC (spend per resident of £405 in the East vs £629 in the West).
	C) Sensible geographic breakdown, which will help increase housing	**G**	• Aligns with existing partner geographies e.g. NHS, ICB, police etc and enables strategic planning to address disparities in housing needs and land supply across different parts of the county (five-year housing supply	**A**	• Misalignment of boundaries with key partners incl. the ICB, police, and fire and rescue. • Variations in homelessness (higher in the West at 0.21% vs 0.11% in the East) and

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
	supply and meet local needs		target is 4.97 years for East and 3.83 years for West, with a countywide shortfall of 4.37 years).		housing land supply (lower in the West at 3.83 vs 4.97 in East). This could result in more demand for housing in the West with less supply to meet this efficiently within the new UA borders. • Average house prices illustrate that the private housing market faces greater challenges in the West, where values are lower (e.g. Gloucester £225,000; Forest of Dean £291,000) compared to the East (e.g. Cotswolds £419,000; Cheltenham £324,000), reducing profit margins and making it less likely that the private sector will deliver sufficient supply without public intervention.
2. Right-sized local government	A) A population of 500,000 or more (unless specific local factors make this unreasonable)	**G**	• Serves ~659,000 people, meeting MHCLG's expected population threshold of 500,000.	**A**	• Both councils exceed 300,000 (minimum viability threshold is met) but fall below the MHCLG preferred 500,000 (East: ~315,349, West: ~354,031).
	B) Supports efficiencies and value for money for council taxpayers	**G**	• Opportunities for economies of scale e.g. across smaller specialist contracts for services such as cyber and asbestos and	**A**	• Reduced duplication of lower tier services and improved coordination between areas such as transport, housing, and regeneration.

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			increased market influence to enable market management. • Delivery of potential net revenue savings from reorganisation of ~£21.1m per annum.		• However, duplication of countywide service infrastructure e.g. two statutory officers for CSC, two core systems for CSC etc will add in additional costs. • Delivery of potential net revenue savings from reorganisation of ~£10.7m per annum (split as ~ £4.9m for the East, and ~ £5.8m for the West).
	C) Improves capacity and supports the council to withstand financial shocks	**G**	• Enables pooling of specialist professional resource to allow for flexible deployment across the county. • Improves financial resilience to manage imbalances in demand and cost between different areas in the county. • Services like ASC and CSC are preserved in their current state with senior capacity maintained and increased workforce resilience. • Current financial analysis indicates that a 1UA for Gloucestershire would be established with a balanced budget on day one. This assumes the full delivery of unidentified savings required by all seven councils between now and vesting day (1	**A**	• Opportunities to continue operating shared service arrangements in a targeted way to drive efficiencies and provide an increased number of senior officers, potentially resulting in increased capacity. • However, potential significant financial burdens for the West in relation to ASC (around the demand and cost of working age adult placements). • Current financial analysis indicates that the East council in a 2UA scenario would be established with a day one general fund surplus of ~ £21.9m. Whilst a West council would be established with a day one general fund deficit of ~ £21.9m. This assumes the full delivery of unidentified

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			April 2028) and does not fully account for the impact of the fair funding review (subject to further detail from government).		savings required by all seven councils between now and vesting day (1 April 2028) and does not fully account for the impact of the fair funding review (subject to further detail from government).
	D) Manageable transition costs	**G**	• Requires creation of only one new authority and legal structure, minimising transition costs - estimated to be ~£21.3m. (Based on the assumption of a continuing authority). • This includes lower costs of systems migration e.g. no need to split out or duplicate existing countywide systems such as Liquidlogic; lower costs of statutory senior officer roles as only one set of roles is required; lower costs of setting up two separate implementation portfolios to manage transition etc.	**A**	• Higher transition costs as governance and activities would need to be undertaken twice – currently estimated at ~ £30.1m. • Specific examples of additional costs incurred include the recruitment of two sets of statutory officer roles, the increased costs of disaggregation of core county wide services and systems, the costs of setting up two shadow authority structures.
3. High quality, sustainable services	A) Improves local government and service delivery, avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	**G**	• Preserves current integrated delivery in ASC, CSC, transport, and public health. • Also results in minimal disruption to current multi-agency partnership arrangements. • There may be challenges in delivering quality services across such a diverse	**A**	• Opportunities to potentially strengthen local partnerships with organisations within each area. • Services that require aggregation will have a simpler journey as East / West will each aggregate from three districts into one.

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			geography, but continued strong locality working can help to mitigate this. • This involves the aggregation of six councils into 1UA, which is likely to be complex and costly e.g. alignment of different policies etc.		• However, a 2UA will result in the likely disaggregation of core countywide services including ASC, CSC, education, transport, public health, trading standards, and libraries which could result in financial viability considerations (e.g. in ASC given the imbalance in demand and cost) as well as variations in service delivery and offer (e.g. in relation to public health services). • Under the provisions in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, fire and rescue will need to move to non-local authority governance, financial, and service arrangement (i.e. the creation of an independent fire and rescue authority), which will incur additional net costs (estimated to be c.£2.8m additional pressures on day one for the new councils) and may increase risk to sustainable service provision.
	B) Opportunity for public service reform, including instances where this will lead to	**G**	• A larger organisation will have increased scale, resilience, and influence in working with local and national partners, driving longer-term improvements including the creation of a single trusted front door for	**A**	• Enables each council to innovate locally and make targeted investments in line with local priorities with greater agility and easier implementation, but at a potentially

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
	improved value for money		residents, a single data platform to drive prevention and early intervention, and the ability to innovate at scale quickly. • For example, in areas like health and social care, a single larger organisation is likely to have a stronger voice and influence as part of the ICB in comparison with smaller organisations.		reduced scale compared to countywide delivery.
	C) Improves delivery of, or mitigates risk to, negative impact on crucial services	**G**	• Allows flexible resource allocation across the county, directing investment to areas of highest demand such as ASC and CSC in the West. • Consistent service standards for countywide functions. • Preserves MASH arrangements and avoids artificial borders that could disrupt education and care placements.	**A**	• Disaggregating core services such as education, SEND, admissions, and safeguarding systems risks disrupting end-to-end care pathways, hospital discharge, and home-to-school transport.
4. Meets local needs	A) Meets local needs and is informed by local views	**A**	• Findings from local engagement undertaken with Gloucestershire residents in July 2025 indicated that 205 out of 225 residents (who had a view on local government structures) preferred a 1UA for Gloucestershire.	**A**	• Findings from local engagement undertaken with Gloucestershire residents indicated that 14 out of 225 residents (who had a view on local government structures) preferred a 2UA model. However, concerns were raised in broader qualitative

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			• Parts of the county's strategic partner base (NHS, police, business networks) and the VCFSE emphasised that a single accountable body could also simplify engagement and reduce duplication across multiple districts. However, some parish councils and VCFSE groups raised concerns that this needs to be supported by robust locality governance so that a 1UA does not feel more distant, especially in rural areas. • The 1UA model reflects existing countywide delivery of ASC, CSC, public health and transport, noting that service leads supported retaining local operational footprints even under this arrangement.		commentary around fairness, division, and efficiency, with references to "creating a rich side and a poor side of the county". • Concerns were raised around large urban centres within each unitary dominating focus and resources, potentially leading to rural areas receiving a lower standard of service. • Risks include fragmentation where communities span boundaries or rely on countywide networks (e.g. education, safeguarding, housing). • Parts of the VCFSE warned that splitting the county may marginalise rural transition areas such as the Severn Vale and North Cotswolds.
	B) Improves / mitigates risk to issues of local identity, cultural and historic importance	**A**	• Civic identity kept through 267 parish councils, new city / town councils for Gloucester and Cheltenham, and use of local names and branding. • Neighbourhood partnerships (30k–50k population) bring decision-making closer to communities and build on existing local networks.	**A**	• Aligns with current district geographies. • Equalities impact assessment (EqIA) analysis shows differing community profiles: East combines Cheltenham's urban diversity with older rural areas, while West combines Gloucester's ethnic diversity with rural Forest of Dean and Stroud communities.

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			• Area-based practice in ASC / CSC and precedents from other unitaries show local visibility can be maintained under a 1UA model. • Local engagement with residents raised concerns that a unitary authority may not recognise the individual places that have their own unique identity. For example, residents spoken to at the Coleford Music Festival wanted to maintain the identity of the Forest of Dean as a unique place.		• However, several stakeholders noted that smaller authorities don't necessarily directly correlate with improved community engagement – the underlying structures and design are crucial to success. • Findings from local engagement with residents also highlighted that it could be difficult to create local identities for each unitary that do not revolve around the largest towns which would exclude other areas.
	C) Addresses local concerns	**A**	• Risk of overcentralisation can be mitigated by strong locality governance and retaining local delivery (e.g. social work teams). • A 1UA enables countywide planning to address inequalities (e.g. child poverty, which is higher in West) while flexibly allocating resources by place. • Unified capital and housing functions allow targeted investment in local priorities, such as brownfield regeneration in the West and transport access in the East.	**A**	• The West faces greater cost pressures due to higher deprivation (indices of deprivation - East: 12.71, West: 17.16); higher ASC costs per resident (East: £405, West: £629); and higher claimant rates (East: 13.79%, West: 17.87%). • Cross-boundary issues (e.g. housing, transport, tech corridors, flood risk) require joint working, limiting full localisation. • Unified capital and housing functions allow targeted investment in local priorities, from brownfield regeneration in the West to transport access in the East.

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
5. Supports devolution arrangements	A) Helps to support devolution arrangements / unlock devolution	**G**	• Gives Gloucestershire a single, unified voice in national negotiations. • Streamlined governance and one point of entry improve clarity for partners and enhance the county's profile when securing investment and funding. • Unified leadership supports countywide priorities such as housing, infrastructure, skills, and transport, while preserving links to both the South West and West Midlands regional partnerships.	**A**	• No single voice for Gloucestershire overall which could weaken influence in negotiations but there may be improved opportunities for each authority to tailor devolution asks based on distinct priorities. However, there is limited evidence to support this.

	B) Sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	**G**	• Population sizes for potential combined authority options being considered for Gloucestershire just about meet the minimum 1.5m benchmark set by government as illustrated by the combined population estimates below:
			  ○ Gloucestershire + WECA Core: 1.6m
			  ○ Gloucestershire + WECA (incl. North Somerset): 1.81m
			  ○ Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire: 1.45m (falls a little short of the 1.5m threshold).
				G	• Opportunities for each UA to join potentially different combined authorities due to potential political divergence.
					• Two smaller Gloucestershire authorities would cause concerns around meeting the minimum 1.5m benchmark in all potential combined authority scenarios, e.g. Herefordshire and Worcestershire have a combined population of c.806,000 so if only one of the Gloucestershire authorities was to form a combined authority with these two areas, this would fall short of the minimum

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			○ Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire + Swindon: 1.63m • However, concerns were noted around the relative size of a single Gloucestershire unitary authority in comparison with other partners in a combined authority. For example, in the case of a WECA option, Gloucestershire would be the largest partner in WECA, with a population of c. 659,276, compared to Bristol's c.472,400, South Gloucestershire's c.290,400 and Bath and North East Somerset's c.193,400 (population figures based on ONS 2021 census). This could potentially make a single unitary less appealing for other partners.		1.5 million threshold (at a maximum, it would be c.1.2m). • In terms of relative size of two smaller Gloucestershire authorities compared with potential partners, this may be more palatable. The populations of c.300,000-350,000 for Gloucestershire would not be significantly higher than potential partners, particularly in the case of a WECA option.
6. Local engagement and empowerment	A) Enables stronger community engagement	**G**	• A 1UA removes districts but can create countywide frameworks for neighbourhood partnerships, reducing duplication and clarifying responsibilities. • Effective engagement depends on deliberate design; partners stressed the need to "build in real localism" to avoid perceptions of distance.	**G**	• Smaller footprints could improve councillor visibility and allow warding and committees to reflect local settlement patterns. • Effective engagement depends on deliberate design; partners stressed the need to "build in real localism" to avoid perceptions of distance.

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			• The 1UA model generates the largest potential reorganisation savings (c.£21.1m annual net savings), creating capacity to invest in local forums co-designed with partners including the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC), ICB, and the VCS Alliance.		• Service leads stressed that effective engagement depends on design, resources, and authority, not size alone.
	B) Delivers genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment	**G**	• A 1UA can formalise locality governance through neighbourhood partnerships and area committees, co-designed with communities and partners – noting it may be difficult on such a large footprint (OPCC, ICB, VCS Alliance). • Existing hubs and parish clusters can be aligned to locality areas, ensuring services like ASC, CSC, and planning remain close to residents, while using shared systems and standards countywide. • Concerns have been raised that removing levels of government risks democratic deficit.	**G**	• A 2UA can formalise locality governance through neighbourhood partnerships and area committees, co-designed with communities and partners – noting it may be difficult on such a large footprint (OPCC, ICB, VCS Alliance). • Concerns have been raised that removing levels of government risks democratic deficit.
7. Environmen	A) Ensures the new authority has /	**G**	• Countywide plans and partnerships on climate, nature recovery, and flood risk (e.g.	**G**	• Strategic collaboration could continue through Climate Leadership

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
tal and climate protection	authorities have clear capabilities to deliver existing and future climate and nature plans		Climate Strategy, Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) role) continue seamlessly under a 1UA. • Scale enables coordinated budgets, specialist teams, and single ownership of assessments and bids, strengthening capacity for investment and delivery. • Neighbourhood partnerships embed environmental priorities locally, supporting community-led climate and nature actions.		Gloucestershire, but duplication of plans and scrutiny would add cost. • Requires countywide coordination on cross-boundary issues (which can continue to build on the success of partnerships such as Climate Leadership Gloucestershire). • The smaller scale of two unitary authorities should not have an adverse impact on the effectiveness.
	B) Reflects local priorities in areas with sensitive landscapes (e.g. Forest of Dean, Cotswolds AONB).	**G**	• Maintains single local plan, LNRS, and biodiversity net gain framework, avoiding fragmented policies across natural assets and landscapes. • Supports countywide coordination of infrastructure, flood schemes, and biodiversity corridors while retaining local tailoring through the proposed locality arrangements. • Provides consistent planning approach on issues like nutrient neutrality, with parish and community networks shaping local priorities.	**G**	• Local initiatives such as Cheltenham's Net Zero Plan and Fairer Greener Forest could be advanced under separate leadership.

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
	C) Builds on existing commitments (e.g. "Fairer Greener Forest", Climate Emergency responses).	G	• Local climate programmes (e.g. Fairer Greener Forest, Stroud Climate Action Network (CAN), Cheltenham net zero) can continue with countywide support, funding and systems. • A 1UA enables one climate plan, shared datasets, and a single scrutiny framework to align priorities and track delivery. • Some partners highlighted through engagement that 1UA simplifies collaboration, supporting targeted investment in rural, urban, and flood-risk communities.	G	• Two councils could retain and develop existing local climate plans, keeping accountability close to members and communities. • Local ownership may strengthen engagement, but alignment is needed on countywide priorities like emissions, transport decarbonisation, and biodiversity.
8. Civic engagement and participative democracy	A) Promotes civic engagement and strengthens participative democracy	A	• Countywide engagement tools and resident panels can be delivered at scale, avoiding duplication across districts. • A single framework protects equal access to participation for both rural parishes and urban neighbourhoods. • Builds on local co-design pilots and VCFSE partnerships, enabling grassroots leadership within a countywide democratic structure.	A	• Both authorities would be able to develop civic engagement strategies suited to their geographies and communities. • Smaller councils could feel more accessible to residents, with closer member–resident links. • Given LGR will reduce the number of elected councillors and create larger electoral divisions, this will increase the number of residents each councillor

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			• Given LGR will reduce the number of elected councillors and create larger electoral divisions, this will increase the number of residents each councillor represents. This could risk a democratic deficit.		represents. This could risk a democratic deficit.
9. Inclusive growth and equity	A) Ability to tackle disparities in wealth setting up one unitary authority or two unitary authorities	**G**	• A 1UA enables countywide planning and pooled resources to tackle disparities, targeting regeneration in areas with lower GDHI, job density, and higher deprivation (notably in the West). • Avoids postcode inequality by ensuring consistent access to services and funding across the county. • Strengthens Gloucestershire's case for levelling up and national investment by presenting one accountable body.	**A**	• Lack of countywide redistribution may leave the West struggling with higher deprivation (East: 12.71, West: 17.16) and demand pressures (e.g. ASC costs per resident East: £405, West: £629 and Adults with no qualifications East: 13,375 per 100,000, West: 16,169 per 100,000). • Risks include divergence in neighbourhood regeneration and reduced ability to deliver countywide programmes to close equalities gaps.
	B) Prioritises vulnerable residents and community-level regeneration	**G**	• Shared datasets enable consistent targeting of unmet need (e.g. higher child poverty rates in the West). • Countywide safeguarding boards and integrated commissioning are retained, while services continue to deliver locally	**G**	• The West may face difficulty funding high-need regeneration without redistribution, exposing resource and commissioning gaps. However, funding may become more readily available to the West as their relative deprivation would no longer be

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA		2UA (East / West)	
			through hubs, schools, and VCSFE partners. • A 1UA simplifies cross-cutting delivery (e.g. mental health, housing, substance misuse) and links neighbourhood action plans to countywide priorities.		hidden by the averages of the West and East combined.
	C) Ability to balance financial sustainability with service levels	**A**	• Consolidation of contracts, systems, and infrastructure delivers savings in back-office functions, allowing reinvestment in frontline and preventative services. • A single commissioning function strengthens market position in areas such as ASC and SEND, reducing fragmentation and securing better value. • Countywide reserves and income provide flexibility to sustain high-cost services and manage financial risk across the whole area. • Countywide dedicated schools grant (DSG) deficit projected to reach ~£234m by vesting day (1 April 2028). If statutory override is not maintained or an alternative solution implemented, then both a 1UA and 2UA would face significant financial risks.	**A**	• Each authority would have its own independent medium term financial strategy (MTFS) and budgets which can be aligned with local service priorities. • The West faces higher ASC demand and costs (ASC costs per resident East: £405, West: £629) and CSC costs (CSC costs per resident East: £129, West: £156), creating greater budget pressure without access to countywide reserves or subsidy. • Countywide DSG deficit projected to reach ~£234m by vesting day (1 April 2028). If statutory override is not maintained or an alternative solution implemented, then both a 1UA and 2UA would face significant financial risks. • The impact of the fair funding is currently unknown, presenting further financial

Criterion	Sub-criterion	1UA	2UA (East / West)
		• The impact of the fair funding review is currently, presenting further financial uncertainty to both 1UA and 2UA scenarios.	uncertainty to both 1UA and 2UA scenarios.

The New Councils: Future Operating Model

LGR is a chance to reshape how councils in Gloucestershire work. To deliver better, more sustainable services and tackle inequalities, **clear and consistent future operating models (FOM) are essential.**

This section outlines how the new councils could engage with residents, collaborate with partners, and operate internally. While the final model will be decided by future council leaders, this proposal offers **a framework to support long-term resilience, local decision-making, and community-focused service delivery.**

Our Opportunity to Modernise

Gloucestershire is in a unique position – ready to harness its strengths whilst fundamentally transforming to address some its challenges, ultimately improving outcomes and delivery of high-quality services for all residents, businesses, and staff.

Through LGR, the new councils can take advantage of:

- **Simplified access to services making it easier for residents to get the help they need** without having to be passed between councils.
- **A strategic approach to prevention and integration** across social care, public health, environmental health, leisure, housing, and other services. Given Gloucestershire's higher than average ageing population, this approach is key to future demand management and financial sustainability.
- **Opportunities to partner with local organisations.** Gloucestershire already has great foundations to build on – like our place-based family and youth hubs across the county and the Ow Bist Community Hub[54] in Cinderford. Ow Bist is a great example due to its co-designed ethos; the community named the building and shaped its offer, which blends council, health, and VCFSE services.
- Accelerated opportunities for transformation enabled by **shared intelligence and predictive analytics**. Housing and homelessness are an example of how a more integrated operating model can enable more evidence-driven and predictive responses for vulnerable people.
- **Fresh impetus for broader public service reform across Gloucestershire** to address service modernisation, integration, prevention, and demand pressures**.**

[54] www.fvaf.org.uk/owbist

Our Design Principles

We've set out clear design principles to guide every decision behind our FOMs:

- **Values-led:** everything we do will be rooted in clear values and led by outcomes – **doing the right thing for the people of Gloucestershire.**

- **People at the heart:** we're here for all our people, businesses, and communities – everyone is equally valued. We design with people, not for the, **building relationships rooted in listening, trust, transparency, and inclusivity.** Our ambition is to create places and services that actively support wellbeing and happiness, helping everyone to thrive.

- **Locality-focused:** our commitment to localities means **real place-based working, genuine co-production, and enabling community-led delivery.** One size won't fit all, and we will support different places in different ways.

- **Online by default and accessible for all:** our strategic 'online by default' culture maximises the impact of technology, simplifying and automating our processes, with alternative provision where it is desired or needed, so that **nobody is left behind**. And as we innovate, we stay mindful of the environmental and ethical impact of our digital choices.

- **Collective ownership:** we'll drive collective ownership throughout the new councils with a **'one-team ethos'**. This empowers service leads, managers, and staff to make smart, local decisions and adapt quickly to what our communities need most.

- **Partnerships with purpose:** our **partnership working will be purposeful** to make a positive difference to our communities and achieve shared goals. Every delivery model is shaped by what works best for each place, not by a one-size-fits-all approach.

- **Intelligence led decision-making:** We will harness evidence to spot things early, be proactive, influence strategy, and drive meaningful change - using data and insights to improve service delivery and ways of working.

- **A great place to work:** we'll value, train, and care for an agile and resilient workforces, building clear career pathways and enabling development of specialist service experts, multi-skilled individuals, and those that want to move between service areas. We champion **a diverse and inclusive workforces that reflects our communities**, promoting equality, equity, and belonging for all.

Key Components of Our FOMs

With our design principles as our foundation, we're clear about what this means in practice.

Two-way engagement and a first point of contact for residents, businesses, and the community

Each unitary authority could have its own in-house engagement capability but with consistent features:

- Fostering participation and co-creation with neighbourhoods and other communities to encourage genuine partnership working and empowerment; exploring investment in community assets, libraries, and outreach to support place-based access and digital inclusion.
- Wherever possible, ensuring that services feel consistent and connected, powered by shared customer data, especially for those with complex or multiple needs.
- Blending digital self-service and effective triage (enabled by AI, including voice and chat automation) to free up our people to provide higher value, personal services.
- Utilising resident and community demand data and insights to feed neighbourhood and community support, commissioning, and corporate planning, which will allow the councils to use data to drive decisions and improvements.

Bringing together frontline and place-based service delivery for residents, businesses, and communities

There may be some common service delivery features and principles adopted by each authority including:

- High-risk, regulated, and a range of other services are likely to stay in-house (or potentially even be brought in house) to protect quality, value, and flexibility.
- A workforce that blends specialist staff, who understand the technical nuance and risks of frontline services, with flexible, multi-skilled staff, who can provide challenge and strong leadership.
- Visible and responsive services in local areas through place-based forums and outreach which adapts to diverse populations and cultural needs.

- A seamless flow of contact, triage, and resolution into operational teams – with clear service standards and safeguarded pathways for urgent or high-risk cases.

Commissioning in-house specialist capabilities associated with services the councils acquire externally

Each unitary authority could have its own in-house commissioning capability which can commission based on local market conditions and demand / supply in each area. The councils would also seek to:

- Strategic commissioning capabilities to link insight, market knowledge, service needs, and outcomes (aligned to the corporate strategy and community needs).
- Lead with intelligence – using demand, neighbourhoods, and supply insights to drive every decision so that they are outcomes-focused and needs-based.
- Joint working with partners built on trust and shared goals (not necessarily always full-service integration), enabled by strong governance and clear exit strategies.
- An ethos of continuous review and improvement, making sure services remain resident-focused and outcome-driven, encouraging maximum value for money.

Note: An initial view of potential delivery models for core service areas (i.e. commissioned, shared services, in-house), is set out in Appendix 6: Proposed Service Delivery Models (noting that ultimately the final decisions on these will be for the new authorities).

Strategic enablement: driving the councils' strategic direction, transformation agenda, and operational excellence

Each unitary authority will need its own strategic enablement capabilities to lead direction, retain decision-making sovereignty, and deliver on its political and strategic priorities. These teams will help drive:

- Coordination of corporate strategy, transformation, and financial performance to ensure alignment and accountability across the council.
- A robust business partnering model turning strategy into action. Central teams will manage systems, standards, and high-volume transactions, with business partners embedded within or alongside directorates.

- Insight and performance information will flow both ways between services and strategic leadership, enabling real-time learning, smarter resource use, and targeted interventions.
- Investment in the right tools, skills, and culture, pairing data with human judgement and local context to ensure decisions are ethical, inclusive, and effective.
- Outcome-driven performance management – using insight to monitor progress, drive change, and enable services to reach their full potential for residents.

Shared Services Between East and West Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire already leads the way in shared services, delivering consistent, efficient, and cost-effective solutions like waste collection and environmental management across up to eight councils. Where scale, specialist expertise, or infrastructure matter, collaboration just makes sense.

For most children's and adults' social care functions, it is essential that each authority delivers its own services, led by dedicated professionals who know their communities best and are empowered to make decisions locally. High-quality, safe support for vulnerable children and adults depends on clear lines of accountability and strong local leadership - an approach adopted by the vast majority of councils across England because it delivers results. The new authorities may wish to explore shared service models in areas such as:

- **Archives:** splitting physical and digital collections would be costly, disruptive, and face significant legal challenges, with no benefit to residents. A single, shared archive service protects access, quality, and value.
- **Coroners:** Gloucestershire's coroner area boundary is already set by the Ministry of Justice under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. Keeping a countywide service avoids unnecessary boundary changes and preserves specialist expertise.
- **Registrars:** a shared approach is key to financial resilience, especially with demand varying so widely across the county. Pooling resources ensures a sustainable, high-quality service for all.
- **Waste and environmental services:** the Ubico model already successfully delivers for seven councils. Expanding this shared service across two new authorities will drive even greater efficiency, without compromising on delivery.

Gloucestershire's Shared Waste Services

Ubico Ltd is Gloucestershire's shared environmental powerhouse. delivering frontline services for eight councils, comprising all seven in the county as well as West Oxfordshire. Teckal-compliant and council-owned, Ubico has set the standard since 2011/12 for cost-effective, flexible alternatives to outsourcing.

From waste and recycling collections to street cleansing, fly-tip response, grounds maintenance, fleet management, and even cemetery care, Ubico covers it all. Every service is tailored to local priorities but delivered with the consistency and efficiency only a shared model can offer.

Despite being in a shared service arrangement, each service is tailored to local policies and priorities set by the individual councils across Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire.

There have been a range of benefits to all councils, including:

- **Cost efficiency** through centralised senior management, support services, fleet management and procurement
- **Consistent, high-quality service delivery** with flexibility for local policy differences
- **Back-office savings** and simplified contract management
- **Operational resilience**, with cross-council support and standardisation
- **Centralised expertise** in environmental service provision, fleet management and maintenance, environmental compliance, service change and innovation, and programme management.

The New Councils: Workforce

The workforce approach builds directly on the strategic ambitions proposed in the FOMs. The new councils' FOMs provide an opportunity to reimagine what it means to work for our councils and to invest in continuing to develop **a diverse, valued, and multi-skilled workforce that represents, and is best placed to service, Gloucestershire's residents and communities.**

By reshaping how we attract, develop, and empower staff, we unlock **greater mobility, clearer career pathways, and the chance to embed a culture of innovation and continuous improvement** across services.

Gloucestershire's Workforce Challenges

Our workforce is talented and dedicated, but we're not immune to the pressures facing local government. LGR is our chance to tackle these challenges head-on and build a workforce that's resilient, inclusive, and future-ready.

- **Recruitment and retention**: stability is impacted by competition for talent, especially in social care, education, and technical roles. To attract and keep the best, we need to offer more than just a job. Flexible working is increasingly expected, and career pathways could better reflect diverse progression routes.
- **Diversity and representation:** there are gaps in workforce diversity, with underrepresentation in some roles and areas. Promoting Gloucestershire's strengths more widely can help attract a broader range of talent.
- **Wellbeing and change fatigue:** staff are under pressure, particularly in middle management and specialist roles. A stronger focus on wellbeing and open communication can help build cultures that embrace change and support growth, ready for what comes next.
- **Skills for the future:** rapid technological change means we must invest in digital and data skills across all roles. Updating job structures and expanding access to learning will help build confident, adaptable workforces ready to lead transformation.

Unlocking New Opportunities for Our Workforce

LGR provides a unique moment to reshape how our councils engage, support, and develop their workforce. By aligning people strategies with the broader transformation agenda, we can unlock new potential and build future-ready organisations.

Through LGR the councils can:

- **Reset organisational culture** by embedding inclusive values, energising teams, and empowering staff to shape services. This fresh start unites colleagues through adoption of new behaviours, attracts new talent, and

creates real ownership and pride, across every corner of Gloucestershire. By putting wellbeing and resilience at the centre, we'll tackle change fatigue and build workforces that are more connected, motivated, and driven by a shared mission.

- **Strengthen recruitment and retention** by reducing internal competition for talent, enabling more flexible resource sharing, and creating clearer pathways for retraining and upskilling. Structural changes, such as refining spans of control and smarter job design, can improve efficiency and clarity - especially important in high-demand areas like social care, education, planning, and technical services. LGR will allows the councils to become more attractive employers, offering rewarding careers and development opportunities.

- **Build skills and capability** by investing in digital literacy, data competence, and shared training – raising standards and opening-up new career routes. We'll close skills gaps in areas like AI, development operations, data analysis, and data engineering, competing with the private sector and positioning the councils as forward-thinking employers, ready to meet future challenges with confidence. And by sharing these skills with wider partners and the community, we'll boost employment prospects and deliver real social value.

- **Support diverse career pathways** by recognising the value of both specialists and generalists and creating structures that reward horizontal and vertical progression equally. Through investing in specialist skills – like commissioning, contract management, market shaping, and quality assurance – we'll help staff feel more valued for their unique strengths and open up fulfilling career journeys within each organisation.

- **Promote workforce diversity and representation** by setting the standard for an inclusive workplace. Addressing persistent gaps in representation and removing cultural and structural barriers in recruitment and progression, we'll build workforces that better reflects the communities they serve and where everyone can thrive.

Gloucestershire's Workforce Priorities

Through collaboration across all seven councils, we've identified opportunities to shape workforces that can deliver on Gloucestershire's bold vision and ambitions:

1. **Create a 'fresh start' for the new organisational cultures, marking the opportunity to reset organisational identity and behaviours following reform, creating more inclusive and energising environments.**
LGR offers a valuable opportunity to reset organisational cultures. It's a chance to reaffirm shared values, refresh our identities, and foster more dynamic, inclusive workplaces. By moving beyond legacy behaviours and empowering staff to shape the new cultures, we'll boost morale, strengthen engagement, and inspire pride in each council's future.
2. **Accelerate digital confidence and capability: Reflects the commitment to equip staff with digital skills and tools.**
We're embedding digital, data and technology (DDaT) at the core of the new councils, backed by real investment in upskilling our people so that they have the tools and support they need to thrive. By expanding graduate schemes and digital apprenticeships, we'll build workforces that are digitally confident, ready to innovate, and equipped to deliver modern, responsive public services.
3. **Design inclusive career pathways, reflecting the commitment to support both specialist and generalist progression by creating flexible, transparent career routes that value diverse skills and aspirations.**
We're committed to clear, flexible career pathways that let both specialists and generalists thrive, without being pushed into unsuitable management roles. Current structures often lack the flexibility to support dual career tracks, which can limit the development of specialist expertise. By valuing every route equally, supporting career exploration, and being transparent about role expectations, we unlock talent at every level. And for regulated professions, such as S151 officers, we'll keep the depth and accreditation that excellence requires.
4. **Championing diversity of thought and inclusive behaviours, highlighting the importance of embedding equity and inclusion in recruitment, leadership, and everyday practice.**
LGR is our platform to embed inclusive practices and celebrate diversity of thought at every level. We're tackling underrepresentation head-on, making sure all staff feel seen, heard, and valued. Our priorities include inclusive recruitment, diverse leadership pipelines, and open dialogue across teams. By championing different

perspectives and lived experiences, we'll strengthen decision-making, build community trust, and create workforces that truly reflect the population they serve.
5. Building leadership capability – referring to the qualities, skills, and support needed for leaders to guide teams effectively through change and deliver high-quality services.
Strong leadership is key to navigating change and delivering high-quality services. LGR creates valuable opportunities to grow leadership at every level. Through shared training, mentoring, and clear development pathways, the councils can support leadership growth while defining the qualities needed for the future. By investing in our leaders, we'll boost confidence, enhance engagement, and equip managers to lead with clarity, empathy, and purpose – amplifying the strengths already thriving across our teams.
6. Creating anchor institutions for the wellbeing of our communities
The 2021 Gloucestershire Director of Public Health's annual report "Sources of Strength"[55] described how 'anchor organisations' can support community health and wellbeing and help tackle inequalities in their places. Anchor organisations like the new unitary councils will take direct action in areas like employment policies, procurement, buildings, the environment, and place-shaping – leveraging our assets and influence for local benefit. As two of Gloucestershire's largest employers, we'll lead by example.
7. Supporting staff who may not continue in the new unitary councils
LGR is also about looking after our people. For those not transitioning into new roles within the new organisations, we'll offer tailored support – including CV writing, interview preparation, and access to redeployment resources – so that everyone feels respected, empowered, and ready for their next step. This compassionate approach values individual contributions and helps maintain positive organisational cultures throughout the change.

[55] www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/nb5dugc1/dph-report-2021-sources-of-strength.pdf

The New Councils: Digital, Data, and Technology

Designing Digitally-Enabled Organisations for Gloucestershire

Since the announcement of LGR, we've worked with the Local Government Association (LGA) and other councils who've already navigated this process to understand the realistic opportunities and learn from their experiences in Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) transformation. This collaborative approach has enabled us to identify opportunities, challenges, and best practices, ensuring that our DDaT aspirations are informed by real-world experience and aligned with the government's digital blueprint[56].

Putting residents and communities first is at the core of our DDaT approach. We're designing digital services that work for everyone – whatever their age, ability, or access to technology. While we're investing in DDaT to improve outcomes and experiences, we recognise that not everyone can or wants to access services online. We'll continue to offer alternative ways to get support and information, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Our DDaT vision is to **transform the experience of local public services**, designing organisations that are truly fit for the digital age: innovative, efficient, and built to meet the expectations and needs of our local people, communities, and staff.

By bringing together county and district services across two unitaries, we can simplify and standardise services, so every resident enjoys a consistently good experience – no matter where they live or what service they use. This means **easier access, less confusion, and no need to repeat information or navigate multiple systems.** It allows us to focus resources where they are needed most, respond quickly, and deliver joined-up, reliable support. Ultimately, we're building councils that are more efficient, more responsive, and better able to meet the needs of our communities.

What Do We Mean by Digital, Data, and Technology?

Digital: we're creating an empowered and user-centred culture – investing in the right skills and tools to deliver seamless, end-to-end online services that people choose to use because they're simple and effective.

Data: we'll use data strategically and ethically to drive smarter decisions and deliver personalised support. At the heart of our data use will be secure and ethical data sharing, improving interoperability across systems, and using insights to redesign services around real need.

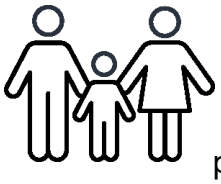
[56] www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-blueprint-for-modern-digital-government

Technology: our approach is robust, secure, and flexible – from cloud and low-code to open-source tools and responsible use of AI. We'll deliver resilient, scalable systems that support innovation and work together effortlessly, so every experience feels joined-up and intuitive.

What Difference Will Designing Digitally Enabled Organisations Make?



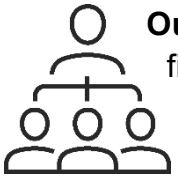
Our residents and businesses across Gloucestershire will access services that are consistent, proactive, accessible, and responsive – joined-up across the councils and their partners. By using data smartly (where it makes sense to rather than 'just because'), we'll deliver the right support at the right time, cutting out repetition and confusion. Whether its online, by phone, via email, or face-to-face, everyone gets the same reliable service. And because digital exclusion is real, we're committed to making sure that everyone – regardless of how they choose to engage – can access the support and services they need.



Our communities will have more opportunities than ever to shape services and share their views. Digital platforms will make it easier to access data, share views, respond to consultations, and work in partnership with us – building fairness, trust, and real empowerment. This means communities are enabled to respond to local issues themselves, as well as target support and resources where they are needed most, strengthening local resilience.



Our staff will have the right tools and connected systems, working in cultures that champions learning and collaboration. Routine tasks will be automated, freeing up time for complex work and collaboration within and outside the organisations. We'll trust our staff to experiment, adapt, and grow, supporting them every step of the way to build new skills.



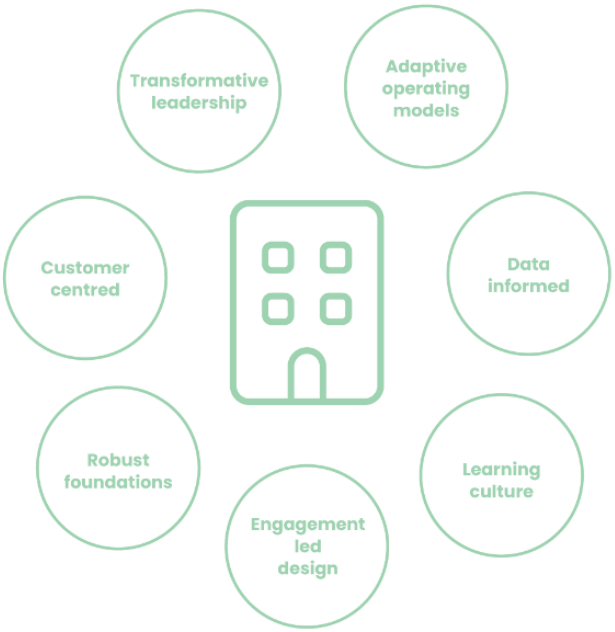
Our leadership will have real-time, high-quality insights at their fingertips, enabling confident, informed decisions. With LGR unlocking joined-up data, we'll see across systems, anticipate future needs, and target resources where they'll have the greatest impact.

Our new unitary authorities will be better equipped to manage demand, streamline processes, and evolve services in innovative ways. By harnessing digital and data capabilities, we'll break away from traditional models of local government service delivery, enabling more targeted support and adaptive operating models. We're committed to becoming employers of choice: attracting and retaining talented people by fostering modern, inclusive, purpose-driven workplaces where staff feel empowered to make a real difference.

Our partners will benefit from shared platforms, ethically aligned data, and collaborative delivery, making it easier to work across organisational boundaries. We'll reduce duplication, remove barriers, and create seamless experiences for people using services across different agencies.

Strategic Components of Our Approach

DDaT sits at the heart of Gloucestershire's transformation. We've identified seven key areas that will help us turn our ambition into action – each focused on delivering better outcomes for residents, communities, and businesses.



Transformative leadership

Our leadership will encourage bold innovation – **challenging the status quo** and championing joined-up services across teams, organisations, and sectors. Leaders will foster a culture where experimentation is encouraged, help remove barriers, and use data to make informed decisions. They'll empower staff to 'build, test, learn', embracing continuous improvement over perfection at the first

iteration. They'll ask the right questions, equip staff with the tools to answer them, and act confidently on what data reveals.

Adaptive operating model

We'll adopt reusable common components wherever possible, ensuring data portability and a consistent user experience across services.

All services will be online by default (with alternative channels available), underpinned by a single digital process regardless of contact channel. We'll remove unnecessary hand-offs, reduce duplication, and make it simpler and quicker for residents to get what they need. By joining forces with partners across the public and voluntary sectors, we'll deliver a simple and consistent experience across the whole system.

Data-informed decisions

Traditionally, local government has faced challenges with fragmented datasets – both within and between organisations – making early intervention difficult. LGR offers a real opportunity to break down these silos, joining up services and data to enable earlier intervention, faster responses, and more effective prevention. **Evidence-based decision making and investment in analytics, predictive modelling, and AI will better equip us to anticipate demand and drive continuous improvement.**

Robust data governance is non-negotiable. We'll use information safely, securely, and ethically – joining up across services and with partners when there is consent and clear purpose. Clear principles and accountability will guide how we use AI and data, building trust and delivering value responsibly.

The new unitary authorities will enable the implementation of a joined-up predictive analytics platform across adult and children's services, education, housing, and health. By pooling data that used to be locked in districts and county silos, the system will help identify early warning signs of safeguarding risks – such as school absence, housing instability, or repeat A&E visits – and trigger coordinated interventions when needed. In our MASH, for example, we'll enable real-time data sharing across agencies, standardised data formats and dashboards, predictive analysis to identify risk earlier, standardisation of risk thresholds, and automation of routine processes (e.g. triage and referrals).

Customer-centred services

Customer experience and our approach to digital must go hand-in-hand.

For each council, our aim is to deliver **intuitive, accessible, and consistently high-quality online services for all residents and customers - putting them at the heart of our service design.** One phone number. One website. An integrated digital front door – incorporating tools like live chat and chatbots for 24/7 availability. With smart digital tools and AI, we'll track progress on cases, keep people updated, and resolve issues faster, freeing up our staff to focus on supporting people with more complex needs.

We'll build public trust through transparency – open dashboards showing our performance, reliability, and commitment to high standards. By connecting information across services, we'll build a fuller picture of our communities' needs and respond with care.

User-centred design and continuous improvement will be our standard. We will test new services and features with real users, gather feedback, and keep improving, so that what we deliver is always intuitive, accessible, and genuinely useful. This will help us to identify and address issues early, refine our services, and make sure our services work for everyone.

Learning culture

We're creating cultures where **curiosity is celebrated, change is embraced, and learning never stops.** We'll blend the best of our existing strengths with our appetite for more experimentation, collaboration, and continuous learning.

We'll learn from the best – partnering with national initiatives like the LGA and the Government Digital Service to improve digital consistency across the sector and drawing inspiration from places that have already led the way, like Greater Manchester and Data Mill North. We'll bring together the councils, NHS, universities, technology start-ups, and other partners to pilot bold new ideas and turn innovation into action.

We'll invest in digital skills at every level, including digital apprenticeships, to **build workforces that can deliver and sustain transformation.**

Listening to our residents and stakeholders

To build online services that are truly inclusive and genuinely responsive to our residents' expectations and needs, we must actively listen to them and recognise the digital exclusion challenges across the county.

Our digital engagement approach will support Gloucestershire's residents and communities to easily provide feedback, join resident panels, and co-design services. Aligned to our proposed locality arrangements, we'll make appropriate data and insights available so that our communities are empowered to shape

solutions to local concerns and issues. By teaming up with partners like the VCSFE and parish councils, we'll boost digital skills and deliver meaningful digital engagement.

We'll use data and digital platforms to tailor engagement by location, interest, or demographics. **Robust feedback loops, co-design practices, and transparency will improve inclusive service delivery and build trust with our residents.**

And we're committed to true accessibility. If digital isn't an option, we'll meet people where they are – by phone, in person, or through trusted local partners.

Regardless of the contact channel, the process and experience must feel consistent, joined up, and fair, **ensuring that no one is left behind in our digital transformation.**

Robust infrastructure

The success of the new councils will fundamentally rely on robust and dependable technology foundations. We'll ensure our infrastructures, devices, applications, and data are up-to-date, secure, resilient, and dependable.

We'll move to the cloud-based platforms where it makes sense. But we won't just simply replace legacy systems in the cloud – **we'll seize every chance to transform services, using flexible, open-source solutions to promote transparency, efficiency, and innovation.**

Every investment in our infrastructure will be futureproof: cyber-secure, sustainable, and built to last. We'll set clear design principles to prioritise standardisation and interoperability. Environmental sustainability will be a key consideration, ensuring our technology decisions support the councils' broader climate and carbon reduction commitments.

We'll equip teams with the right digital tools - like low-code platforms - to design, test, and launch new solutions at speed, scale, and lower cost. We'll tackle 'shadow IT' – where tools, apps, or systems are procured without the approval of the central DDaT service – to ensure every technology decision is strategic, centralised, and fully aligned with our DDaT ambitions.

Our DDaT investments must go beyond devices and platforms to include connectivity. While most of Gloucestershire already enjoys superfast broadband, we'll close the gaps, especially in rural and digitally excluded areas. As unitary councils we'll be better placed to coordinate infrastructure investment, work with national programmes, and ensure that all communities, regardless of geography, can benefit from modern, reliable, and inclusive digital services.

Summary

Designing digitally enabled councils for Gloucestershire isn't just bold, it's essential. **We're laying the foundations for modern, responsive, and inclusive organisations.**

The risk of not embedding a clear digital strategy and robust DDaT foundations from day one is real. Without it, we risk building on fragmented systems, outdated processes, and inconsistent data – driving up costs, slowing progress, and limiting our ability to innovate, collaborate, and meet rising expectations.

Our case studies (Appendix 2) already show how **digital is improving outcomes** across the county, streamlining services, and supporting those who need us most. But the real opportunity lies ahead: working together to deliver consistent, high-quality outcomes for everyone who lives, works, or visits Gloucestershire.

As we move through the phases of LGR, our strategy will balance innovation with stability. We'll embed customer focus from the outset and set a clear roadmap for future transformation.

Ultimately, our DDaT ambitions will enable us to become proactive councils that deliver meaningful outcomes. Our new councils will feel modern, human, and trustworthy - **designed around the people we serve and powered by the best of digital, technology and data insight.**

The New Councils: Democratic Arrangements

We're creating two strong, focused councils, each with a clear vision for their area, championing local priorities while working together in Gloucestershire's wider interest.

Local members will be strong representatives and true community leaders, deeply connected to local priorities and aspirations, clearly accountable for services, and powerful convenors who bring people and partners together to deliver real impact.

Merging the county and district councils into two new unitary authorities will simplify local government, making it easier for residents to engage with the council, with local members at the heart of that relationship.

While some services will be shared, members on each council will ensure **services are tailored to local needs** and will hold services to account.

Right now, electoral arrangements across seven councils mean that every year sees a council election in at least one part of the county. **This new model brings coherence, clarity, and a stronger voice for every part of Gloucestershire.**

Council	Number of Councillors	Electoral cycle	Next election
Gloucestershire County Council	55	All out every 4 years	May 2029
Cheltenham Borough Council	40	Elected in halves every 2 years	May 2026 May 2028
Cotswold District Council	34	All out every 4 years	May 2027
Forest of Dean District Council	38	All out every 4 years	May 2027
Gloucester City Council	39	All out every 4 years	May 2028
Stroud District Council	51	All out every 4 years	May 2028
Tewkesbury Borough Council	38	All out every 4 years	May 2027
Total	295		

Table 9: Current electoral arrangements

Creating two unitary councils will streamline local democracy, reduce councillor numbers, and create a more stable political landscape for Gloucestershire. But this isn't just about efficiency, it's about strengthening local voices.

We're committed to **enhancing democracy**, not diluting it. Both new councils will be built around a culture that empowers local members to lead, listen, and act on what matters most to their communities.

To ensure **fair and effective representation** from day one, we'll use the existing county council divisions - recently reviewed and electorally balanced - avoiding the disruption of an immediate boundary review. This provides a solid, balanced foundation for local democracy, with electoral equality built in.

The result? **A simpler, stronger, and more accountable system, designed to serve every part of Gloucestershire better.**

To ensure strong local representation and capacity from day one, each ward / division will elect two councillors. Using the existing recently reviewed county council divisions avoids the need for an immediate boundary review. In contrast, current district ward boundaries aren't fit for purpose: unequal elector ratios and inconsistent structures (single-, double-, and triple-member wards) make them unworkable for a modern, unified council.

This approach delivers:

- A West council with 58 members and an East council with 52, a **total reduction of 185 councillors**.
- Elector ratios of 1:4,454 in the West and 1:4,503 in the East, slightly above the average for similar unitary councils, but well within a fair and functional range.

Our councillor-to-elector ratio ensures:

- **Capacity to lead through transition** while staying closely connected to communities.
- **Representation across large, rural divisions** with multiple parishes.
- **Clear democratic accountability from day one**, with councillors who are visible, accessible, and responsive representatives of their communities.

In time, a boundary review will help streamline representation further - reducing reliance on two-member divisions and making it even easier for residents to know who represents them.

Our governance will be built on four core principles:

- A clear voice for Gloucestershire
- Easier collaboration across the public sector
- Strong transparency and accountability
- Community needs at the heart of every decision.

We'll deliver strong, responsive governance through clear leadership, local empowerment, and deep community connection. We'll deliver this through:

- **Bold, visible leadership** from a Leader and Cabinet in each council, driving collaboration and playing a leading role in the future Combined Authority.
- **Engaged, flexible scrutiny** that brings together all political groups - and where needed, external voices - to shape policy and hold decisions to account. We will use creative, constructive approaches to scrutiny, working at both a strategic and a local level to make sure we're meeting the needs of our communities.

- **Proud civic leadership**, preserving the heritage of Gloucester and Cheltenham while elevating their roles at the heart of each new unitary council. The Chair of the council and strong ties with the Lord Lieutenancy will uphold county-wide identity and tradition.
- **Local decision-making power** through area planning committees, handling planning and other place-based matters where local knowledge matters most.
- **Neighbourhood Partnerships** that reflect real communities and local priorities, shaping services, guiding funding, and driving community-led development.
- **A stronger role for Town and Parish Councils**, backed by a jointly owned charter and new opportunities to take on devolved powers, tailored to each council's appetite and capacity.
- **Real opportunities for children and young people** to share their views and help shape the decisions that affect them.
- **A culture of participation**, with co-production and engagement embedded in how we work, reaching every community, including those in non-parished areas.

The New Councils: Empowering Gloucestershire – Our New Locality Arrangements

Unitarisation provides us with a unique opportunity to **rewire the connections between places, people, and organisations**. Since the English Devolution White Paper was issued, the seven councils in Gloucestershire have worked together to **reimagine our system, with local places at its heart.** The result is a proposal to unlock the strengths in our community organisations, in our diverse places, and above all, in the people of Gloucestershire.

Our council Leaders are united in a desire to shift the extent and quality of community empowerment. We want to take the best of our smaller scale, localised, good practices - delivered by councils and key partners – and scale it up, making it central to how we work as new councils.

Grounding our approach in evidence

Gloucestershire's seven councils have worked closely with key local associations and organisations to understand what truly empowers communities and to map the strengths of our current system. We've also drawn on insights from over 20 unitary councils with area-based arrangements and conducted a thorough review of national best practice. Our early conclusions were clear: given the scale and diversity of the East and West Gloucestershire councils, **a neighbourhood approach is essential** - for our future accountability, effectiveness, and cohesion.

Among many learning points, the following stand out:

- **Trust and consistency matter:** Too often, new unitary councils have struggled to deliver the locality promises set out in their proposals, risking trust – especially with parishes and the VCFSE sector. Our approach puts **long-term relationships and trust at the heart of everything we do.**
- **A priority for the whole of both new councils:** Neighbourhood arrangements are not an 'add-on'. To deliver prevention, participation, and wellbeing, good practice cannot be confined to a neighbourhood model. **Leadership, culture, and structure must be joined up and laser-focused on empowering communities.**
- **Community development drives real change:** Unitary councils have made strides on using area-based arrangements to act on visible economic and environmental issues, but many have found tackling health, inequalities, and social challenges at the neighbourhood level has been tougher. By **applying resources and focus to community development**, working hand-in-hand with the VCFSE and NHS, we will unlock better outcomes. In our model, the role of public health is central - bridging the priorities and capacities of health and local government systems.
- **Area-based approaches build stronger communities:** The evidence is clear: when councils work across sectors and issues, communities thrive. But a top-down, overly formal approach stifles innovation and inclusivity. We're committed to test-and-learn, and genuine engagement in ways that make sense to people - making sure every resident feels included.

These learning points have been crucial in shaping our model and proposals**.**

Our current locality models

Neighbourhood approaches are already woven into the fabric of local services, delivered by councils and partners at various geographic scales. As current district boundaries become less relevant, our focus shifts from serving broad populations of 100,000 plus, to local communities of 20,000 - 50,000. **It's about putting people at the centre - organising around natural communities and driving real change where it matters most.**

The Gloucestershire Place Pyramid

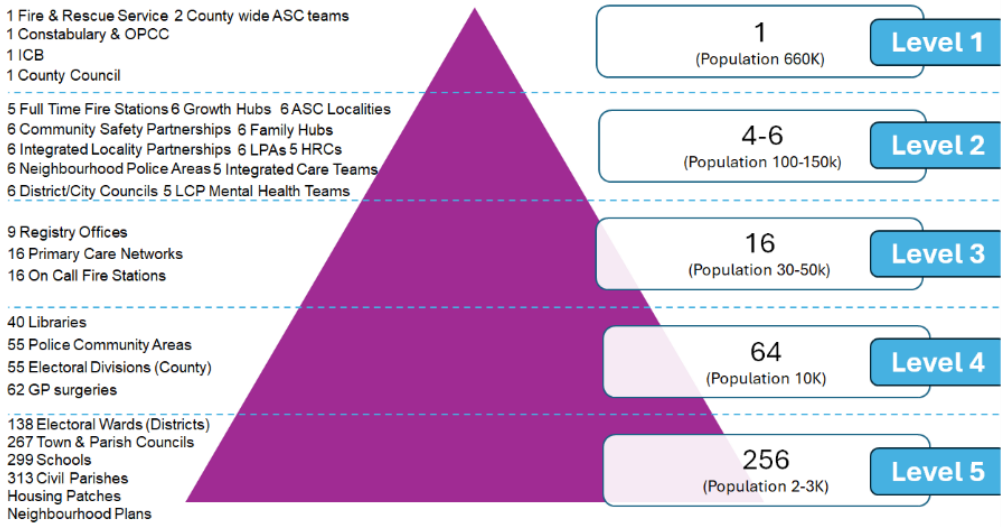


Diagram 1: Gloucestershire's current locality approaches

Across our seven councils and partners, we see a rich diversity of approaches – each driving positive change in its own way:

- **Stroud's community hub approach:** born during the pandemic, but now evolved into a dynamic partnership - bringing together local voluntary organisations, parishes, and housing providers to tackle social isolation and health and wellbeing
- **Integrated Locality Partnerships (ILPs):** led by the NHS, uniting health and other partners at a local level, currently based on district footprints
- The wealth of **community-centred regeneration and economic initiatives**, including the award-winning Gloucester Forum and the Golden Valley development in Cheltenham – proof that **local ambition delivers real results**
- **The Forest of Dean's innovative partnership** between the district council and Forest Voluntary Action Forum has developed a dynamic approach to youth services and more
- The recent successful launch of **Gloucestershire's** Family Hubs and associated Family Hub Networks. Organised in five locations across the county, with an emphasis on wider outreach. Partners include the Gloucestershire Gateway Trust which has developed a neighbourhood and community led approach to supporting children and families

- The area-based **community development approach pioneered in Tewkesbury** and closely tied to the rapid housing and business growth in the area
- Cotswold District Council's active approach in its unique geography supports 115 parish and town councils, with the annual **'Cotswold Parish and Town Summit'** as a showcase for local leadership and collaboration.

We know that great practice already exists in Gloucestershire – but much of it needs to be scaled up and shared across boundaries.

Neighbourhood Partnerships: A new way of engaging and delivering

We're proposing a new system of Neighbourhood Partnerships[57]. Each partnership will have the freedom to set its own agenda and priorities, **rooted in what matters to local people.** Their scope is broad by design – giving every place the space to shape its own future. The five key roles each partnership will perform are set out below:

Core roles for Neighbourhood Partnerships	
Engagement and empowerment	Each neighbourhood will build on existing great work to get local residents and organisations involved. **Neighbourhoods will be the go-to forum for the council and other agencies to listen, consult, and make sure actions are relevant and responsive to local needs.**
Community development	Neighbourhoods will be backed by real resources to drive community development. Working with public health, and other expert capacities, community development will play a key role in **tackling inequalities and amplifying the voices of those too often unheard**. Neighbourhoods will work closely with the VCFSE sector to shape and provide this function.
Service access and delivery	Each neighbourhood will map local services, data, assets, and capacity. **All council services will work together with neighbourhoods**, with many having a visible, accountable presence at the local level. How different services are involved will naturally vary.
Funding and decision-making	Neighbourhood Partnerships will have a main committee made up of local councillors and non-voting members from local organisations. Neighbourhoods will get **funding and staff resources to deliver** on its priorities. Committees will set their own work programmes, decide how resources are used, and make decisions on local priorities. They'll be accountable to local people, shape council work on the ground, and play a key role in the planning system.

[57] 'Neighbourhood Partnerships' would fulfil the role of 'Neighbourhood Area Committees' set out in the current Devolution Bill

Core roles for Neighbourhood Partnerships	
Prevention and Wellbeing	**Neighbourhood structures aren't a *'nice to have'* – they're essential**. Connected communities achieve better outcomes, from early years and health to democracy and community safety. We'll put data and evidence at the centre of Neighbourhood working, powered by our public health and performance capabilities. Neighbourhoods, whilst setting their own priorities, will have **a duty to focus on prevention in everything they do.**

Table 10: The core roles for Neighbourhood Partnerships

We've built these core roles by listening to the views and experience of councillors from all seven councils. At a recent all member webinar, councillors ranked the key roles for Neighbourhood Partnerships in order of importance – and the results are clear. Service accountability, residents voice, health and wellbeing, community development, and joined up working between the councils, parishes, and partners all came out on top. This prioritisation will continue to be tested with local people and organisations.



Diagram 2: Results from all member webinar ranking exercise

The size and shape of our Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhood size and boundaries won't be drawn in isolation – they'll be shaped by thorough consultation. Our research suggests each neighbourhood needs to be big enough for the councils and partners to focus resources, but small enough to reflect a natural community. Most will be made up of a main town and its surrounding villages, or a recognisable neighbourhood within a major town or city. We're suggesting populations of 20,000 - 50,000, with options set out within the consultation process. The result will be between seven and 12 Neighbourhood Partnerships for each of East and West Gloucestershire.

We're proposing the current county electoral divisions as the main 'building blocks' of neighbourhoods. But boundaries aren't set in stone - this will form part of the consultation and some adjustments will be needed to better reflect natural communities. Neighbourhood committees will be composed of between four and ten local councillors (depending on size), in addition to co-optees.

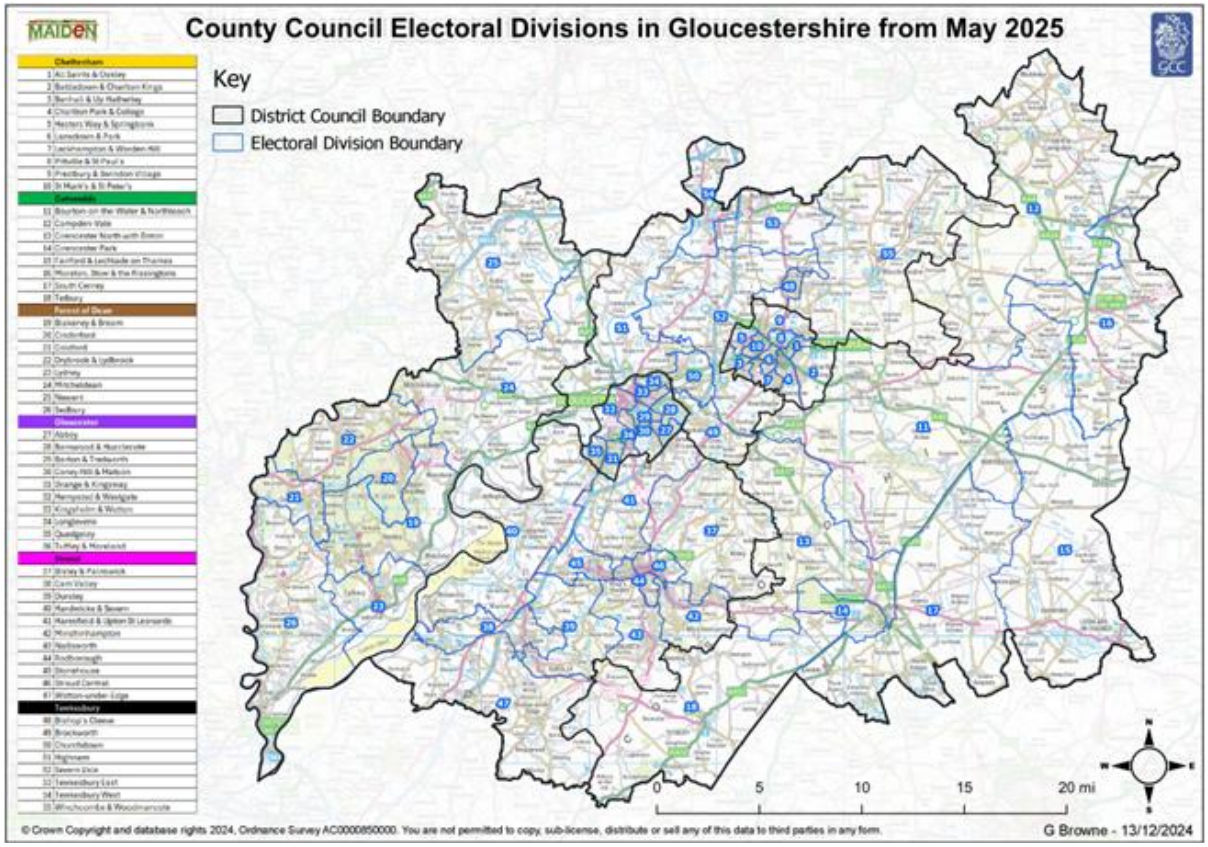


Diagram 3: the current county electoral divisions

Our adaptive and flexible approach

Not everything the councils do will fit neatly into our structure of Neighbourhood Partnerships. We would expect the shadow authorities to consider area-based Development Control committees on a larger scale than Neighbourhood Partnerships. But **Neighbourhood Partnerships will still play a vital planning role** - acting as consultees in a future *Statement of Community Involvement* and, where it makes sense and is wanted locally, in the development of *Neighbourhood Plans*.

Investing in Neighbourhoods

Expert teams will be built around our Neighbourhood Partnerships:

- **Chair of the Neighbourhood Partnership**: An elected councillor, nominated by councillors in the neighbourhood
- **Neighbourhood Partnership manager**: Together with the chair, this role will form a crucial leadership partnership in making the neighbourhood work successfully
- **Council neighbourhoods teams**: Officers assigned to each neighbourhood. A mix of practically focused managers, town and parish liaison officers, and community development specialists
- **Departmental council officers:** Located in family hubs, housing patches, planning, public health, or social care, these officers will have a strong relationship with neighbourhoods
- **VCFSE:** The VCFSE sector will play a crucial role in the grass roots work for each neighbourhood, some potentially working with the councils in managing and facilitating a whole neighbourhood, or providing expertise in community development
- **Partner organisations:** Health, fire and rescue, police, schools, and registered housing providers will also play a vital part. Over time, we expect to see stronger alignment of partner boundaries with that of our Neighbourhood Partnerships
- **Performance teams**: Data and evidence specialists will be assigned to neighbourhoods to help identify insights and needs, and track progress
- **Public Health:** Professional oversight and support, ensuring neighbourhoods use data, policy, and evidence to maximum effect
- **Director-level officer champions:** Each neighbourhood will be assigned a director-level officer champion to support leadership and delivery
- **Services**: Every external-facing council service will develop a neighbourhood offer, ensuring the approach runs through everything we do
- **Budgets:** We anticipate providing a budget for each neighbourhood to fund projects and activities. We also want neighbourhoods to have real influence on other funding streams, both from council departments such as highways and transport, and as part of central government bids.

Every neighbourhood will have its own context, needs, and ambitions. Whilst all will get a baseline support offer, the new councils, with partners, will focus on addressing inequalities, some of which will be more prominent for particular neighbourhoods.

Enabling the VCFSE to achieve more

To strengthen our commitment to residents and Gloucestershire's 4,600 VCFSE organisations, **we'll create a Civil Society Covenant with the Gloucestershire VCSE Alliance**. This Covenant, backed by a clear action plan, will set out how local government and the VCFSE will work together for stronger communities. The Covenant could remain a shared project for both new councils, with councillors from both councils joining VCFSE partners on a joint governance body established

over the Shadow Authority period. Alternatively, the new East and West authorities could choose to take this forward separately.

Making the role of local councillor more effective and accountable

Unitarisation means fewer councillors covering more service areas, bigger geographies, and more electors. **Neighbourhoods provide the crucial local member role with greater structure, capacity, and convening authority.** Neighbourhoods bring partners around the table, helping councillors address issues collectively and with expert support. This joined-up approach reduces duplication and supports meaningful two-way engagement between elected members, residents, and organisations.

Working with local councils (parishes and towns)

Gloucestershire's 267 parish and town councils are a vital part of our communities – and LGR will have a real impact on them. **Parish and town councils are an essential, vibrant part of our communities**, and we see their development as a vital ingredient in our unitary future. The lesson from elsewhere is that where trust and respect between principal councils and local councils break down, opportunities are missed and outcomes suffer.

We'll work with the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC) and the Gloucestershire Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) to **develop a new charter**. A draft will go to the shadow authorities for adoption, setting out clear rights, responsibilities, and governance arrangements to maximise collaboration and two-way communications. **This charter will be the foundation for strong, effective partnership between principal authorities and local councils.**

Neighbourhood Partnership will be a linchpin for locality working - and town and parish councils have a valuable role to play in these structures. The charter process will be developed for all of Gloucestershire, with the respective East and West shadow authorities deciding whether to maintain a joint arrangement or take forward separately.

As the county's major urban areas, we expect **special consideration by the new council will be given to parishing Gloucester and Cheltenham**. Each has major historical and future importance for Gloucestershire, and parishing will help protect their identity and drive momentum. Subject to consultation, we expect community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment to be strengthened by the good governance through parishes that cover most of each urban area. In Gloucester, this could mean a single large parish (city) arrangement, potentially excluding the existing parish of Quedgeley. In Cheltenham, options include a single town council or a federated parish model, combining existing parished and unparished areas. These new arrangements would hold some of the key cultural, civic, and public realm responsibilities, and play a major part in boosting the visitor economy.

Beyond Gloucester and Cheltenham, many parishes are eager to develop their offer. We'll work positively with these parishes to maximise value for local people

and places, keeping value for money in mind**. There will be equal opportunities for larger areas (like Cheltenham and Gloucester) and smaller towns or parishes to take on services and assets.** The new councils will keep a close eye on overall council tax levels, including parish precepts. Any new parishing, or extension of parish responsibilities, will be a matter for the new principal councils to consider and subject to Community Governance Reviews.

We support recent Ministerial statements that have made clear the differences between parish and neighbourhood roles. Strong parish arrangements are vital, but they don't replace the need for a neighbourhood offer anywhere in Gloucestershire. We have valuable local capacity in our towns and parishes, and so we see their involvement in neighbourhoods as important. We celebrate the diversity in the parish offers across Gloucestershire as a reflection of what local people want and need in their communities.

Implementation

Seven activities will shape our work over the pre-shadow period, and are built into our implementation roadmap:

1. **Formal consultation on Neighbourhood Partnerships:**

Each council will deliver a **formal consultation on Neighbourhood Partnerships** in the shadow authority period, enabling implementation in Year 1 of the new unitary councils. We'll test our thinking through early engagement in the pre-shadow period. Our engagement and consultation will include:

- Neighbourhood Partnership geographies and boundaries
- Core roles and responsibilities
- Local priorities, services, and needs
- Alignment with partner organisations on approaches and geographies
- How Neighbourhood Partnerships may evolve over time
- The support, capacity, and resources needed to make them work (bearing in mind financial constraints).

2. **Civil Society Covenant:**

During the pre-shadow period, we'll co-design a Civil Society Covenant with the VCSE Alliance and partners, with a draft covenant ready for the shadow authorities to consider and consult on in readiness for Year 1 of the new councils.

3. **Local Councils Charter**

Working with GAPTC and SLCC, we'll develop a draft charter and action plan for the shadow authorities to consult on. The East and West shadow authorities will have the option of progressing the charter with a joint body of councillors and local council representatives, or separately. The seven principal councils will also work together in the pre-shadow period to ensure clear, consistent communications and policies are in place for working with local councils.

4. **Parishing Cheltenham and Gloucester:**

In partnership with Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucester City Council, and the parish associations, we'll develop a model for how parishing can support the continued **identity, good governance, and regeneration / growth in our major**

urban areas. Decisions on the precise form of proposals and consultation process will rest with the new councils.

5. **Service planning:**

We'll consult with all county and district services in the pre-shadow period to shape how they'll work with neighbourhoods - feeding into service planning for the new councils and establishing a clear **'services and assets offer'** for each area.

6. **Policy development:**

A range of **policy development work** will ensure:

- Neighbourhood approaches are supported by good evidence
- Frameworks and models are established for different types of activity (such as community development, project funding, and neighbourhood action plans)
- Robust neighbourhood governance
- Neighbourhood level data and data insight tools are developed

7. **Partner integration:**

We'll work together with all our statutory partners to integrate our proposals with their frameworks and priorities. **Our neighbourhood structure will provide a powerful channel for partners to engage with communities**. We share the excitement and interest in how the NHS 10 Year Plan will translate into action in Gloucestershire, particularly regarding proposals for a 'Neighbourhood Health Service' and its emphasis on prevention. We will continue to work closely with our health partners and others to ensure the local geographies and approaches we use are aligned in the best interests of East and West Gloucestershire's residents.

The Financial Case for Two Unitary Councils (East/West) for Gloucestershire

The financial cases for both the 1UA and the 2UA options have been developed together, using the same financial model, assumptions, calculations, and governance.

Leaders, Chief Executives, and Section 151 officers from across all Gloucestershire councils have worked together to develop, scrutinise, and sign off all key inputs, assumptions, and outputs. This joint approach means both financial cases are robust, transparent, and carry a high level of local assurance.

The financial case for the **2UA proposal** is set out in four stages:

1. **Overall financial case summary**
2. **Day one financial position[58]:** This is the starting baseline in terms of potential income and expenditure that the new councils would inherit
3. **Reorganisation costs and benefits:** The financial impact of the structural changes that are likely as a result of LGR, including:
    a. One-off transition costs e.g. for data and systems migration or implementation management
    b. The ongoing recurring costs resulting from the disaggregation of county council services
    c. Recurring reorganisation savings e.g. in relation to service consolidation
4. **Transformation benefits:** Savings as a result of fundamental changes to ways of working e.g. digitisation, automation, changes to ways of working, investment in prevention, or procurement.

Overall financial case summary

The table below sets out the key headlines for the 2UA proposal.

Potential day one financial position (c. 1st April 2028)	**East UA**	**West UA**
Total income	£410.5m	£440.9m
Total expenditure	£388.6m	£462.8m
Net position	**£21.9m (surplus)**	**-£21.9m (deficit)**

[58] The analysis takes account of the likely impact of the outcome of the Government's *Fair Funding Review 2.0 consultation*. Local assumptions, supported by the latest *Pixel* model available (*Pixel LGR Disaggregation Model August 2025 v1.2*), have been made in relation to Fair Funding. The projected financial positions will therefore need to be updated once national funding allocations are confirmed in the forthcoming Local Government Finance Settlement.

Total revenue implication of Fire & Rescue (i.e. additional pressures for the new UA)	-£1.35m	-£1.45m
Net position (incl. impact of Standalone Fire & Rescue Authority)	**£20.5m (surplus)**	**-£23.3m (deficit)**
Reorganisation Costs and Benefits	**East UA**	**West UA**
Gross annual reorganisation savings	£8.6m	£10.3m
Ongoing annual disaggregation costs	£3.7m	£4.4m
Net annual savings	£4.9m	£5.9m
One-off transition costs	-£13.2m	-£15.8m
One-off Fire and Rescue disaggregation costs	-£0.5m	-£0.6m
Total one-off transition costs	-£13.7m	-£16.4m
Payback period	4.9 years	4.9 Years
Cumulative net saving after 5 years	£0.5m	£0.5m
Cumulative net saving after 10 years	£26.3m	£28.5m
Transformation benefits	**East UA**	**West UA**
Recurring annual transformation savings fully delivered by year 5 – **Base**	£7.4m	£8.8m
Recurring annual transformation savings fully delivered by year 5 – **Stretch**	£12.0m	£14.4m

Table 11: Headlines from 2UA financial case

Note: Values preceded by a '–' symbol indicate a deficit.

Potential day one financial position (the starting baseline)

On day one, the financial starting points for the proposed East and West authorities would be materially different with the East projecting a £21.9m surplus and the West a £21.9m deficit - a gap driven by higher demand and spend in ASC and CSC in the West.

This position has been prepared on the basis that the seven councils will take any action required to achieve a balanced budget over the period leading to the anticipated Vesting Day of 1 April 2028. The difference in the estimated day one

financial position between the East UA and West UA is a function of differences in income and expenditure, in turn driven principally by variances in social care demand and cost between East and West.

In addition to this, based on discussions with MHCLG and in line with the provisions in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, under a 2UA model, the fire and rescue service (which is currently integrated with the county council) will need to move to non-local authority governance, financial, and service arrangement (i.e. the creation of an independent Fire & Rescue Authority). As a result of this, there are likely to be additional revenue implications for both the East and West authorities which will impact the overall day one position as well (as set out in the table below).

Potential day one financial position (c. 1st April 2028)	**East UA**	**West UA**
Total income	£410.5m	£440.9m
Total expenditure	£388.6m	£462.8m
Net position	**£21.9m**	**-£21.9m**
Revenue implications of Fire & Rescue		
Gross corporate overheads	*-£0.53m*	*-£0.57m*
Estimated efficiency savings on corporate overheads to be delivered by vesting day	*£0.14m*	*£0.16m*
Net corporate overheads (e.g. for support services such as fleet, finance etc).	**-£0.39m**	**-£0.41m**
Contribution to capital	-£0.96m	-£1.04m
Total revenue implication of Fire & Rescue (i.e. additional pressures for the new UA)	**-£1.35m**	**-£1.45m**
Net position (incl. impact of Standalone Fire & Rescue Authority) (*Net corporate overheads + contribution to capital)*	**£20.5m**	**-£23.3m**

Table 12: 2UA day one financial position

Total income: These figures have been calculated by allocating county-level income (such as grants and retained business rates) alongside district-level council tax base forecasts, ensuring that each geography has an income share reflective of its local tax base. The Fair Funding Review is expected to reduce the overall level of resources for Gloucestershire and therefore, total income projections from 2025 MTFSs have been adjusted downwards at the time of writing. However, these numbers are likely to change further following the 2026/27 Local Government Finance Settlement in December 2025.

Total expenditure: This figure consolidates the full range of service responsibilities currently delivered across both county and district councils, including apportioning out the county level expenditure between the proposed East and West geographies (using Newton Europe analysis to apportion ASC and CSC spend, the KM Length split between East and West to apportion total highways spend, and population data to apportion all other county council service area spend).

Note: The source data for income and expenditure is based on each council's individual MTFS and each council has applied their own local assumptions on how to achieve balanced budgets over the four-year period to 2028/2029 e.g. in relation to how reserves are deployed.

In addition to the total income and expenditure position, it is also important to consider what the new councils will likely inherit on their respective balance sheets in terms of assets and long-term liabilities:

Assets and Long-term Liabilities	East UA	West UA
Total assets	£2.1 billion	£2.3 billion
Long-term Liabilities (excl. DSG)	£451.7 million	£458.7 million
DSG Deficit	£112.2 million	£122.1 million
Total liabilities	**£563.9 million**	**£580.8 million**

Table 13: 2UA total assets and long-term liabilities

- **Assets:** Total assets have been apportioned out on the basis of location. These figures reflect the combined current long-term assets with planned capital expenditure through to 2028/29. The portfolio comprises assets such as property, investments, and heritage assets, in addition to Housing Revenue Account assets.
- **Long-term Liabilities:** Long-term liabilities have been allocated out between the East and West based on the proportion of assets in each district as a proxy, and this includes outstanding borrowing. In addition to this, the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit of £234.3 million has also been allocated out using the share of Education, Health and Care Plans based on location of schools as a proxy.

The DSG deficit is a material factor in the financial outlook for Gloucestershire. The most recent MTFS projects that the DSG deficit will rise from £76 million at the end of March 2025 to more than £100 million by March 2026. By 2028/29, the cumulative deficit is forecast to exceed £200 million.

At present, the statutory override allows councils to hold DSG deficits “off balance sheet”. However, this override is due to end in March 2028. If no new national policy is introduced, councils across the country would be required to absorb these deficits within their core budgets, creating a significant risk to financial stability.

For Gloucestershire, this means the DSG position must be kept under close review, with the statutory override and national reforms determining the future treatment of the deficit and ongoing cost of service provision.

Reorganisation costs and benefits

Moving to a unitary model creates costs and benefits which arise directly from consolidating seven councils into two new authorities. The financial analysis brings these costs and benefits together to show the savings that can be achieved, the costs of implementation, and the overall net impact.

Estimated savings, disaggregation costs and transition costs of LGR in Gloucestershire

UA	Annual gross saving	Additional Annual Costs	Net annual saving	One off transition costs	Payback Period	Cumulative net saving after 5 years	Cumulative net saving after 10 years
East	£8.6m	£3.7m	£4.9m	-£13.7m	4.9 years	£0.5m	£26.3m
West	£10.3m	£4.4m	£5.9m	-£16.4m	4.9 years	£0.5m	£28.5m

Table 14: Summary of 2UA reorganisation costs and benefits

The 2UA proposal is projected to deliver annual gross savings of £8.6m in the East and £10.3m in the West, with a payback period of 4.9 years (which is required to ‘pay back’ one-off transition costs of £30.1m).

Savings drivers

Key drivers for savings are as follows:

- **Democratic streamlining –** Through reducing the number of councillors (from 295 to 110 - split as 52 in the East and 58 in the West) and frequency of elections, savings of c.£0.7m per annum can be achieved e.g. from reduced member allowances and election costs.

- **Workforce rationalisation -** Consolidating senior leadership teams and streamlining back office functions such as finance, HR, ICT, and customer contact result in workforce savings (as these are likely to be positions and teams which are duplicated across all seven councils).The financial savings in a 2UA scenario reflect the need to retain two sets of senior leadership and core back office functions for each sovereign organisation.

- **Third party procurement and contract consolidation –** Opportunities to aggregate procurement, renegotiate contract terms, and standardise specifications will reduce cost and complexity. In financial terms, two authorities could be expected to deliver annual third party savings equivalent to approximately 1.2% of their addressable third party spend. Splitting some of the larger contractual arrangements currently in place (particularly across some of the county services including transport, adults and children's services) is likely to be complex and time consuming – estimates from service professionals suggest perhaps up to five years for some of the largest long-term contracts.

- **Property rationalisation -** Currently both county and district councils operate buildings that serve overlapping functions in the same localities. Creating two authorities allows for rationalisation of this estate, with duplicated sites removed and more efficient use made of shared service centres. In financial terms, two authorities could be expected to deliver annual property savings equivalent to approximately 10%.

One-off Transition Costs

Establishing two new authorities requires significant upfront investment covering the full programme of standing up new governance and operational structures; ICT integration and migration; development of two new legal and constitutional frameworks; public consultation; branding for two new organisations; communications; and programme management. This is estimated to cost c.£30.1m.

Type of transition cost	Estimated cost (£)
Redundancy	3,646,000.00
External comms, rebranding and implementation	549,000.00
External transition, design and implementation support costs	7,000,000.00
Internal programme management	3,300,000.00
Creating the new council	1,500,000.00

Contingency	8,100,000.00
Organisation closedown	400,000.00
Public consultation	412,000.00
ICT costs	3,500,000.00
Shadow Chief Exec / member costs	622,200.00
Fire and Rescue disaggregation	1,100,000
Total	**30,129,200**

Table 15: Estimated transition costs for 2UA

Additional Annual Costs – Disaggregation of County Services

A 2UA model also introduces ongoing duplication in services and governance that are currently delivered at county level.

Each new authority would require its own statutory leadership team, including Directors of Adult Social Care, Children's Services, and Public Health, as well as its own Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer. Safeguarding structures and SEND services would need to be duplicated, with two MASH arrangements, two education services, and two commissioning functions established. This duplication creates recurring additional costs that are not present in the 1UA model (where county services would not need to be split). These are estimated to be at c.£8.1m per annum.

Disaggregation cost category	**Estimated cost (£)**
Duplicated senior leadership	3,442,000
Duplicated county service delivery teams	4,317,000
Duplicated democratic structure	355,000
Total	**8,114,000**

Table 16: Estimated disaggregation costs for 2UA

Transformation benefits

Reorganisation can deliver structural savings, but a greater opportunity lies in the subsequent transformation that can take place. This means using the scale of new authorities to modernise services, redesign ways of working, and create efficiencies beyond what structural change alone can achieve.

Financial analysis has identified five main categories where transformation savings are realistic and quantifiable. For each category, we have tested two scenarios for transformation:

- **Base case:** Assumes cautious delivery of savings in line with past performance across Gloucestershire's councils. The base case is deliberately conservative and ensures that assumptions remain credible and deliverable without requiring major change programmes.
- **Stretch case:** assumes sustained investment in digital and organisational redesign, drawing on best practice from other unitaries. Including a stretch case is important as it demonstrates the potential prize available if early reorganisation savings are reinvested into transformation.

Category	Base %	Stretch %	Rationale
Front office staff	6%	12%	Workforce rationalisation through the structural impact of LGR accounts for savings that can be made through removing duplication. However, potential opportunities through utilising the potential of AI, automation, and channel shift will reduce the demand on customer contact centres.
Service delivery staff	3%	6%	Transformation can strengthen demand management, early intervention, and integrated pathways particularly in services like adults and children's services. Service redesign and new operating models will also unlock additional opportunities e.g. through digital, process redesign etc.
Back office staff	7%	9%	Consolidating support functions such as HR, finance, payroll, and ICT enables investment in shared systems and automation. This creates opportunities for streamlined processes and reduces overheads.
Third party spend	2.5%	3.75%	Unified procurement and contract management can deliver efficiencies by aggregating contracts, renegotiating supplier terms, and redesigning commissioning arrangements. However, savings targets are cautious overall recognising Gloucestershire councils already include procurement savings in their MTFSs, leaving limited headroom.

Income (sales, fees and charges / commercial)	1.3%	2.1%	Transformation also includes growth in fees and charges, commercial activity, and investment in economic development. This builds on the county's strengths in advanced manufacturing, cyber, and green technology, and on planned growth initiatives such as the Golden Valley and Severn Edge projects. Overall targets are conservative given volatility and underperformance in past income forecasts.

Table 17: Estimated transformation savings for 2UA

Transformation savings are not expected to be immediate. They are profiled to phase in gradually as programmes are implemented. The model assumes full delivery by **Year 5,** with the savings per annum expected by this point set out in the table below.

Transformation savings	**Base case**	**Stretch case**
Savings per annum by Year 5 – East UA	£7.4m	£11.9m
Savings per annum by Year 5 – West UA	£8.8m	£14.3m

Table 18: Total transformation savings in £ terms for 2UA

Options for funding LGR and enabling transformation

Delivering the 2UA option requires significant upfront investment with estimated transition costs of reorganisation of £29.0m (split out as £13.2m for the East UA and £15.8m for the West UA).

There are several options for funding these costs:

- **Reserves -** Councils hold reserves that are not earmarked that can be applied to one-off expenditure. These provide an immediate source of funding without adding to ongoing revenue pressures.
- **Capitalisation Direction -** Subject to government approval, some costs could be treated as capital rather than revenue. This option, known as capitalisation, has been used in previous reorganisations to reduce pressure on the revenue budget. It applies to costs such as redundancy and ICT integration.
- **Government Support -** Additional funding may also be provided by central government. This could be in the form of transitional grant support, flexibility in financial rules, or early devolution funding. Engagement with the government will be required as proposals are developed.

- **Reinvestment Principle -** Early reorganisation savings can be ring-fenced and reinvested in transformation. This ensures that efficiencies are not absorbed by service pressures but are used to fund programmes in digital, automation, and service redesign. By doing this, initial savings are recycled to create larger recurring benefits in later years.
- **Benefits Compounding -** Investment in transformation compounds over time. For example, reinvesting a portion of early savings into digital customer platforms reduces front office demand, delivering recurring efficiencies by year five. Similar reinvestment in automation and AI can reduce back office and service delivery costs.

Council Tax Alignment (CTA)

Council tax is a major source of income for any new authority. When seven councils with different council tax rates are merged into two new authorities, these rates must be aligned. The way this is done affects both residents and the financial resilience of the new councils. It is also a fiscal lever that can be used to balance out net operating deficits or provide funding to invest in service improvements or resident priorities.

Approach to Council Tax Alignment

To inform decision making, detailed modelling has been undertaken to show how different alignment options would affect what residents are required to pay in the future. The modelling uses the 2024 council tax base as the starting point, net of local council tax support, and applies the councils' own projections to forecast growth in the tax base inclusive of the collection rate. Future Band D rates are assumed to increase annually by 4.99% for county and unitary councils and 2.99% for district councils up to Vesting Day in April 2028, consistent with current MHCLG guidance. From Vesting Day onwards, a new unitary authority rate is assumed to increase at 4.99% per year.

The methodology compares projected receipts under alignment with a baseline of what each council would have collected if they continued independently. The difference between these two scenarios represents the additional income gained or foregone through alignment.

Note: There will be implications for council tax as a result of the fire and rescue service moving out of local authority finance, service, and governance arrangements in the 2UA scenario (i.e. raising of a separate fire precept). At this stage, the impact cannot be modelled precisely and has not been taken into account in the alignment options and impacts set out below.

Alignment Options

The analysis models a main scenario using the weighted average where rates align to an average Band D calculated across the county, weighted by the tax base. This is the option chosen in most recent local government reorganisations.

Each option can be implemented in one year or phased over several years, with the statutory maximum alignment period set at seven years. The period over which council tax is aligned is an important decision. A longer alignment period of up to seven years minimises the immediate impacts on residents by phasing changes gradually. However, aligning earlier allows the new authorities to secure additional income more quickly, providing funding for services. Earlier alignment also avoids the perception of unfairness where residents in some areas continue to pay higher rates for longer while receiving the same services.

Summary of potential impact

Council Tax alignment alters Band D charges across districts because current rates differ. The scale of change depends on which alignment option is chosen and whether this is implemented in one year or phased over several years.

Under the weighted average option for 2UA, impacts differ between East and West. In the East, Band D bills would fall in Cheltenham (£63.41) and rise in Cotswold (£30.80) and Tewkesbury (£35.77).

Current District	**Aligned Band D rate (£)**	**Change in Band D rate (£)**	**% change in Band D Rate**
Cheltenham	2,143.98	-63.41	-2.87%
Cotswold	2,143.98	30.80	1.46%
Tewkesbury	2,143.98	35.77	1.70%

Table 19: Weighted average council tax alignment in one year in the East UA

In the West, Band D bills would rise slightly in the Forest of Dean (£23.54) and fall in Gloucester (£3.50) and Stroud (£12.85).

Current District	**Aligned Band D rate (£)**	**Change in Band D rate (£)**	**% change in Band D Rate**
Gloucester	2,198.93	-3.50	-0.16%
Forest of Dean	2,198.93	23.54	1.08%

Stroud	2,198.93	-12.85	-0.58%

Table 20: Weighted average council tax alignment in one year in the West UA

Engagement to Discover and Improve

Our engagement approach has been shaped by the guidance within the invitation to submit proposals: it's been rooted in genuine discovery and learning, not campaigning for any particular outcome. This focus on open engagement has been enabled by:

- **Unified, option-neutral engagement:** We agreed that both the single unitary and East / West two unitary options would be developed side-by-side, without using the collective engagement activity to campaign or advocate for preferences
- **Strong political leadership:** Gloucestershire's Leaders set the tone – driving a shared engagement plan across councils
- **Clear accountability:** A lead Chief Executive was appointed to oversee all communications and engagement activity
- **Joint working:** Every council played an active role through a joint communications and engagement workstream
- **Prioritised investment:** We prioritised MHCLG LGR funding to support joint engagement activities.

These early actions, underpinned by a clear sense of purpose, enabled us to deliver a wide range of non-partisan engagement activities – each designed to listen, learn, and feed real insights back into the development of our proposals.

Our key engagement activity

Our joint engagement activity from March 2025 – September 2025 is summarised in the table below:

Engagement type	Key activities
Public	• Option-neutral Future Gloucestershire microsite[59] presenting clear, factual information • Online survey, designed to discover values, concerns and ambitions of local people (3,112 completed surveys, including 1,480 open-text responses) • In-person community events, enabling over 500 one-to-one conversations (12 events in total, two in each district) • Two county-wide public webinars • Information leaflets and display banners (used principally at council offices and community events)

[59] https://futuregloucestershire.org.uk

Engagement type	Key activities
	• Regular social media information updates and paid advertising for wider promotion of the survey.
Stakeholders	• Over 40 stakeholder interviews (almost all with multiple attendees) encompassing statutory partners, VCFSE organisations, and key businesses and business associations. Interviews focused on issues of importance and concern in relation to LGR and Devolution • A leadership conference was held to develop common ambitions, involving key partners in statutory services, business, and civil society in Gloucestershire.
Place	• Engagement webinar for VCFSE (hosted by Gloucestershire VCS Alliance) with over 100 attendees • Engagement webinar for Town and Parish Councils hosted by GAPTC with over 100 attendees • Representation on Place Model workstream from NHS (ICB and providers), GAPTC, OPCC, SLCC, and VCS Alliance.
Staff	• Regular LGR staff communications and briefings • Senior officers from principal councils represented on all LGR workstreams, with different Chief Executives acting to lead and chair • Specialist service officers engaged in structured, cross-council aggregation and disaggregation workshops.
Council members	• Interactive all-member webinars • FAQs and other written briefings • Bespoke briefing and democratic processes delivered by individual councils.

Engagement type	Key activities
MPs[60]	• Gloucestershire County Council Leader and Chief Executive monthly engagement with Gloucestershire MPs • Other district ad hoc engagement with local MPs
Other	• In addition to Place (above), workstreams conducted bespoke engagement as relevant. For example, the Vision and Ambition workstream conducted a range of briefings with senior district leaders to develop an understanding of place-based perspectives.

Additional reports

The online survey and in-person community events were co-designed and facilitated by an external specialist engagement organisation, *Cratus*. Their independent report can be found in Appendix 3.

The county council-led stakeholder interview exercise was conducted using consistent open questions. A short report detailing the key themes, together with information about the stakeholders engaged, can be found in Appendix 4. Following these interviews, some stakeholders chose to write to the county council offering views. Where appropriate, this correspondence is also appended.

Our learning and insights

Our learning themes synthesise the responses from a variety of methods and types used. As far as possible, we have avoided significant focus in this proposal on feedback on the relative merits of structural options, since the primary aim of engagement was to discover common concerns and ambitions of local people and organisations. However, some of this data, from the public survey and stakeholder interviews is shown for transparency. It should not be read as representative data on the preferences of the public and partners.

Three big themes have emerged:

1. Belonging in Gloucestershire
2. Service improvement

[60] At a meeting of all Principal Authority Leaders on 09/10/2025 it was agreed that Gloucestershire Councils would collectively engage with all local MPs to understand their preferences and comments in the light of the published proposals. This process will be conducted to develop an objective understanding of MP views to inform both Gloucestershire Councils and Ministers.

3. Vulnerable people and communities

Theme 1: Belonging in Gloucestershire

Our engagement revealed something powerful: people in Gloucestershire feel a strong sense of belonging - whether that's to a village, an estate, a district, or the county as a whole. Local identity runs deep, and it's clear that "home" means different things to different people.

This insight is crucial. It shows that the new council must enable participation and engagement at every level - recognising and supporting the many overlapping communities that make Gloucestershire unique.

Key actions to shape our proposals: Belonging in Gloucestershire (Theme 1)	
Place Model	Proposals for our locality arrangements have avoided prematurely drawing 'lines on maps'. We will deliver a carefully designed engagement and consultation process to develop the spatial scale, competency, and differentiation (by Place) of our Neighbourhood Partnerships. This commitment is reflected in our implementation roadmap.
Future Operating Model (FOM)	The differentiation of Gloucestershire's places is recognised in both the design principles and key features of the Future Operating Model. We have reflected place and identity strongly in engagement, commissioning, and service delivery features.

Theme 2: Service Improvement and Efficiency

Our survey captured a wealth of feedback on council services. Most areas scored well, with the majority of residents rating services as 'good' or 'very good'. However, roads, pavements, and streetlights stood out as clear concerns - mirroring national trends, where dissatisfaction with highways is common.

When asked what should shape future council services, 'community' - meaning representation, voice, and engagement - was the top priority. 'Transport' (including public transport, road maintenance, and connectivity) also featured strongly.

Stakeholder interviews reinforced this theme, highlighting the need for simpler, more efficient services and better integration with partners.

The message is clear: while there are specific areas to address, any improvement must be rooted in local context and connectivity - making sure services work for people and places across Gloucestershire.

Key actions to shape our proposals: Service Improvement and Efficiency (Theme 2)	
Vision and Ambition	Our vision and ambition includes a specific focus on the use of data to transform transport and wider public services. The feedback we have received on public transport in particular has assisted with shaping this ambition. Our vision and ambition also reflects the excitement and energy in the Gloucestershire business community to drive growth. We pay particular attention to the economic opportunities in Gloucestershire, and the desire to use LGR to accelerate our trajectory of breakthrough innovation in economic clusters, such as cyber, clean energy, and agri-tech.
Future Operating Model (FOM)	Our strategic enablement feature within the FOM is specifically designed to create capacity and capability to drive improvement and transformation.
Place and FOM	Our neighbourhood model is linked to service delivery within the FOM, with a proposed specification to tailor on a locality basis, addressing some of the feedback about different satisfaction and experience in different parts of Gloucestershire.
Financial Case	Our financial case shows our desire not simply to reorganise, but to transform. We will reinvest structural and transformation savings into services that people want to see improve. The councils will feel local and responsive but be powered by scale and efficiency for the benefit of everyone.

Theme 3: Vulnerable people and communities

A key theme from our engagement with partners was the opportunity for the new council to do more for Gloucestershire's most vulnerable people and communities.

- **Community development and local engagement must be front and centre.**
- **There's real appetite for public sector reform.** From the emerging Neighbourhood Health Service to new powers for neighbourhood working, they see LGR as a chance to join up regeneration, health, and community development - especially where VCFSE organisations are already leading the way.

- **Tackling deep-rooted inequalities is essential.** We know there are sharp divides between urban and rural areas, and that data and lived experience is important to drive local action and smarter service design.

Respondents have made it clear that LGR offers a huge opportunity to address these challenges and opportunities.

Key actions to shape our proposals: Vulnerable people and communities (Theme 3)	
Vision and Ambition	Our vision makes it clear that we want to use LGR to spark a transformation in community empowerment. We can be closer to communities and people than before, e.g. utilising better and more widely the 'hub' approach to delivering preventive, community-led activity, as well as more tailored services for vulnerable people, families, and communities. We are also clear in our vision that we will more consciously link with partners on wellbeing, housing, climate action, and nature recovery – feedback is showing these are connected issues for local people.
Data, Digital and Technology (DDaT)	Our proposals are clear there are major opportunities to use DDaT to drive better environments, interventions, and services for vulnerable people. We have set out a bold ambition to develop a joined-up predictive analytics platform across adult and children's services, education, housing, and health.
Place	Our place research has revealed a wealth of current good practice in evidenced-based community development. We have hard-wired into our neighbourhood proposals a focus on community development, supported by data insight, the skills of our public health team, and dedicated staff and other resources.

Feedback on structural options

Both the survey and the partnership interviews provided feedback on structural options. This feedback is not based on a statistically reliable sample and it was not the purpose of either exercise. We expect the forthcoming Ministerial consultation to provide clearer data and information on local preferences for structural options. This exercise will be conducted once local people and organisations have had the benefit of considering proposals. The survey feedback is as follows:

A total of 225 respondents (7%) gave active preferences in open text responses concerning which unitary council option they would prefer from the three proposed at the time of survey. Of these, 205 preferred a single unitary council governing

the whole county, 14 preferred the East/West option, and three preferred the Greater Gloucester option. Three people said they preferred two councils without specifying which option.

Implementation Roadmap

We've developed an implementation plan that sets out how Gloucestershire will move from submission of this proposal to Vesting Day and beyond. It's how we'll guarantee residents continue to access the support they need, safeguard statutory services, and lay the robust foundations for ambitious, ongoing transformation.

Whilst we continue to sharpen the details and map out specific activities, this section sets out our initial considerations and phases of activity. The key programmes set out in this section are likely to evolve over time as the national and local context and priorities change.

Framing our approach

Experience from previous LGR programmes highlights several factors that are critical to success for Gloucestershire:

- **Clarity of purpose:** a shared understanding amongst all organisations involved helps maintain momentum and alignment during planning and delivery, which will need to be undertaken collaboratively across all councils involved.
- **Early planning and mobilisation:** Early proactive planning (beginning before any MHCLG decision) is critical to manage delivery and improve implementation outcomes.
- **Robust portfolio and programme management:** LGR is complex and high stakes. We'll need a strong portfolio approach, with defined programmes, clear responsibilities, and the right resources in place to govern and manage delivery at pace.
- **Early appointment of senior leadership:** Recruiting into key posts such as the Chief Executive, S151 Officer, and Monitoring Officer early to provide leadership and stability.
- **Engagement and transparency:** Early, ongoing, and open communications is essential. Keeping staff, members, residents, and suppliers updated builds trust, enables proactive management of key risks, and provides confidence and reassurance to stakeholders.

Working together

All councils in Gloucestershire have agreed how they will work together in the run-up to MHCLG's decision and during the shadow period, ensuring that staff, members, partners, and residents remain confident in the process. Our shared principles are as follows:

Continue to involve all our staff proactively: we'll continue to keep staff from all councils actively involved in co-designing our journey to Vesting Day – drawing on their collective expertise to lead, design, and manage key LGR programmes.

Remain aligned around our shared future vision: we will stay focused on our shared vision for the new councils and make the most of our collective strengths.

Open and honest communication and collaboration: We will continue to be transparent about activities, challenges, and decisions - with no hidden agendas - and commit to working in partnership across all seven councils.

Aligned decision-making and transitional support: As Vesting Day approaches, we'll agree practically how significant financial and other decisions are made across each council, and how we'll support each other – so that every council delivers on its existing plans and commitments. The transition programme will include a draft shadow constitution, a combined MTFS, a risk register, and a costed investment strategy to guide transition.

Invest in core skills: We'll need the right people in the right roles. That means bringing together not just technical specialists, but also standout leaders in programme management, procurement, change, and digital transformation. We'll harness strengths already in our councils – and invest in new talent and capacity wherever its needed – to make sure Gloucestershire's transition is expertly led from day one.

Roadmap to Vesting Day

The roadmap to Vesting Day is structured across five clear phases aligned with indicative timelines, based on MHCLG guidance.

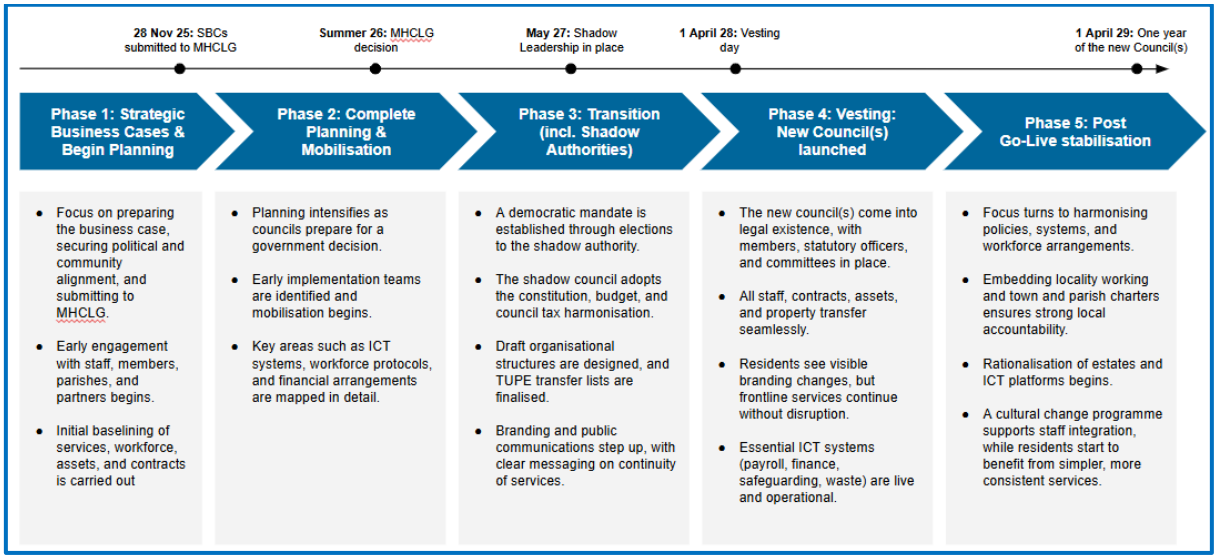


Diagram 4: roadmap to Vesting Day

High-Level Activities by Phase

Phase 1 – Strategic business cases (SBCs) and begin planning (to Nov 2025)

In this phase of work, councils focus on preparing and submitting the SBCs and starting to undertake preparatory baselining of key infrastructure across all seven councils (including workforce, assets, finances, policies, contracts etc). Continued engagement with staff, members, towns and parish councils, and partners ensures early buy in and alignment, which is critical for the coming months.

Some of the core activities in this phase will include:

- All seven councils in Gloucestershire will finalise and submit a SBC to MHCLG by 28 November 2025 (setting out all options for LGR that are under consideration)
- Each council will start to gather baseline data on current services, strategic risks, establishment data, assets, contracts, and vacancies to work towards a consistent baseline across all seven councils
- The joint LGR portfolio and programme management capability will be designed, setting out key roles, role profiles, and capabilities required including an overall LGR Portfolio Director
- A more detailed transition and implementation plan will be developed in line with the five key phases of activity
- Staff will start to be invited to join core LGR programmes (e.g. secondments etc) to support detailed planning and delivery work
- Councils will engage with town and parish councils to co-design a town and parish charter and initial governance approach

Phase 2 – Complete planning and mobilisation (Nov 2025 – Summer 2026)

Detailed planning will continue to take place while awaiting MHCLG's decision, particularly preparatory work which would be required irrespective of which option is chosen. The full LGR portfolio, including core programmes, will be mobilised, with staff in place to lead and deliver activities. This phase is crucial to ensuring alignment and clarity on how transition will be managed so that activities can progress at pace immediately after a decision is made.

Some of the core activities in this phase will include:

- Portfolio management capability in place and actively running
- All core LGR programmes stood up with staff in place (either from existing councils or through external support being brought in where required)

- Detailed planning will be completed in readiness for MHCLG's decision, including timelines for key decisions such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) selection and resident contact channels on Vesting Day
- All seven councils will focus on cleaning data to get it into a consistent and complete format across areas such as staff (aligning with finances), contracts, systems, assets, strategic risks, existing policy frameworks etc. This will enable the development of a consistent Gloucestershire wide baseline of core infrastructure, service delivery, and risks, which will need to be managed by the new councils
- Implementation of Section 24 controls, as needed, to make sure significant financial decisions and contractual commitments made by the current councils do not adversely impact the new councils
- Development of options and policies for managing the HR implications of staffing changes, covering vacancy management, joint approaches to recruitment, redeployment approaches, senior staff implications, pay and grading harmonisation, and benefits harmonisation
- Discussions with trade unions on managing the HR approaches to ensure early and proactive involvement and challenge
- Development of a detailed communication and engagement plan (internal and external)
- Continued staff and partner engagement through communications and co-design opportunities to consider service aggregation and delivery model opportunities
- Starting to create a shadow authority decision log, including areas such as the new councils' budgets, council tax, and policy requirements
- Early engagement with suppliers to consider any potential implications of contract novation and other key supplier issues
- Draft design of neighbourhood governance, form, and function.

Phase 3 – Transition (Summer 2026 – March 2028)

Councillors will be elected to shadow authorities who will lead the transition - making important decisions on how the new councils will be governed and funded, and how council tax will be set. Behind the scenes, preparations will focus on getting staff, IT systems, buildings, contracts, and locality arrangements ready for Vesting Day. Communications and branding will help residents understand the changes and feel confident about what's coming.

Some of the core activities in this phase will include:

- Elections will be held (likely in May 2027) for shadow authorities which will, in turn, appoint key officers, approve the new constitution, set the budget, and decide how council tax will be aligned across areas
- Final TUPE staff transfer lists will be confirmed, and draft organisational structures will be developed and shared. Staff will begin to be recruited, trained, and sent letters confirming their roles, pay, and work locations
- The shadow authorities will also agree on the new council's values, branding, and communications plan
- Detailed service transition planning and service operating models will take shape, with aggregation and disaggregation implications
- Pay dates and staff benefits will be standardised in agreement with trade unions to ensure consistency before Vesting Day (critical for equal pay considerations)
- Senior leadership positions will be appointed, including Chief Executives, S151 Officers, Monitoring Officers and other key statutory roles such as Directors of Adults Social Care (DASSs)
- Asset and property registers will be updated, and health, safety, and compliance responsibilities clearly assigned
- Policies for transferring community assets and services will be developed (working alongside town and parish councils and the VCFSE)
- Engagement with suppliers will agree and formalise any contractual changes including termination, novation, and extensions
- Detailed design will progress for the key contact channels that residents will use on day one
- Neighbourhood Partnerships will be designed, costed and implementation underway
- A Town and Parish Councils Charter and a Civil Society Covenant will be finalised, and public-facing branding and communications stepped up, including the development of new websites for the new councils
- The councils' future operating models will be agreed, supported by a corporate plan that aligns services with strategic goals
- Financial support schemes, like council tax and business rate relief, will be aligned to ensure equity for residents
- Payroll arrangements for staff will be established
- The shadow authorities will review and sign off the MTFSs, investment plans, financial charts of accounts, and savings plans.

Phase 4 – Vesting: new councils launched (1 April 2028)

All current councils legally cease to exist on 31st March 2028. Staff, contracts, assets, and systems transfer to the new councils. Essential services continue without disruption for residents. Residents will see new branding but experience continuity in delivery of services.

Some of the core activities in this phase will include:

- The existing councils will formally cease, with all staff, functions, assets, property, and contracts legally transferred to the new authority
- TUPE transfers will be completed, payroll will run without disruption, senior staff savings will be realised, and members will take up their roles under the new constitutions with committee structures operational from day one
- All critical ICT systems - ERP, payroll, planning, ASC, CSC, safeguarding, waste, and the new electoral system will be live and stable (it is not anticipated that all systems will be aggregated / disaggregated on day one)
- Neighbourhood Partnerships will be live
- Staff will receive a new email address, but the majority will still be working on the same ICT hardware (laptops, phones etc) and from the same office locations on day one
- New phone numbers and email addresses for residents to contact the new councils will be live, with redirects in place on legacy contact channels
- New branding will be rolled out on tax bills, vehicles, uniforms, and signage to signal visible change and reassure residents the new councils are up and running
- Opening balance sheets will be agreed and predecessor accounts closed and audited
- Senior staff changes, including role realignment, redundancies, and benefits will be realised
- A high-profile public launch campaign will be delivered on day one and the immediate period thereafter to make sure there is appropriate awareness amongst residents, partners, and businesses.

Phase 5 – Post go-live stabilisation (April 2028 onwards)

In this phase of the programme, the focus shifts to aligning policies, systems, and workforce arrangements, embedding new ways of working, and delivering against the transformation opportunities identified to enable long-term design and delivery of the identified benefits.

Some of the core activities in this phase will include:

- Fees and charges will be harmonised through a single register
- Ongoing change management programme to embed new organisational values and behaviours, supported by engagement and communications with staff, partners, and residents
- Development and implementation of more detailed organisational structures (likely in a phased manner, aligned with service transition plans)
- ICT systems will be consolidated and rationalised over time, with cyber security and data governance strengthened
- Procurement policies will be harmonised and guided by a new supplier strategy, while estate rationalisation continues
- Customer service standards will be embedded consistently across services, supported by a FOM action backlog that drives harmonisation and redesign beyond day one
- Continued communications and engagement with all stakeholders including residents, partners, members, and staff.

Managing Delivery: Portfolio Structure

To oversee, manage, and deliver these transition and implementation activities, we will set up a robust portfolio and programme management structure.

Wherever possible, we would resource capacity and capability from across the seven councils by repurposing existing resources. There are likely to be certain capabilities or points during the five stages of the roadmap where we may need to bring in additional external capacity or capability to drive delivery at the pace required.



Diagram 5: LGR Portfolio Programmes

The scope of these 12 programmes could include:

Programme	Description
Communications, Engagement and Branding	• Internal and external communications and engagement strategies for partners, residents, staff, councillors • Design and agreement of new branding • Public launch campaigns • Monitoring effectiveness of communications with feedback loops to other programmes to act on sentiment and feedback.
Governance and Legal	• Design and adoption of the new constitutions and governance structures • Leading the legal establishment of the shadow authorities, including oversight of elections • Developing and embedding scrutiny arrangements • Legal transfer of functions and statutory responsibilities from predecessor councils • Policy oversight, ensuring that critical policies are in place for day one and that no decisions are taken that undermine continuity • Legal assurance for implementation decisions and considerations, including service specific considerations such as transfers of assets and contracts.
Finance and Risk	• New financial structures and charts of accounts • MTFSs, annual budgets, and statements of accounts • Implementation of Section 24 controls • Managing and delivering council tax harmonisation policies • Opening balance sheets and closure/audits of predecessor accounts

Programme	Description
	• Development and management of the strategic risk registers.
Performance	• Developing performance frameworks to measure delivery of the transition and implementation portfolios • Establishing metrics to track service continuity, staff engagement, ICT readiness, and financial stability • Management of the benefits realisation frameworks.
Property and Assets	• Property and asset implications, including rationalisation opportunities, development of asset and estate strategies, and investment properties • Consolidated asset and property registers • Ensuring health and safety responsibilities for all property and assets are clearly assigned • Supporting the transfer of ownership of all land, buildings, and property rights from predecessor councils • Delivering against the estate rationalisation programme ambitions.
Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT)	• Ensuring all critical ICT systems are operational on day one, including ERP, payroll, safeguarding, and operational service systems • Design, procurement, and implementation of new ERP systems • A new email address for all staff on day one • Ensuring legacy systems can integrate or run in parallel where required • Longer-term system harmonisation and embedding of cyber security and data governance practices

Programme	Description
	• Developing and delivering against data migration requirements from predecessor councils, with a focus on security and GDPR compliance.
Customer Contact	• Designing the customer journey for the new councils, agreeing the balance between online by default and other forms of access and engagement • Establishing clear customer contact points for Vesting Day, including phone numbers, websites, and email addresses • Ensuring legacy contact channels redirect residents seamlessly to new channels • Embedding consistent customer service standards across all services during the stabilisation period.
Development of the FOM (incl. service redesigns)	• FOM blueprints and implementation plans for the new councils • Where needed, supporting specific services (e.g. leisure) to manage aggregation/disaggregation implications and consider operating model choices.
People and Culture (incl. OD)	• Baselining workforce structures and establishments across all current councils • Redeployment and recruitment processes • TUPE transfers • Harmonisation of pay dates and benefits in negotiation with trade unions • Staff engagement programmes, including opportunities for staff to join LGR programmes and co-design services • Cultural change projects to embed new organisational values, identity, and ways of working.
Neighbourhoods and Communities	• Design, consultation, and implementation of Neighbourhood Partnerships, including elements

Programme	Description
	which relate to Neighbourhood Area Committee legislation • Policies for parish asset and service transfers • Towns and parishes engagement • VCFSE engagement • Town and Parish Charter and Civil Society Covenant (for both councils either jointly or separately) • Community engagement (non-geographic), including corporate and service approaches to resident and stakeholder engagement and participation.
Devolution	• Political and strategic engagement with senior leaders on long-term devolution options • Planning for potential strategic authority over the medium/long term.
Procurement, Contracts and Commercials	• Baselining of all contracts and external spend across all seven councils • Identification of key contracts for novation and engagement with suppliers • Harmonisation of procurement policies • Exploring further opportunities for commercialisation, joint arrangements, and income generation.

Table 21: the proposed scope of each LGR programme

Portfolio and Programme Management

A Portfolio and Programme Management team will be established to oversee, coordinate, and manage delivery of the implementation roadmap - anticipated to be in place until at least March 2029.

The team is likely to consist of a range of programme, transformation, and change roles, and will be at the heart of managing the overall transition and implementation portfolio. This includes:

- Detailed planning and management of progress
- Enabling consistency across all LGR programmes
- Supporting the overall governance arrangements of the portfolio
- Providing regular progress reporting and internal assurance
- Developing and delivering the benefits realisation plan
- Working closely with the programmes in the portfolio, including in managing risks and interdependencies.

Managing strategic risks

There will be a range of strategic, operational, and service level risks associated with transition and implementation. Strategic risks will likely include:

Risk	Potential Mitigation
Potential delay in Vesting Day timelines nationally - There is a risk that changes or slippage in the agreed national timelines for the LGR process will undermine our ability to plan and sequence key activities effectively. This could lead to misalignment across programmes, reduced stakeholder confidence, and delays in achieving critical milestones.	Establish clear checkpoints both with MHCLG representatives and locally to monitor timelines and make sure there is early notification of any potential delays or changes in national timelines particularly around Vesting Day.
Scale and complexity of change - The level of change involved for all seven councils is significant (e.g. changes to how residents are engaged, policies, processes, organisational structures, leadership and culture, new services being delivered etc) and needs to be	• Develop a detailed transition and implementation plan which enables a smooth transition (as far as possible) • Implement a robust portfolio and programme management capability as soon as possible to help manage and drive change,

Risk	Potential Mitigation
delivered and managed in very short timescales.	including managing interdependencies and risks.
Capacity and capability to support transition and implementation - There is a risk that we struggle to bring in the right capacity and capability to drive delivery alongside maintaining BAU service delivery for our residents and communities.	• Identify early the key resources required to enable successful delivery, including any subject matter experts. Engage with other councils who have been through LGR to identify resourcing needs • The seven councils to consider where existing resources can be redeployed or reprioritised to support transition and implementation, including opportunities for secondments into the LGR portfolio • Set aside specific funding as part of the overall transition investment to bring in additional external support where needed and support backfill arrangements.
Maintaining service continuity – Most service areas will be impacted by LGR and will need to be involved in supporting the portfolio (including service transition planning). There is a risk that service performance or continuity could be adversely impacted during transition or immediately post Vesting Day.	• Prioritise the principle of being 'safe and legal' on day one, with no resident experiencing a worse service than they do currently • Develop a prioritised service transition plan to manage the transition and transformation in a phased manner • Form early working groups for core service areas (across all seven councils) to undertake detailed transition planning - making sure any considerations for maintaining operational

Risk	Potential Mitigation
	service continuity can be managed e.g. systems access.
Financial sustainability - There is a risk that the transition budget is insufficient to cover unexpected or unforeseen circumstances or that the savings that have been identified cannot be delivered.	• Contingency has been built into the transition costs to account for unexpected circumstances • A clear benefits realisation framework will be established to track and manage benefits delivery • The portfolio and programme management capability will be responsible for making sure there is a tight grip on all costs and benefits associated with LGR, so any financial risks can be proactively identified and mitigated.
Alignment with key stakeholders - There is a risk that key stakeholders including staff, partners, members etc are not aligned with the vision for the new councils or experience change fatigue from the level of change and disruption they are going through.	• Establish early a clear communications and engagement strategy for all stakeholders and agree key messages for each group at different stages of the implementation • Involve stakeholders early on to help co-produce plans • Dedicated change management resource to help embed the change successfully • Investment in leadership and managerial development so that they are equipped to support staff and engage with partners.

Table 22: strategic risks and mitigations

Managing the aggregation and disaggregation of services

Transitioning seven councils into two new councils is a major undertaking - and keeping services running smoothly for residents is our top priority. This will require a high degree of service aggregation and disaggregation.

Aggregation

Aggregation means uniting services, systems, and teams into a single structure, unlocking better coordination, less duplication, and more consistent delivery across Gloucestershire.

We'll manage the challenges and opportunities presented from aggregation by:

- **Enabling services to lead design:** The people who know services best will shape how delivery changes - ensuring practical solutions and continuity for residents
- **Managing existing shared service and wholly owned company arrangements:** Shared services like Ubico, One Legal, and Publica already show the power - and complexity - of joint working. Where aggregation is straightforward, we'll keep it simple; where it's more complex, we'll manage the transition carefully, including TUPE and out-of-county partners, such as West Oxfordshire District Council
- **Considering data and system aggregation:** Consolidating IT and data platforms will drive savings (likely in later years) and consistency, but we know it takes careful planning and upfront investment
- **Keeping services local:** Even as we aggregate, we're committed to place-based delivery - tailoring services to local needs and making Neighbourhood Partnerships central to our approach
- **Strengthening our workforce:** Aggregation lets us pool talent, invest in skills, and create new career pathways - especially in high-demand areas like cyber, data analytics, and surveying
- **Driving prevention through integration:** By bringing together district and county services, like public health, housing, leisure, and planning, we can drive improved outcomes for residents, such as tackling the wider determinants of health at greater scale.

Disaggregation

Disaggregation involves separating services, systems, and teams that are currently delivered at county level so they can operate independently within the two new unitary authorities.

We'll manage the challenges and opportunities presented from disaggregation by:

- **Enabling services to lead design:** The people who know services best will shape how delivery changes - ensuring practical solutions and continuity for residents
- **Robust governance:** Oversight boards with senior leaders, technical experts, and service professionals will be in place to monitor progress, resolve issues, and keep decisions evidence-based and aligned with our strategic goals.
- **Clear, open communication:** Residents, staff, and partners get timely, accurate updates through multiple channels. We're committed to transparency, building trust, and inviting feedback at every stage.
- **Careful systems and data separation:** Disaggregating core systems, especially those containing very sensitive personal data such as ASC and CSC, requires meticulous planning and investment. We're prioritising secure, safe data migration and strict adherence to information governance.
- **Protecting specialist expertise:** Some services, like public health, rely on small teams of specialists. We're focused on maintaining this capacity and operational resilience as teams are split across two authorities.
- **Staying 'safe and legal':** Above all, we're keeping a laser focus on statutory responsibilities and clear accountability - especially for safeguarding vulnerable children and adults.
- **Managing demand imbalances:** We're planning for the different needs and pressures in East and West Gloucestershire. For example, higher ASC complexity and costs in the West and the challenge of maintaining critical, high-cost highways assets in both new authorities. Resource allocation and financial viability are front of mind.

Disaggregation of Fire and Rescue

The disaggregation of Fire and Rescue, prior to vesting of the new Councils, will be legally necessary in the 2UA scenario. It will involve the separation from the current County Council in governance, organisational, and financial terms. In this sense it is a very different disaggregation challenge than for other countywide services.

Given the organisational destination for Fire and Rescue will be outside of local government, a key mitigation may be to manage this disaggregation exercise separately from other LGR activity. In this way the very specific needs of Fire and Rescue over a period of change and possible instability can be given the focus needed.

Disaggregation Case Study: Adult Social Care (ASC)

Our engagement with service professionals, initial data analysis, and lessons learned from other councils made it clear that a shared service for ASC is unlikely to work in Gloucestershire.

A disaggregated model between East and West (over a period of three to five years to fully disaggregate complex contractual arrangements) is likely to be the most operationally and strategically viable delivery model.

This approach enables each new authority to recruit its own DASS and retain clear accountability for Care Act duties. In the long-term this is also likely to be more politically viable given shared arrangements require continued negotiation across two sovereign organisations who will have very different demand profiles for ASC, financial challenges, and potentially political priorities.

Early considerations for making ASC disaggregation work:

- **Minimising additional workforce pressures:** Social care is already stretched - across social workers, nurses, and care staff. Many specialist teams are small, e.g. quality oversight, reablement, and performance monitoring. Mitigation of additional workplace pressures is important, including consideration of equal pay and grading to avoid poaching and competition, and protect specialist capacity wherever possible.
- **Data and systems:** All ASC data and care records are held in LiquidLogic/ContrOCC. A clear plan for data migration and splitting of care records over time will be needed to manage data loss risks and ensure services continuity is not impacted.
- **Ordinary Residence (OR):** Ordinary residence determines which local authority is responsible for funding an individual's ASC. It's based on where a person usually lives, unless specific legal exceptions apply (e.g. placements arranged by a council). Given the West has a much higher demand for multi-decade, high-cost care packages for supported living, there is a baseline structural cost imbalance between the two authorities. This not only has significant financial implications but there are also operational considerations, as there is insufficient provision of suitable accommodation in the East of the county. The availability of staff and suitably priced supported accommodation in the West means that there are a disproportionate number of people living in supported accommodation in the West. There are legal, ethical, and human rights considerations, as well as logistical challenges, to ensure vulnerable residents placed in care are not being unduly moved to a different part of the county away from an area that is 'home' for them.
- **Strategic market management:** Councils have a statutory duty to manage their market so continuing to manage provider relationships and ways of

working is critical. Retaining clarity of messaging in an already fragile care market will be key for both authorities. Joint commissioning may still be needed to tackle supply challenges and maintain negotiating power with providers.

- **Hospital discharge and integrated care:** Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, located in the West, is the county's central acute site and is often the place from where individuals are discharged into placements that become their long-term homes. Both authorities must agree joint protocols for hospital discharge and integrated care pathways to keep people safe and services running smoothly.

Appendix 1: Vision and Ambition 'Personas'

CHARLIE'S BIO	
	Charlie is a 15-year-old student living in Parkend. His area has limited public transport and he feels disconnected from school and community life. His school engagement is low, and he is often absent or disengaged in class. With limited access to youth facilities, Charlie spends most of his time online, often unsupervised.
DESIRES	**CHALLENGES**
Charlie is digitally curious and likes learning and connecting with people online.	Emotional isolation, lack of trust in adults, feels invisible in the community, vulnerable to online radicalisation and has limited access to safe youth spaces.

BRINGING OUR VISION AND AMBITION TO LIFE

- ✓ By co-creating services that work for everyone, Charlie gains access to safe, inclusive digital and physical spaces shaped by young people like him.
- ✓ Digital services connect him to mentors and wellbeing resources, reducing isolation and offering healthy alternatives to unsupervised online use.
- ✓ Collaboration between community groups, schools and digital platforms helps rebuild Charlie's trust and sense of belonging.

TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR AMBITIONS

- Driving Breakthrough Innovation for National Resilience: Forest of Dean becomes a pilot site for 'Project Beacon', an initiative using AI-powered early intervention tools, leveraging expertise from the Golden Valley Cyber Hub in Cheltenham These tools spot early signs of disengagement and connect young people like Charlie to trusted mentors and support networks. Workshops, both in-person and online, build digital resilience across the county in partnership with schools, the police and industry.
- Creating Together: Inspired by Project Beacon, Charlie becomes involved with the Forest Voluntary Action Forum (FVAF). Working alongside community groups and local mentors, he helps design online platforms that promote resilience and peer support, as well as new youth activities that reflect what young people actually want. This gives Charlie a stronger sense of belonging, builds his confidence and ensures services are responsive to the needs of all generations.

THE V**ARMA** FAMILY'S BIO



Priya (34 years old) and Arjun (33 years old) live in rented housing in Cheltenham with their young son, Ravi (9 years old) who has additional learning needs. Like many families in the town, they are balancing work, caring responsibilities and the rising cost of housing.

DESIRES	CHALLENGES
Priya and Arjun are eager to retrain to another industry to better financially support the family. Ravi enjoys music and building things.	The family struggles with insecure housing, long assessment wait times and navigating the education, health and social care services. Priya and Arjun feel stuck in low-paid work and torn between caregiving responsibilities and pursuing career opportunities. Meanwhile, Ravi feels behind in school due to overstimulating environments and a lack of tailored learning approaches.

BRINGING OUR VISION AND AMBITION TO LIFE

- ✓ By co-creating services that work for everyone, Arjun and Priya can help shape flexible training and SEND support that fits their family's real needs.
- ✓ Using digital inclusion initiatives, Ravi has access to secure, joined-up learning tools that support his education needs both in and out of the classroom, and give his parents visibility of his progress.
- ✓ Through linking housing skills and innovation locally, Arjun and Priya can take up retraining opportunities without moving away or compromising Ravi's care

TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR AMBITIONS

- Using Data to Transform Transport & Services: Integrated data systems link Ravi's SEND support, the family's housing needs, and the parent's retraining. Because services communicate, the social care professionals are able to provide the Patels with proactive care. It is through this better data integration that Arjun and Priya are offered a suitable retraining programme through the Talent for Life initiative.
- Unlocking Talent, Skills & Housing for Inclusive Growth: Through linking housing, skills and innovation locally, Arjun and Priya can retrain in secure jobs while knowing Ravi's care and education are supported close to home. This gives Ravi access to new learning opportunities from tailored digital tools to his family's attendance at 'taster days' in local industries, helping him discover his own future pathway.
- Driving Breakthrough Innovation for National Resilience: Ravi discovers a passion for advanced manufacturing through hands-on activities at local skills hubs. With access to mentoring, modern equipment and real-world projects linked to clean energy and sustainable production, he is able to see how his interests connect to solving national challenges. As he grows up, these opportunities give him the skills and confidence to pursue a career in advanced manufacturing, contributing directly to Gloucestershire's role in building resilience for the United Kingdom.

MARGARET'S BIO	
	Margaret (82 years old) lives alone in a small flat in Gloucester City. She has limited mobility and digital literacy, and no nearby family. Before retirement, she used to work in a garden centre where she enjoyed advising customers on garden needs.
DESIRES	**CHALLENGES**
Margaret has a strong desire to be a part of the community and is willing to engage if supported.	While public transport is available, she finds it difficult to navigate without support and feels overwhelmed by the pace of digital change. This makes it hard to access services or stay socially connected. She feels forgotten by the fast-changing world around her. She wants to remain in her own home for as long as possible and her family need assurance that she can be safe and cared for.

BRINGING OUR VISION AND AMBITION TO LIFE

- Co-designed neighbourhood and health services reflect Margaret's needs and preferences, restoring her dignity and independence.
- Digital inclusion initiatives supported through LGR, give Margaret the confidence to use online health services and stay socially connected.
- Local community groups and health providers collaborate to bring companionship and tailored wellbeing support directly into her neighbourhood, reducing isolation.

TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR AMBITIONS

- Putting Wellbeing, Housing & Nature Recovery at the Heart of Growth: Every policy and service in Gloucestershire is shaped by a wellbeing-first approach, ensuring Margaret's needs are central. From transport to housing, decisions prioritise her dignity and independence helping her remain at home and part of her community. Over time, this creates a fairer community where ageing is fully supported.
- Empowering Communities through Co-Design & Local Decision Making: Margaret contributes her experience to a local Neighbourhood Partnership, shaping age-friendly housing ideas and intergenerational community projects. This gives her a place in the community while ensuring older residents' voices are embedded in local decision-making.
- Using Data to Transform Transport & Public Services: Trusted, real-time data links Margaret's health, housing and care needs, ensuring services coordinate seamlessly. Her GP and social care team receive the same up-to-date information, avoiding duplication and preventing issues from escalating. Her family also gets reassurance through regular wellbeing updates.

EMILY'S BIO



Emily (26) lives in Cirencester. She works part-time in admin and has caring responsibilities for her family. She is passionate about sustainability and wants to pursue a career in the field without leaving her district. However, she's not sure if that is possible within Gloucestershire. From her knowledge, she feels she needs to move to other areas like Bristol and London to access the opportunities she is looking for, an option not available to her

DESIRES	CHALLENGES
Emily wants to find flexible, on-the-job training opportunities that offers career mobility, alongside care support for her father so she doesn't have to compromise on her ambitions.	Emily struggles to find local green skills programmes that are flexible, adaptable to her schedule and will help secure her a job in the industry. She feels torn between her caregiving responsibilities and her aspirations.

BRINGING OUR VISION AND AMBITION TO LIFE

- Breakthrough innovation in clean energy and climate technologies creates local career pathways that allow Emily to stay close to her family while contributing to a globally significant sector.
- Collaboration across transport and training clusters connects her to opportunities in Stroud and Severn Edge.
- Digital tools support remote learning and flexible work, helping her balance ambition with caregiving.

TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR AMBITIONS

- ✓ Unlocking Talent, Skills & Housing for Inclusive Growth: Emily accesses flexible, online training tailored to her caregiving schedule, gaining credentials in clean energy. This allows her to build a local career in sustainability without sacrificing her family responsibilities whilst also connecting Emily to high potential sectors across the whole of Gloucestershire.
- ✓ Harnessing Digital to Tackle Inequality: Digital inclusion projects mean Emily can use high-quality online learning platforms and remote working hubs in the Cotswolds, supported by affordable transport to training centres for in-person learning.
- ✓ Driving Breakthrough Innovation for National Resilience. By linking into Gloucestershire's growing clean energy sector, Emily gains placements and mentoring that tie her personal goals to the county's contribution to net zero and energy security. Within a decade, she leads a flagship initiative promoting green fuel and zero-carbon mobility for visitors to the Cotswolds AONB.
- ✓ E**mpowering Communities through Co-Design and Local Decision Making:** Emily connects with peer support groups through local Family Hubs, finding access to wellbeing and respite care support. This provides visibility of a pathway for Emily to achieve her career goals and care for her loved ones.

RACHEL'S BIO



Rachel is in her mid-30s and lives in Bussage with her two children. She commutes daily to Bristol for her job in marketing. The journey is long and expensive, with poor rail connections. She spends hours in traffic and pays high parking fees in Bristol. She's considering remote work or relocating but loves her home and community in Stroud.

DESIRES	CHALLENGES
More time with family and friends, affordable and direct commuting options, local work flexibility. She hopes to grow her career, ideally without having to relocate.	Whether rail or car, Rachel's commute has caused her stress. She feels like she has little to no time to enjoy life during the weekdays. Her mother is currently helping with school pick-up but has expressed a desire to relocate outside of Stroud.

BRINGING OUR VISION AND AMBITION TO LIFE

- ✓ By shaping local transport priorities through local community forums, Rachel has a voice in decisions that directly affect her daily life. .
- ✓ Improved connectivity enables hybrid working, reducing the need for Rachel to commute daily.
- ✓ Smart mobility platforms give Rachel real-time journey planning, reliable timetables and targeted pothole repairs that make her routes safer and quicker.

TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR AMBITIONS

- Using Data to Transform Transport & Public Services: Strategic partnerships underpinned by employee migration data make the case for improvement in regional connections. This reduces costs and journey times for Rachel. Smart data systems also prioritise road maintenance and pothole repair, making daily travel safer and more reliable. Together, these improvements give Rachael a quicker, more affordable commute and more family time all while ensuring she can progress in her career.
- P**utting Wellbeing, Housing & Nature Recovery at the Heart of Growth**: Transport and housing are planned with wellbeing in mind. Rachel benefits from community facilities linked to commuting routes, making family and work easier to combine.
- Harnessing Digital to Tackle Inequality, Improve Services and Drive Innovation: Rachel uses digital platforms to plan hybrid working and smarter travel, helping her stay rooted in Stroud while keeping access to regional career opportunities in the sectors where she has the most skills.

DARREN'S BIO



Darren (52 years old) lives in Bishops Cleeve. Darren has been working hard to overcome addiction and is determined to build a new life. He wants to work and contribute more to his community but faces stigma and limited access to tailored employment support. He's proud of his recovery and seeks meaningful ways to stay on track and help others.

DESIRES	CHALLENGES
Darren wants a stable employment that can enable him to be financially independent. Inspired by the support he has received from health and social care professionals, he wants to contribute and give back to those in need.	Darren feels socially isolated and is conscious of being judged by others. He has yet to find a stable job in Tewkesbury that will give him financial security, causing him stress, which he fears may cause him to relapse.

BRINGING OUR VISION AND AMBITION TO LIFE

- Integrated services mean Darren can access recovery, housing advice and employment support in one place, removing the barriers he previously faced navigating separate systems.
- Local employers and VCFSE partners offer supported routes into meaningful work, helping Darren rebuild confidence while contributing to his community.
- Digital tools track Darren's progress and connect him to peer networks, reinforcing his recovery and helping him sustain long-term stability

TRANSFORMING OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR AMBITIONS

- ✓ Putting Wellbeing, Housing & Nature Recovery at the Heart of Growth: Darren accesses a new joined-up wellbeing and employment hub model that integrates housing advice, health support and training opportunities under one roof. Unlike existing services, the hub is embedded in local housing and regeneration projects, giving Darren stability in his home environment as well as tailored pathways into work. This integration reduces the stigma he's faced in fragmented systems and helps maintain recovery.
- ✓ Empowering Communities through Co-Design and Local Decision Making: Darren helps co-design recovery-to-employment programmes with local employers and VCFSE partners in Tewkesbury. His lived experience is treated as expertise, shaping more inclusive pathways that others in recovery can access. Over time, Darren takes on a mentoring role, feeding into decision-making that improves services county-wide and strengthens trust between residents and providers.
- ✓ Unlocking Talent, Skills & Housing for Inclusive Growth: Darren joins a reskilling programme linked to local employers, with wraparound housing and wellbeing support. He starts with part-time work at a social enterprise in Bishop's Cleeve, progresses into a supervisory role and ultimately secures a qualification that allows him to mentor others. By linking employment with social support, Darren's recovery is reinforced while also contributing to Gloucestershire's inclusive growth.

Appendix 2: Digital, Data, and Technology Case Studies

Digital, data, and technology (DDaT) are already transforming services across Gloucestershire – making them smarter, faster, and more joined-up. These examples show how a customer-centred, data-informed approach improves outcomes, reduces avoidable demand, and enables proactive service delivery.

Right now, delivery varies by council. But when applied across the new organisations, our DDaT approach unlocks consistent, high-quality services for everyone – wherever they live.

Case study 1:

Customer experience

Streamlining and opening up data through AI (Tewkesbury BC)

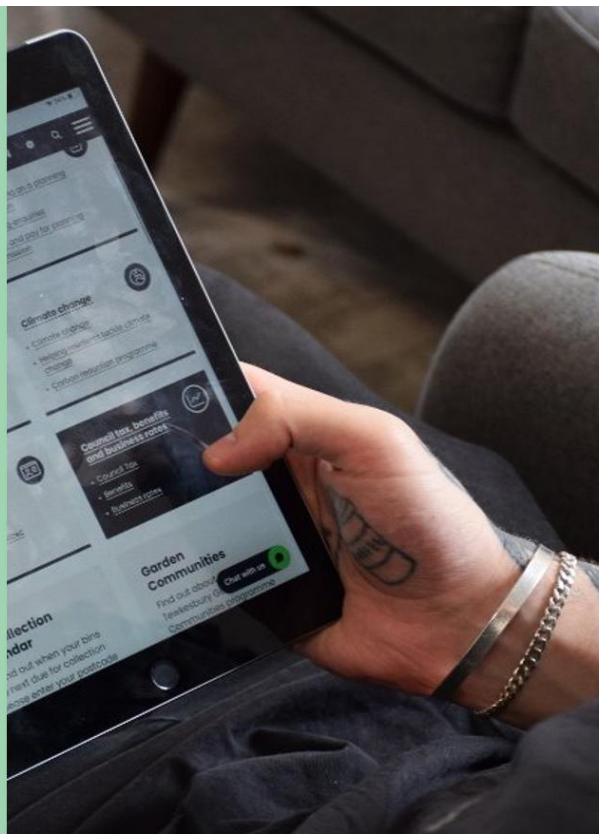
AI is redefining our customers' experience over the phone and online - there's no longer a need to navigate a lot of webpages or a maze of phone options (or to sit waiting on hold).

The customer types their issue into a responsive AI-driven chatbot online or speaks through a Large Language Model assistant over the phone (with a single phone number for all issues). If the issue is particularly complex, the customer seamlessly passes through to a human advisor who already knows why they're calling. If the teams are particularly busy, a simple call-back option is offered.

Residents are less frustrated, receive support quicker and have more confidence in contacting the council when they need help.

Real-time dashboards mean teams manage demand dynamically, and seamless integration into the council's digital platform means that customer contact can trigger automatic workflows depending on what they're contacting about.

50%	38%	17%
reduction in wait times in 6 months	shift to online services in 6 months	decrease in abandoned calls in 6 months





Case study 2:

AI virtual care

Helping vulnerable residents live in their own homes for as long as possible (Gloucestershire CC)

Innovative AI-powered virtual care will help transform how social care is delivered. Using smart plugs, motion sensors and other remote devices installed in residents' homes to monitor daily activity and wellbeing.

Devices feed data into a technology-enabled care system (recently procured by Gloucestershire CC), which uses AI to detect changes in behaviour that may signal a health concern.

The proactive approach allows care teams to intervene early – before a crisis occurs. In Sutton, this has led to around 25 residents per month being supported by community response service, avoiding ambulance callouts and hospital admissions.

The technology supports residents to live independently for longer, with the reassurance that help is available 24/7. It also eases pressure on overstretched adult social care services.

Case study 3:

Bulky waste

Reducing demand by keeping customers updated (Tewkesbury BC)

Bulky waste bookings take place through an intuitive online booking system – no need to call or visit (although that option is available).

The online experience is really enjoyable. Information is clear and there's a basket for items to be added, and an integrated payment system – nowhere close to the traditional clunky online local gov experience. Residents get to choose a collection date that suits them from a calendar of availability.

Through automated communications, residents are kept informed at every stage of the process - from booking confirmations to collection updates. These messages, delivered via email and text, are clearly branded and consistent with the council's digital identity.

Live data integration allows collection crews to update the system in real time, enabling customer services to respond swiftly to any queries.

Similar proactive approaches will be used for missed bin reports, planning applications and many other services.

In six months:

60%	70%	261%
collections booked online	of items now recycled	rise in income





Case study 4:

Open Digital Planning

MHCLG-funded programme to improve planning online (Gloucester City and Tewkesbury BC)

MHCLG's Open Digital Planning is transforming the planning service through systems that reduce invalid applications, improves customer experience and streamlines internal processes.

Plan X uses spatial data to assess site-specific constraints and guides users online through a tailored, question-based journey. This empowers applicants to self-serve, reducing calls to the council and improving the quality of submissions.

Through further development the system will integrate with Idox Uniform, enabling applications to be submitted directly and automatically populate back-office systems.

Gloucester City is also part of Back Office Planning System (BOPS), which is being developed with planning officers to improve the planning process - their input will help shape the system ensuring it meets the needs of planning officers and reduces the double handling and outdated processes in legacy back office systems.

- **Plan X:** Avg 113 visits per week for 'do I need planning permission?' tool (Glos City and Tewks BC).
- **BOPS:** 20% reduction in householder application processing time (Glos City).
- **Plan X:** Ratings of 'excellent' and 'good'.

Case study 5:

Flooding

Using spatial data to protect vulnerable residents (Tewkesbury BC)

A data-informed approach helps keep flood-risk communities and vulnerable residents safe.

With the introduction of a new digital system in ArcGIS, we can capture information quickly and accurately. Integrating satellite imagery with other datasets (such as the EA river gauge imagery and rainfall) means we can create predictive models of flood extent and impact.

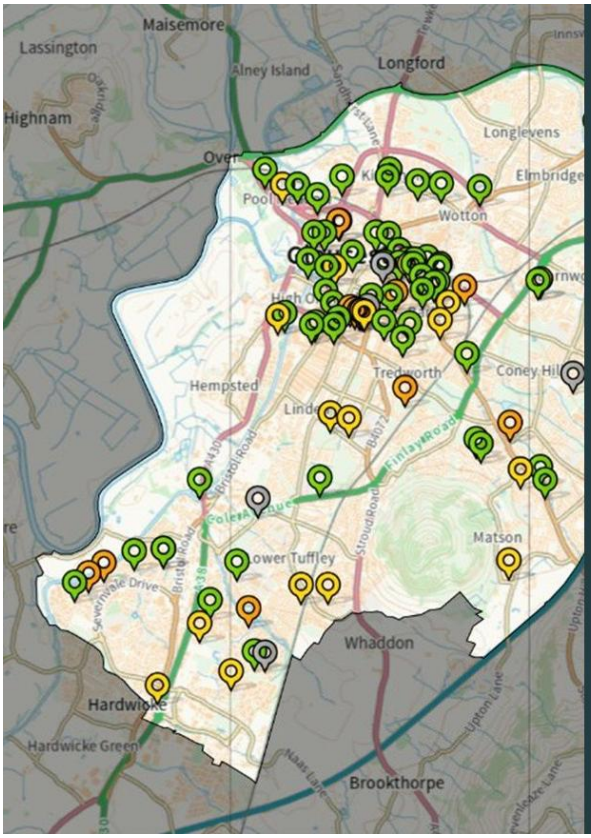
We know what different river levels mean on the ground, and mapped data will show where to direct support, such as:

- Where sandbags and rest centres are best located
- Which householders require targeted alerts and information
- Which vulnerable residents need welfare checks

This approach isn't just about reacting, but about being proactive in supporting at-risk communities.

LGR will enhance this approach even further by enabling a unified, cross-county view of flood risk and response. It allows for the consolidation of data sources from county and district councils, streamlined decision-making, and coordinated deployment of resources - ensuring that support reaches the right places faster and more effectively.





Case study 6:

Fix My Street

Fix My Street, a simple, map-based tool, lets residents report issues like potholes, fly-tipping, and broken streetlights via the web or mobile app.

Users drop a pin, add details and photos, and the report is sent directly to the right team—whether that's the City Council, UBICO, or the County Council.

The system links with in-cab tech, asset layers, and back-office systems to ensure accurate routing and real-time updates for crews. A public map shows reported issues and progress, improving transparency and removing the need for users to understand council responsibilities.

This streamlines service delivery, reduces call volumes, and improves the quality of reports across multiple authorities.

- City council: Average time to resolve issues dropped from **5.25 days** (previous process) to **1.25 days** with FixMyStreet and Alloy integration.
- GCC and city council: Of 198 city council cases reported to the county's FixMyStreet, **100% were automatically routed** to the city council **without any manual intervention.**
- GCC: **60% of highways issues** now reported through FixMyStreet – an increase of 20% on old process.

Case study 7: CoPilot

Gloucestershire CC: Average hours saved per week on different activities using M365 Copilot



Future Gloucestershire
Digital, Data and Technology workstream

Hours saved per week based on feedback received from 127 users

Appendix 3: Public Engagement Report (Cratus)

Cratus group

We're more than an agency.
We're change makers.

Gloucestershire Local Government Reorganisation Public Engagement

August 2025

cratus.co.uk

Executive Summary

Between July and August 2025, Cratus Group engaged residents and stakeholders across Gloucestershire to gather views on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The programme combined 12 in-person events, two countywide webinars, and a countywide survey which in total generated more than 3,100 responses. A dedicated microsite and multi-channel campaign ensured broad reach across all six districts, though younger residents were notably under-represented.

Residents expressed a strong sense of belonging to their communities, with green spaces, safety, and access to essentials like buses and GPs ranked as the most important local priorities. Council services such as rubbish and recycling, libraries, and parks were generally well regarded, while roads, pavements, buses, and aspects of social care received lower satisfaction ratings. Respondents experience of engaging with councillors and/or council officers was relatively positive.

When considering the future of local government, most respondents prioritised making services better and ensuring council tax is well spent over issues of identity or representation. Community identity, transport infrastructure, housing, and environmental protection were the most commonly prioritised themes in the additional written feedback. Many residents are wary of change, as shown in the written feedback and noted in our conversations. In terms of those who gave a preference as to which model they felt would work best, a single countywide unitary was by far the most supported option. The East/West split and 'Greater Gloucester' model were widely opposed, with concerns about fairness, division, and efficiency.

The next stage of communication should focus on reassurance: showing that local voices and identities will not be lost, underlining the financial and service benefits of change, and clarifying how the new system will work in practice. Simplification of council responsibilities is a persuasive message, but trust will depend on continued engagement and transparency throughout the process.

Introduction

This report summarises the engagement activity undertaken by Cratus Group in Summer 2025 on behalf of Gloucestershire councils around the future of local government in the county and sets out an analysis of the feedback received.

Please note that throughout this report, for brevity, we use the term 'district' to refer to city, borough and district councils in Gloucestershire. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole figure for neatness.

Background and context

The Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) community engagement programme in Gloucestershire was initiated to gather views from residents, stakeholders, and partner organisations on the future shape and priorities of local government in the county. This work forms an early stage in the process of developing proposals for submission to Government in November 2025.

The aim was to engage communities across all six districts, ensuring that a broad range of voices contributed to the discussion. Importantly, this engagement did not ask people to choose between fixed options or vote on pre-defined models. This will be the focus of formal Government consultation during the early part of next year. Instead, it invited open conversation about the principles, priorities and values that matter most to people in Gloucestershire.

By building understanding and listening to what communities have said they want and need, the engagement sought to generate insights that will help inform decision-making later in the year. The process was designed to be transparent, inclusive and accessible, ensuring that residents could help inform the county's future governance arrangements.

Objectives

- To inform residents about the context for potential changes to local government in Gloucestershire and the reasons for exploring these changes.
- To understand people's priorities, values and concerns in relation to the organisation of local government and the services it provides.
- To engage as widely as possible across all districts, reaching communities in both urban and rural areas.
- To gather insight that can be used to support councils in the development of proposals for submission to Government in November 2025.

Methodology

The engagement was undertaken using a hybrid approach, combining online and face-to-face engagement to ensure broad coverage and accessibility.

We followed the principle of 'going where the people are', integrating with existing community events and venues to reach a diverse cross-section of residents, while also providing digital channels for those who preferred to take part online.

In person engagement included a set of materials summarising the changes and signposting to the survey.

Survey

A county-wide survey was the central element of our public engagement. Hosted on Gloucestershire County Council's Engagement HQ platform, and developed with input from all seven councils, the survey included a blend of closed and open questions. This approach allowed for both quick responses and more detailed commentary.

- ✓ The survey was open to the public from **1 July to 8 August 2025**.
- ✓ The full list of questions is available in Appendix 1.

Engagement and demographics

We achieved high levels of engagement, with over 3,000 responses received. The demographic reach was also strong, with the distribution across most categories closely aligning with the general demographic makeup of the county of Gloucestershire, with the caveat that women were slightly over-represented (53% vs 51% in the 2021 Census) and the respondents skewed slightly older than the general population (33% over-65 vs 22% in 2021 Census). This suggests a broad range of residents chose to participate.

It is important to note that a digital survey of this nature is a self-selecting process rather than a representative poll. This means that people chose to engage with the survey, whether they found it online via social media or council content, or participated in person with a member of our team. Unlike a representative poll, we did not actively contact individuals with the aim of reaching a

statistically significant and truly representative sample of the county's or districts' populations. This was not feasible within the project's scope, budget, or timeframe.

Despite not being a statistically representative poll, we are confident that the feedback is robust and highly useful. The high level of engagement and the broadly representative nature of the respondents' demographics mean that the data provides clear and valuable trends. This feedback is therefore a reliable resource for councils as they develop local government reorganisation (LGR) options.

Note: While the data aligns broadly with 2021 Census data for the county, this has not been assessed at a District level so we cannot assert that the views expressed are representative of individual Districts.

The survey achieved good, useful results at a fraction of the cost and time a full-scale representative poll would have required, proving to be an effective and efficient engagement tool within the project's constraints.

Microsite

A dedicated microsite – www.futuregloucestershire.gov.uk – was created to provide background information on LGR, answer frequently asked questions, and list details of upcoming engagement events and webinars. It also provided a direct link to the survey, ensuring a single point of access for the public.

Outreach and marketing

To maximise reach, the survey and microsite were promoted through a range of channels:

Elected members and council officers
Councillors and officers received information to share with their networks, including a set of informational banners and flyers provided for each district council. Staff across district councils and partner organisations were reached through newsletters and intranet posts.

Gloucestershire County Council officers attended the parish and town council AGM in July to share information.

Residents and community networks
Social media activity included both organic and paid campaigns. Paid advertising targeted postcodes with lower response rates during the final two weeks of the engagement.

Posts were shared by each council's communications team via Facebook, Instagram, X, LinkedIn and Nextdoor, alongside digital newsletters, community bulletins and business mailing lists. Flyers were also sent to libraries and other council owned buildings across the county.

Events and webinars
In-person engagement took place at two existing community events in each of the six districts, and two online webinars were held to enable countywide participation. All activities were designed to ensure residents could access clear information, ask questions, and provide feedback in a way that suited their needs.

Engagement summary

As a result of online promotion, 12 in-person events (two per district) and 2 online webinars with countywide attendance, 3,112 survey responses and 1,480 written comments to open-text questions, providing rich qualitative insight, were received.

Events brought conversations into the heart of communities – from busy market towns to rural villages, whilst the online offer ensured residents could take part at any time. This mix of formats generated a balanced evidence base: hard data from the survey for statistical analysis, and detailed personal perspectives from written feedback.

Engagement findings

Events

The 12 events are detailed in the following section, with approximate figures for the engagement at each.

Teams attending the events had flyers to hand out, pull-up banners at the stands, and activities to attract people's attention.

People attending the events were encouraged to complete the survey, but discussions also provided useful insights into opinions on council services. Key findings are summarised below. People were encouraged to take flyers home, both as a reminder to fill out the survey themselves and to share with family, friends and neighbours, as we emphasised the desire to reach as many residents as possible.

Stroud Show

Saturday, 12 July – Stroud district

~ 15 Surveys ~ 40 conversations ~ 70 leaflets handed out

The audience was largely local to Stroud, and local councillors and district leadership were also in attendance. Many people felt that the local voice would be lost under LGR reforms, and they weren't supportive of change. However, many acknowledged that the different levels of local government now were confusing.

Quite a few specifically mentioned that they liked their Parish Councils. Residents complained about the lack of buses and public transport. A few discussed personal council issues.

Gloucester Quays Shopping Centre Pop-up

Saturday, 12 July – Gloucester City district

~ 8 Surveys ~ 50 conversations ~ 30 leaflets handed out

Feedback varied from disinterested to well-informed. Some attendees reported themselves as being from Gloucester, and identifying as such, but actually living within Stroud or Tewkesbury council areas.

There was some concern that unitary councils would not recognise the individual places that have their own unique identity under current arrangements. There was also a concern that any authority which contained Gloucester would have their resources diverted to the city. More broadly, there was a limited understanding of the difference between the levels of government and some disinterest in how services are delivered.

Coleford Music Festival

Sunday, 13 July – Forest of Dean district

~ 4 Surveys ~ 25 conversations ~ 15 leaflets handed out

Conversations tended to focus on very local issues including the role of Town and Parish Councils, noting that the Coleford Town precept had gone up dramatically in recent years. All residents spoken to wanted to maintain the identity of the Forest of Dean as a unique place and were not supportive of any option to become a unitary council.

Some councillors had been to the parish event on the 12th and were keen to understand more about what other authorities were doing elsewhere in the country. There was some feedback that the northern part of the Forest of Dean faces toward Herefordshire and could benefit from becoming part of that authority.

Moreton-in-Marsh Market

Tuesday, 15 July – Cotswold district

~ 21 Surveys ~ 25 conversations ~ 36 leaflets handed out

The busy market had a large tourist presence, making it harder to reach local residents. To counter this, the team engaged stallholders and shop staff directly. This approach ensured meaningful conversations with those living and working in the area.

Generally, there was a lack of trust of Cotswold District Council, partly due to the market stall holders themselves not having a positive experience when dealing with council officers. Aside from this, one of the biggest issues facing local people seemed to be with buses as some routes are being reduced or stopped altogether.

Regarding LGR, most were not aware this was happening but once explained, understood the reasons for the changes. Most were pleased with the idea it could lead to more effective and efficient councils.

Lydney Community Day

Saturday 19 July – Forest of Dean district

~ 2 Surveys ~ 45 conversations ~ 30 leaflets handed out

Feedback reflected concerns that the Forest of Dean is already overlooked for investment and that Lydney, on the edge of the district, is even more marginalised. Local transport limitations and dependence on cars were raised.

The 'Greater Gloucester City' model was criticised as exclusionary. Residents feared that roads and services would be deprioritised in favour of higher-traffic areas. A young carer noted potential benefits if services became more joined-up.

Councillors expressed opposition to reorganisation, with some arguing the county/district system should remain. Other comments touched on roadworks coordination, declining community events, and the importance of youth engagement.

Churchdown Summer Fun Day

Saturday, 19 July – Tewkesbury district

~ 1 Survey ~ 25 conversations ~ 15 leaflets handed out

Residents voiced concerns about historic boundary and naming issues, stressing Churchdown's distinct identity from Gloucester and Tewkesbury. Some frustration was expressed that the process was not consulting on whether reorganisation should happen at all.

The general sentiment was that change felt imposed and unnecessary, though residents still engaged with engagement materials. Issues raised included access to waste facilities and representation.

Cirencester Town Centre Pop-up

Sunday, 20 July – Cotswold district

~ 5 Surveys ~ 20 conversations ~ 15 leaflets handed out

Engagement included younger shop workers and local business owners. Leaflets were displayed in shops and community spaces.

Residents asked about potential combined authorities and whether reorganisation was required by national government. Concerns were raised about losing local identity, confusion over service responsibilities, and how planning could adapt to different topographical needs.

Tewkesbury Market

Wednesday, 23 July - Tewkesbury district

~ 35 Surveys ~ 40 conversations ~ 10 leaflets handed out

Residents valued Tewkesbury's historic identity and stressed the importance of a localised response to flooding. While many saw opportunities for improved efficiency under reorganisation, concerns were voiced about differences between districts such as the Cotswolds and Gloucester and what this would mean if the local authority areas were combined.

Gloucester City Centre Pop-up

Friday, 25 July – Gloucester City district

~ 30 Surveys ~ 50+ conversations ~ 10 leaflets handed out

This high-footfall location enabled engagement with a broad mix of residents. Safety, cleanliness, and homelessness in the city centre were key concerns, particularly from younger respondents.

Issues raised included a shortage of affordable housing, the use of hotels for temporary accommodation, and the pressures of migration on housing. Calls for more youth facilities, investment in health services, and stronger support for tourism were common themes.

Greenways Fun Day

Saturday, 26 July – Stroud district

~ 10 Surveys ~ 40+ conversations ~ 6 leaflets handed out

Residents voiced concerns about east–west divisions in the county creating inequalities. They called for prioritisation of affordable homes for young people and better responses to anti-social behaviour.

As a busy, family-friendly event, it was harder to focus people on doing the survey then and there but there was a lot of interest and people took photos of the materials and/or scanned the QR code to follow up later.

Cheltenham Town Centre Pop-up

Saturday, 2 August – Cheltenham district

~ 36 Surveys ~ 40+ conversations ~ 33 leaflets handed out

Engagement was steady throughout the day, with neutral or positive views towards reorganisation in the majority. Issues raised included concerns over council tax, immigration, potholes, and buses.

Awareness of local councillors was generally low, and most had not contacted council departments in recent years. Some raised issues with local SEN support.

No Child Left Behind Festival

Wednesday, 6 August - Cheltenham district

~ 37 Surveys ~ 30+ conversations ~ 22 leaflets handed out

The family-focused event drew strong engagement. Activities at the stand encouraged conversations with parents and carers.

Recurring issues included poor road and street maintenance, lack of awareness of councillors, and concern that a county-wide unitary would erase local identity. Some welcomed the idea of area forums to retain local voices.

Webinars

Two webinars took place, on 5 and 6 August, one held during the working day and the other during the evening, allowing for different people's schedules. Both events were advertised across social media channels by all the councils. A recording of the presentation was then hosted on the www.futuregloucestershire.co.uk website for those who could not attend.

The main sentiment from the Q&A portion of the webinar was requests for more details on exactly how the process will work, from questions about which council buildings will be kept to details on how departments will be organised and who will be responsible for policies.

The structure of local government beyond district and county level was raised, with several queries about how the potential combined authorities and mayoral areas will be organised, and on the other side, how this will affect Town and Parish Councils. It became clear that attendees had heard rumours about how both could work, including the concern that parishes will be given further responsibilities without more resources.

We learned that residents will need reassurance throughout the process. People were concerned about things like how council housing will work, whether libraries will be affected, whether staff are at risk of losing their jobs, and where council offices will be.

Also, a couple of comments concerned future updates, while attendees were happy to hear that the details were still not finalised, they were keen to hear the results of the survey and details as they emerge – so Gloucestershire councils must keep up the good momentum of engagement and information sharing.

We had 71 attendees across the two days (45 on Tuesday, 5 August and 26 on Wednesday, 6 August). The audience was a mixture of residents, council staff and councillors from all tiers of council.

Unlike some in-person conversations and the survey results, webinar attendees did not request that the status quo remain. This shows that if it is clearly explained then people do understand that LGR is a national government requirement, and change will be taking place. Attendees commented that they found it helpful and were grateful for the engagement.

Survey results

Demographics

The survey gathered demographic data from respondents so we could assess how representative the respondents were of Gloucestershire's population. Where possible, this has been reviewed against the 2021 Census data.

The key demographic findings are as follows:

Age: The majority of respondents were aged 55 and over (57%), followed by those aged 35-54 (30%), and under 35 (9%). Gloucestershire does have an older population than the national average, however given that the figures for 65+ at a county level are 22%, the survey responses skew to an older demographic than is fully representative.

Sex and Gender Identity: The respondents were almost evenly split between female (53%) and male (47%), with a slightly higher number of women than men responding, slightly higher than the census data which has 51% female. Almost all respondents indicated that their gender identity is the same as their sex at birth.

Sexual Orientation: About 80% of respondents identified as heterosexual/straight, which is less than the census data which 90% identified as such. Smaller proportions identified as asexual (~3%), bisexual (~3%), gay man (~2%), or lesbian/gay woman (~1%). The number of respondents identifying as LGBTQ+ was higher among under-35s (16%) compared to those aged 55 and over (less than 4%).

Ethnicity: The largest ethnic group was White British (87%), followed by White European (4%) and White Irish (1%). Other individual ethnic groups each accounted for less than 1%. This is reflective of the demographics of the county (based on the 2021, 88% of the population is White British with a further 5% coming from other White backgrounds).

Religion or Belief: The most common responses were 'No religion' (46%) and 'Christian' (44%). 'No religion' was more prevalent among under-35s, while 'Christian' was more common among older age groups, reaching around 62% in those aged 75 and over. The county levels for 'Christian' are higher at 48%, and lower for 'No religion' at 43%.

Long-term Illness or Disability: About 19% of respondents reported having a long-term illness or disability that limits their day-to-day activities, less than the census figure of 23%.

Caring Responsibilities: Approximately 20% of respondents had caring responsibilities, mainly for older family members (15%). A smaller proportion (4%) cared for children with additional needs, and around 1% had dual caring responsibilities. This is higher than the census' average of 9% providing unpaid care.

Survey responses in detail

Section 1: A sense of belonging

This section of the survey focused on where people lived and where they identified as 'home' within the county. Respondents were asked for their postcode (first half only), which councils they

thought represented them, and where they consider they live. The latter was to determine whether people's local identity is more closely tied to the county, district, or local neighbourhood.

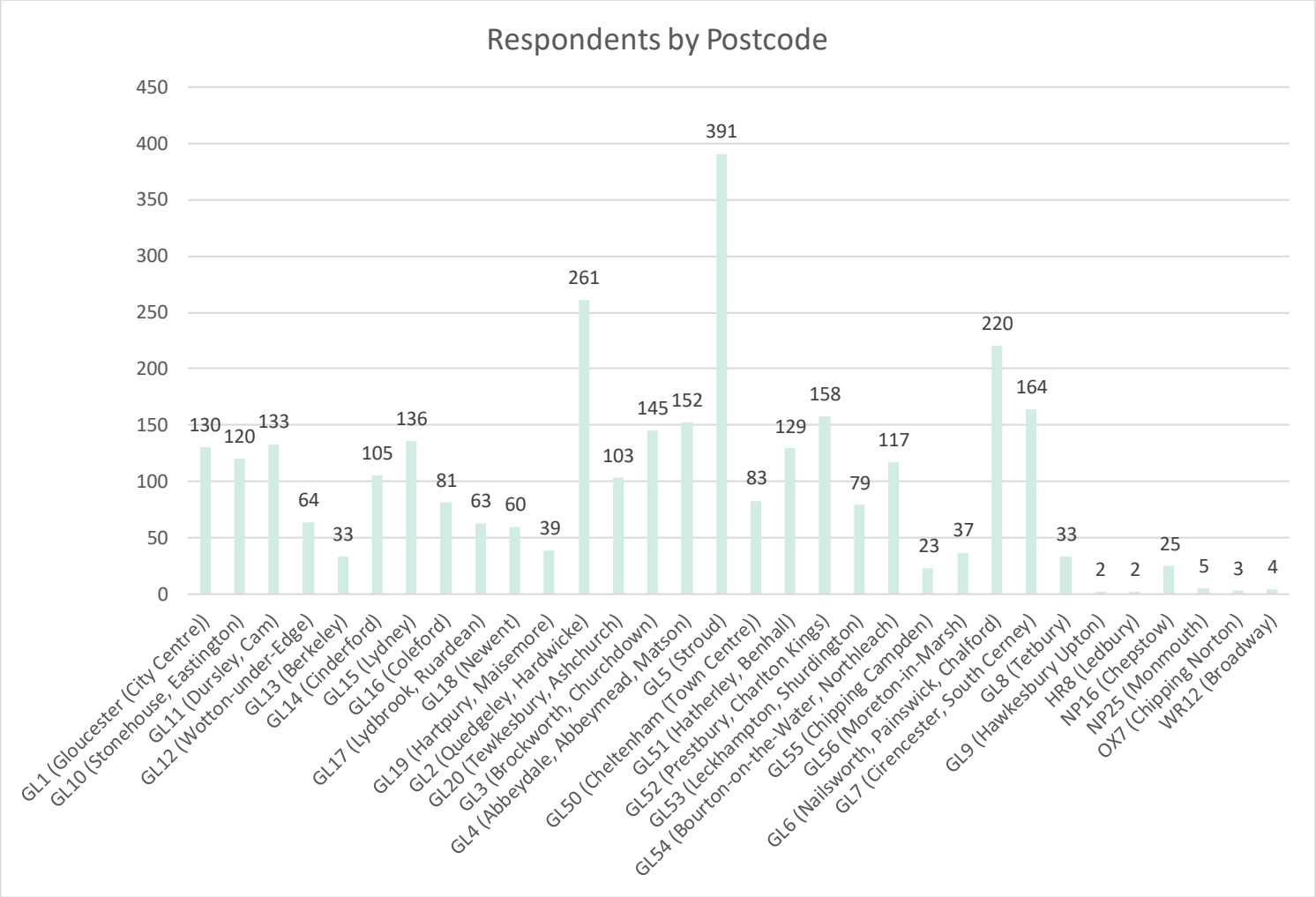


Figure 1

Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents across postcodes and the most commonly associated areas within the postcodes. There is notably high turnout from GL5 (Stroud), GL6 (Nailsworth, Painswick, Chalford), GL7 (Cirencester, South Cerney), GL52 (Prestbury, Charlton Kings), GL4 (Abbeydale, Abbeymead, Matson) and GL3 (Brockworth, Churchdown).

Eleven respondents gave a hometown postcode outside of Gloucestershire, explained by the fact some lived on the borders or visited the county for work. Those postcodes were: GL9, BS37, IP2, GL20, GL8, GL12, OX7 and TA1.

People were asked to select their council, with the option of all six districts, the county council, and 'other.' 52 (2%) were not sure which council they were served by, indicated by either selecting 'not sure' or by selecting multiple district councils. However, we were able to allocate all except seven using the postcode and description of where they live for the purpose of effective survey analysis.

1,012 (33%) included Gloucestershire County Council as part of their answer, with 15 of those placing it as their only council. This shows that 2,090 (67%) respondents either do not realise this is their council or do not see it as much a part of their day-to-day life as their district council.

As shown in Figure 2, the districts were relatively evenly represented in responses, except for Stroud District Council which saw a considerably higher response rate.

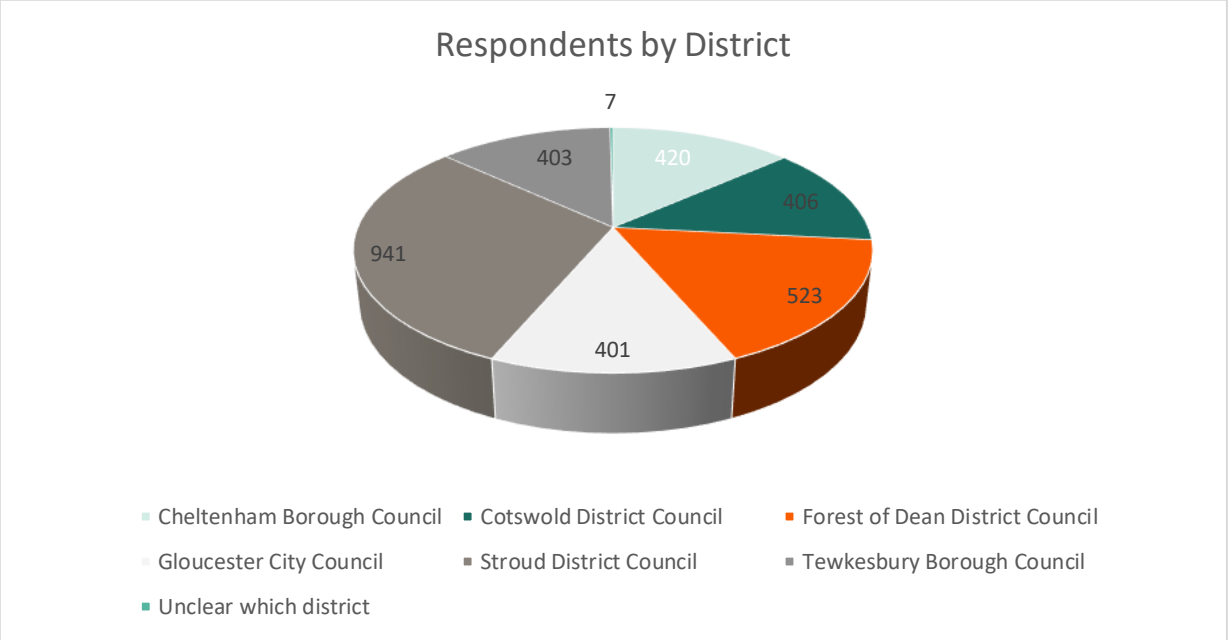


Figure 2

34 people added a council after selecting 'other'. Of these, 23 were Parish Councils and 11 were councils outside of Gloucestershire County Council lines (e.g. South Gloucestershire, Wychavon, West Oxfordshire, Malvern Hills, Somerset and Ipswich).

Next, people were asked to tell us first where they lived (Figure 3) and then what they considered to be their 'local area' (Figure 4). The word-clouds below summarise the most common responses to each.



Figure 3

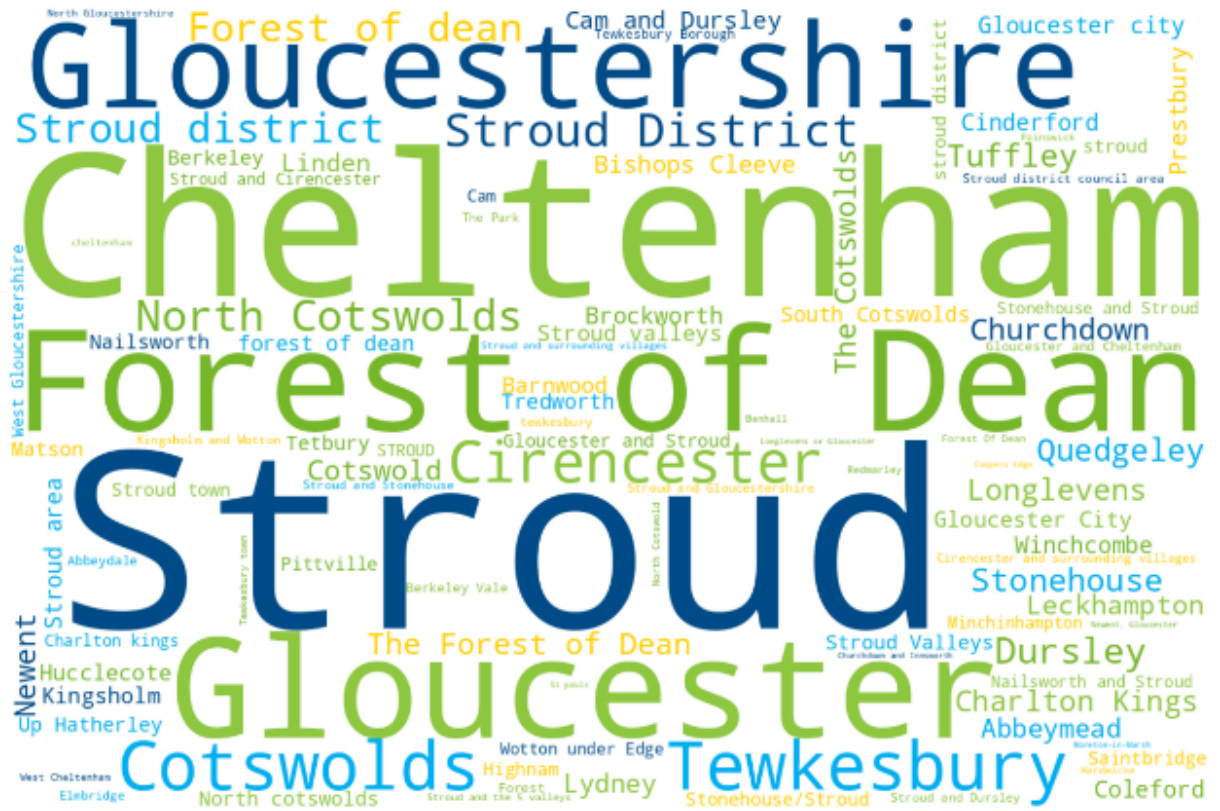


Figure 4

These two questions were designed to get people thinking about where they feel most connected to, rather than thinking solely in terms of council boundaries. The results show that people are

more specific when thinking about where they live vs what is their local area, and that while the district names are mentioned frequently, hundreds of smaller towns and villages are included, suggesting people's sense of home is more complex than which district or county they belong to.

We then asked people to what extent they felt a 'sense of belonging' to the local area they just identified. The responses to this question were overwhelmingly positive, with 1,503 (48%) saying strongly agree, and only 218 (7%) either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (shown in Figure 5).

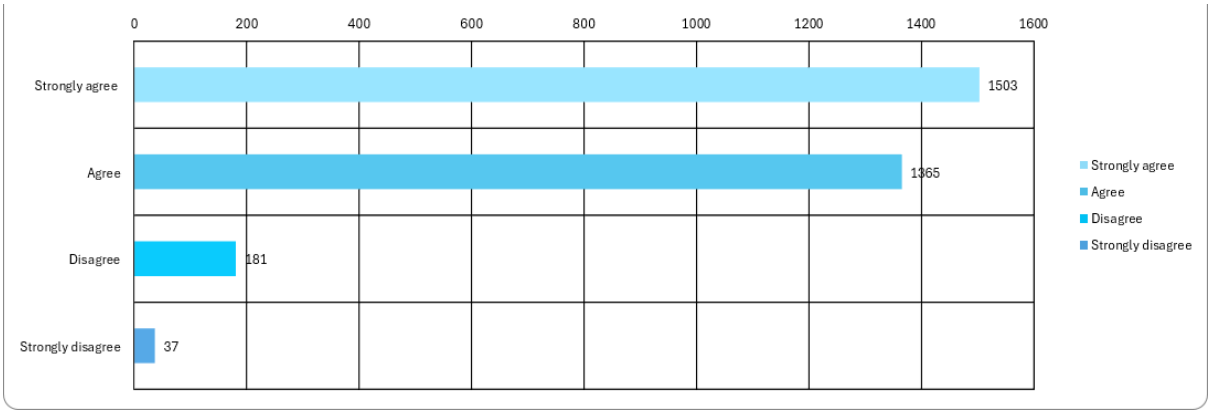


Figure 5

We then asked respondents to rank the importance of various key factors in contributing to this 'sense of belonging'.

Overall, green open spaces were rated as the most important element, with 72% saying they were 'very important'. Safety was the next priority, with 70% rating it very important, followed by 65% saying 'easy to get to important things like buses, schools and the GP' were very important.

Only 40% said history and heritage was very important to them, however overall, all elements were seen as more important than not important. 9% said events were not at all important, and this was the highest percentage of all 'not at all important' rankings.

Section 2: Council Services

In this next section of the survey, respondents were asked for feedback on their council services as they are now, including assessments of a series of council services and feedback on their engagement with councillors and officers.

Overall, 2,215 (71%) know who their councillors are, and 1,045 (34%) have contacted them in the last two years. 77% were satisfied or very satisfied with the response from their councillor.

1,904 (61%) have contacted a council department, and 73% were happy or very happy with the response from the relevant department.

In terms of services provided, rubbish and recycling and parks and green spaces consistently receive a high positive sentiment across all councils, while roads and pavements are the weakest area – in almost every council, these saw the lowest 'very good' ratings and highest negative feedback.

Residents across all councils received good ratings on average, with little differentiation between the six districts.

Overall average satisfaction per district (rated 1–4 scale):

Cheltenham Borough Council: 2.89
Cotswold District Council: 2.70
Forest of Dean District Council: 2.72
Gloucester City Council: 2.81
Tewkesbury Borough Council: 2.87
Stroud District Council: 2.86

Each council's individual feedback figures are summarised below:

Cheltenham Borough Council

420 responses were from residents in Cheltenham Borough Council. Table 1 shows how respondents from Cheltenham ranked the council services. Key things to note are that parks, gardens, and other green spaces were the highest rated, with 93% 'very good' or 'good', and roads, pavements, and streetlights were rated the lowest, with only 2% rating them as 'very good' and 76% as 'not good' or 'not very good at all'.

	Very Good	Good	Not good	Not very good at all
Rubbish and recycling	32%	55%	9%	4%
Roads, pavements and streetlights	2%	21%	48%	28%
Parks, gardens, and other green spaces	40%	53%	6%	1%
Schools and education	23%	69%	6%	2%
Libraries	22%	60%	15%	4%
Sports facilities/festivals/events	32%	57%	9%	2%
Local buses	14%	59%	23%	4%
Social care and benefits	5%	56%	29%	10%

Table 1

Engagement with Councillors
The survey included two questions about residents' awareness and interactions with their district or county councillors.

Awareness
A significant portion of residents (75%) are aware of their councillors, with 35% having actively engaged with them in the last two years. 15% did not know who their councillors were and 10% were unsure or did not respond.

Satisfaction
Among those who had contacted their councillors, 27% were very satisfied with the response, 40% were satisfied, 22% were dissatisfied, 10% were very dissatisfied and 1% did not respond.

The satisfaction levels are relatively positive, with 67% expressing satisfaction (either very satisfied or satisfied). However, the dissatisfaction rate of 32% (dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) indicates that there is still a notable portion of the population that feels their concerns are not being adequately addressed.

Engagement with Council Officers
The survey also included questions about residents' interactions with council departments over the past two years.

Contact
65% of respondents had contacted a council department within the last two years, some respondents mentioned contacting a different borough, possibly related to friends or family across the border or where they work.

Satisfaction
Of those who had contacted a council department, 19% of respondents were very happy with their experience, 47% were happy, 21% were not happy, 12% were not at all happy and 1% did not respond.

Cotswold District Council

406 responses were from residents in Cotswold District Council. The rating of the services is detailed in Table 2 below. There were several well rated services in this district, with 90% rating Schools and education as 'good or very good', 89% rating rubbish and recycling as the same and 87% for parks, gardens, and other green spaces.

Roads, pavements and streetlights were less well rated, with 56% rating 'not good' or 'not very good at all', and 42% saying the same for social care and benefits.

	Very Good	Good	Not good	Not very good at all
Rubbish and recycling	35%	54%	8%	3%
Roads, pavements and streetlights	3%	22%	44%	32%
Parks, gardens, and other green spaces	17%	70%	11%	2%
Schools and education	21%	68%	9%	2%
Libraries	18%	60%	16%	6%
Sports facilities/festivals/events	15%	58%	22%	5%
Local buses	4%	25%	41%	29%
Social care and benefits	7%	51%	32%	10%

Table 2

Engagement with Councillors

Awareness
42% of respondents knew who their councillors were and had contacted at least one of them within the last two years. 37% knew who their councillors were but had not contacted them, while 13% did not know who their councillors were.

Satisfaction
Among those who had contacted their councillors, 39% were very satisfied with the response, and 40% were satisfied. However, 15% were dissatisfied, and 6% were very dissatisfied.

Contact with Council Departments

Engagement
65% of respondents had contacted a council department within the last two years.

Satisfaction
18% of respondents were very happy with their experience, and 46% were happy. However, 26% were not happy, and 9% were not at all happy.

Forest of Dean District Council

523 responses were from residents in Forest of Dean District Council. Table 3 shows the range of ratings given to the services by the residents.

Rubbish and recycling were rated very highly, with 95% of respondents rating it as 'good or very good'. Roads, pavements, and streetlights, and local buses were seen as poor, with 67% and 64% rating them 'not good' and 'not very good at all' respectively.

	Very Good	Good	Not good	Not very good at all
Rubbish and recycling	51%	44%	4%	1%
Roads, pavements and streetlights	3%	30%	43%	25%
Parks, gardens, and other green spaces	26%	60%	11%	3%
Schools and education	12%	69%	15%	4%
Libraries	16%	62%	16%	5%
Sports facilities/festivals/events	10%	56%	27%	6%
Local buses	5%	31%	40%	24%
Social care and benefits	4%	49%	35%	12%

Table 3

Engagement with Councillors

Awareness
34% of respondents knew who their councillors were and had contacted at least one of them within the last two years. 33% knew who their councillors were but had not contacted them, while 23% did not know who their councillors were.

Satisfaction
Among those who had contacted their councillors, 39% were very satisfied with the response, and 44% were satisfied. However, 10% were dissatisfied, and 7% were very dissatisfied.

Contact with Council Departments

Engagement
59% of respondents had contacted a council department within the last two years.

Satisfaction
26% of respondents were very happy with their experience, and 52% were happy. However, 13% were not happy, and 8% were not at all happy.

Gloucester City Council

401 responses were from residents in Gloucester City Council. Table 4 details the ratings given by people in this district. The data reveals that while some services, such as rubbish and recycling, are well-regarded (92% saying very good or good), but other areas are seen as sub-par, with 56%

reporting roads, pavements and streetlights as 'not good' or 'not very good at all' and 42% saying the same for social care and benefits.

	Very Good	Good	Not good	Not very good at all
Rubbish and recycling	34%	58%	5%	3%
Roads, pavements and streetlights	3%	41%	41%	15%
Parks, gardens, and other green spaces	11%	68%	18%	3%
Schools and education	13%	69%	15%	3%
Libraries	18%	66%	13%	3%
Sports facilities/festivals/events	9%	57%	28%	5%
Local buses	17%	55%	23%	5%
Social care and benefits	5%	53%	35%	7%

Table 4

Engagement with Councillors

Awareness
30% of respondents knew who their councillors were and had contacted at least one of them within the last two years. 38% knew who their councillors were but had not contacted them, while 23% did not know who their councillors were.

Satisfaction
Among those who had contacted their councillors, 25% were very satisfied with the response, and 47% were satisfied. However, 17% were dissatisfied, and 12% were very dissatisfied.

Contact with Council Departments

Engagement
61% of respondents had contacted a council department within the last two years.

Satisfaction
16% of respondents were very happy with their experience, and 46% were happy. However, 18% were not happy, and 10% were not at all happy.

Stroud District Council

The district with the most responses was Stroud with 941, and the service ratings are below in Table 5. Responses were very positive overall, especially relating to rubbish and recycling which received 97% 'good or very good' ratings. Parks, gardens, and other green spaces, schools and education. Libraries all also had positive ratings above 85%.

	Very Good	Good	Not good	Not very good at all
Rubbish and recycling	60%	37%	2%	1%
Roads, pavements and streetlights	3%	28%	48%	21%
Parks, gardens, and other green spaces	30%	63%	7%	1%
Schools and education	20%	68%	9%	3%
Libraries	26%	59%	12%	3%
Sports facilities/festivals/events	19%	67%	12%	2%
Local buses	5%	33%	40%	22%
Social care and benefits	5%	54%	33%	9%

Table 5

Engagement with Councillors

Awareness
33% of respondents knew who their councillors were and had contacted at least one of them within the last two years. 38% knew who their councillors were but had not contacted them, while 19% did not know who their councillors were.

Satisfaction
Among those who had contacted their councillors, 51% were very satisfied with the response, and 36% were satisfied. However, 8% were dissatisfied, and 5% were very dissatisfied.

Contact with Council Departments

Engagement
63% of respondents had contacted a council department within the last two years.

Satisfaction
33% of respondents were very happy with their experience, and 44% were happy. However, 16% were not happy, and 7% were not at all happy.

Tewkesbury Borough Council

403 responses were from residents in Tewkesbury Borough Council. The survey results indicate that Tewkesbury residents were most positive about rubbish and recycling services (96% very good or good), with schools and education second (84%) and most negative about roads, pavements and streetlights, with 66% rating them not good or not very good at all.

	Very Good	Good	Not good	Not very good at all
Rubbish and recycling	63%	33%	4%	0%
Roads, pavements and streetlights	4%	30%	43%	22%
Parks, gardens, and other green spaces	17%	62%	18%	3%
Schools and education	16%	68%	14%	2%
Libraries	24%	57%	15%	3%
Sports facilities/festivals/events	16%	60%	20%	4%

Local buses	18%	47%	24%	11%
Social care and benefits	7%	52%	34%	7%

Table 6

Engagement with Councillors

Awareness
30% of respondents knew who their councillors were and had contacted at least one of them within the last two years. 40% knew who their councillors were but had not contacted them, while 20% did not know who their councillors were.

Satisfaction
Among those who had contacted their councillors, 36% were very satisfied with the response, and 36% were satisfied. However, 19% were dissatisfied, and 7% were very dissatisfied.

Contact with Council Departments

Engagement
56% of respondents had contacted a council department within the last two years.

Satisfaction
25% of respondents were very happy with their experience, and 46% were happy. However, 20% were not happy, and 9% were not at all happy.

Other Services

An additional option after rating the eight specified services was 'I'd like to rate a different service'. Across all respondents, 261 respondents chose to respond to this question, just over 8% of the total respondents. This has been analysed across the county rather than by district, as the relatively low response rate to this question would imply

Issues around planning and highways dominate the comments - these two areas alone account for more than half of all service mentions. By noting that people felt the need to add extra analysis to topics such as roads and schools that had already been rated in the previous questions shows the strength of people's opinions.

For each, we have included a sentiment score[61] and some examples of the kind of comments included.

- Planning / Development / Building Control - 16.5% of comments

[61] *Each comment in the survey was tagged with a sentiment label: **Positive**, **Neutral**, or **Negative**. To quantify overall sentiment for each issue, these labels were converted into numerical scores as follows:*

- ***Positive** → **+1***
- ***Neutral** → **0***
- ***Negative** → **–1***

*For each category, the **average sentiment score** was calculated by taking the mean of all individual comment scores associated with that issue. This provides a simple, interpretable metric:*

- *A score **closer to +1** indicates generally positive feedback.*
- *A score **around 0** suggests mixed or neutral sentiment.*
- *A score **closer to –1** reflects predominantly negative feedback.*

This approach allows for easy comparison across service areas and helps highlight where public perception is most favourable or critical.

Average Sentiment Score: -0.27

There were concerns raised about new development, density, lack of local consultation and poor enforcement of planning decisions. There were also complaints raised about the performance of planning services.

- *"Planning decisions - this should be more under the umbrella of the town council not the district most of which do not live in the area".*
- *"Planning applications are dealt with extremely slowly... little consistency between councils."*
- Roads / Highways / Potholes - 10.0% of comments
  Average Sentiment Score: -0.30

There were recurrent complaints about potholes, poor road maintenance, resurfacing delays and local road safety. There were also localised complaints about the streetscape, covering issues like parking availability and enforcement, and litter and graffiti.

- *"Highways- not very good at all. Far too many road closures, and temporary traffic lights."*
- *"Fix my pothole website... a pothole in my street was fixed within the week!"*
- Housing / Homelessness / Council houses - 5.5% of comments
  Average Sentiment Score: 0.09

A number of comments were frustrated that housing services have not improved in the area.

- *"Lack of social housing for people."*
- *"Housing officers aren't good as they have too much work to do".*
- Schools / Education - 4.0% of comments
  Average Sentiment Score: 0.00

A small number of people raised issues around education, from a lack of nurseries through to problems with the education system overall. There were a number of comments about poor transport to school.

- *"Early careers - needs to be better in schools"*
- *"I think we should not have an 11 plus grammar school system. It is divisive. I went to a comprehensive school in Oxford."*
- Children's services / Child protection - 3.5% of comments
  Average Sentiment Score: -0.43

Similar to schools / education, a small number of people raised real concerns with children's services, mostly from parents trying to access SEND support for their children.

- *"Children's services - not good at all"*
- *"Parents trying to negotiate SEND provisions for children with extra needs is a lengthy and high stress process. This needs huge investment as these children will slip through the*

cracks."

- Waste / Bin collections / Recycling - 3.5% of comments
  Average Sentiment Score: -0.14

Missed collections and recycling issues appear across a number of comments. There was a surprisingly strong opposition to the way recycling centres operate with multiple people raising frustration with having to register in advance to attend and feeling that these centres make it harder for them to recycle.

- *"Any suggestion of bin collection every 3 weeks should be stopped".*
- *"Recycling Centres: Not very good at all due to having to book for a slot".*
- *"Recycling Household Centre. The registration of cars should be removed".*
- Public transport / Buses - 3.0% of comments
  Average Sentiment Score: -0.50

There were a range of complaints about bus reliability, frequency and connections — and a recognition that these impact people's ability to travel without a car. Many of these were very specific complaints about a local service.

- *"The Number 10 bus service: Inconsistent every single day, rarely happens according to the schedules at the bus stops. Many busy stops rely on printed schedules as they do not have electronic schedules. The Stagecoach West app sometimes lies about where buses are. And the overall cost is terrible. The monthly Rider Plus ticket now costs £85 per 28 days (i.e. £1,020+ per year). This is reaching a point where private transport is becoming economically comparable and vastly more comfortable and convenient over public transport. This is exactly the reverse of where public transport as a service in Gloucestershire should be heading."*
- Council tax / Benefits / Finance - 2.5% of comments
  Average Sentiment Score: -0.20
- *"Cost of council tax value for as council tax is incredibly expensive for the services received/provided."*
- *"Council tax can vary greatly in cost between councils & also which parish you live in."*

Section 3: Local government reorganisation

In this section of the survey, we focused on questions about LGR and the future of councils in Gloucestershire.

What are your top priorities when it comes to reorganising councils in Gloucestershire?

We first asked respondents to rank in order of priority the four key objectives of LGR, as set out by National Government:

'Make sure your council tax is well spent' was the top priority for most people, with 1,267 rating this highest. Next highest was 'make local services better', named as the top priority by 1,128 respondents.

There is then a large gap with only 330 naming 'provide a sense of community' as their highest priority and a similar figure of 337 saying 'provide a stronger voice for residents'.

We can see from this that overwhelmingly people's priority is the practical day-to-day spending and work of the council, rather than feeling the council should focus on issues of identity and feeling included.

Is there anything else you think should be a priority, or anything you would like us to think about when putting together plans to reorganise Gloucestershire's local government structure?

The final question in the survey asked if there was anything else respondents wanted us to consider when designing proposals for how new council services will be delivered under LGR. Almost 60% of respondents answered this question and their comments are summarised below, divided into overall comments and specific references to different structures.

Topics to consider

Almost 60% of respondents answered this question and their comments are summarised below, grouped into key categories:

Theme	Percentage (%)	Explanation
Community	16.06	Concerns about local representation, community identity, and engagement in decision-making.
Transport	9.36	Issues related to public transport, road maintenance, and connectivity.
Housing	5.47	Comments on housing affordability, development planning, and infrastructure.
Environment	3.51	Feedback on climate action, sustainability, and environmental conservation.
Economy	2.8	Suggestions for economic growth, job creation, and business support.
Healthcare	2.19	Concerns about access to medical services and hospital facilities.
Education	2.06	Issues regarding schools, learning opportunities, and educational infrastructure.
Safety	1.64	Mentions of crime prevention, policing, and community safety.

Table 7

Of the above, the most common concerns were:

a) Community engagement and local representation – Emphasis on keeping decisions local and maintaining identity.

- *"Local government is not just about providing services, it is also about being a place leader and convenor for the local system and communities. I am concerned that discussions about LGR are so reductive - just focusing on what the boundary should be. If I had a preference it would be for two authorities to retain local identity and prioritisation of areas that may be overlooked on a larger footprint with joint working to achieve economies of scale in service delivery."*

- *"Support for community hubs which provide a point of contact for services and places for people to come together."*
- *"The decision should be based on what's best for residents, NOT local politicians."*

b) Transport infrastructure – Calls for better public transport, road maintenance, and connectivity.

- *"Integrated public transport network."*
- *"Churchdown is part of Tewkesbury. I can't get to Tewkesbury on a bus from Churchdown."*
- *"Improve transport across the county as a one Gloucestershire scheme, not just good in the urban areas of Gloucester and Cheltenham."*

c) Housing development – Concerns about affordability, planning, and infrastructure support.

a) *"I recognise the need for more housing… but it's SO important that the roads and parks/green spaces around these new estates is managed well."*

b) *"Local housing only for local people and ex-military."*

c) *"Housing needs to be prioritised. Limited and get infrastructure right before new homes."*

d) Environmental protection – Requests for climate action, conservation, and sustainability.

- *"Protecting our green spaces, fields, woods, and farmland from development."*
- *"Climate and nature action for the transition to a low carbon economy."*
- *"Environmental concerns, green energy and net zero."*

Other Issues

Several other issues were raised, although in much smaller numbers. These included:

1. Youth Services
2. Public Health / GP services
3. Cycling infrastructure
4. Libraries and museums
5. Environmental services
6. Parking / Car Parking
7. Services Older People
8. PROW (Public Rights of Way)
9. Policing

Council Structure

While at no point were respondents asked to give their view on the proposed structure options of the future unitary council, 225 (7% of the respondents) actively gave preferences in the written text on which unitary council formation they would prefer out of the three currently proposed options. Of these, 205 (91%) preferred one single unitary council governing the whole county, 14 (6%) preferred the East / West split, and 3 (1%) preferred the Greater Gloucester City model. Three (1%) people said they preferred a two-council split but did not specify the split.

There were concerns that the East / West split would essentially be seen as a rich / poor divide. Few were in favour of the East / West approach, with even fewer in favour of the 'Greater Gloucester' approach. There were some disparaging remarks about the latter not "making sense" and references to this model being a "political" manoeuvre.

- *"It would be extremely unfair to split our county into two councils, especially along the lines proposed - which would effectively mean a "rich" side and a "poor" side of the county, as this would likely cause greater feelings of division between people."*

- *"The Greater Gloucestershire option is also very silly. It's just a political idea that will make us poorer."*

Some people saw the two-council option as a half-measure, continuing to cause confusion over who is responsible for what, and causing disruption to existing services while not achieving the efficiency LGR claims to provide.

- *"Providing a 'one stop' shop for council services across the County, to eliminate confusion as to who does what. Also not to break up services that operate perfectly well at the moment to further a 'two unitary' arrangement."*

- *"To have two unitary authorities would be divisive, inefficient (compared to one), and cause identity confusion (with the additional factor of South Gloucestershire already existing)."*

Many said one large council was the most efficient option, noting concerns about splitting Gloucestershire County Council regarding health, fire, police services. Economies of scale were mentioned.

There was a feeling from Forest of Dean residents that they would be neglected in a larger council.

There were those who mentioned options outside those currently proposed. Many wanted the system to stay as it is, however, many who mentioned this realised this was not an option. Some offered alternative solutions such as areas joining Wiltshire or Herefordshire or South Gloucestershire Councils.

Conclusions

Headline conclusions

Existing councils are generally well-thought of, with high ratings for both services and interactions with councillors and officers. While this reflects well on local services, it does mean that residents may be concerned about any potential change to the way their councils operate. Several comments, in person and online, reflected a contentment with the current system and a preference for no change at all.

Reviewing any negative ratings and written feedback should guide improvements in the new system, especially by addressing limitations in the current two-tier system to improve services that are less

successful now. This could include emphasising that housing and infrastructure would now be more joined-up which was requested, or it could be shown that the change gives a chance to improve the environmental credentials of the councils.

Despite many concerns about local identity and community being lost, when respondents were asked to clearly rank their priorities for the future, efficient use of council tax and good service provision were far above sense of community and a local voice.

The whole Gloucestershire model was given as the preference by the majority of those who offered an opinion on future structures.

Resistance to change

There is a need to explain to people that LGR is a national policy with wider objectives – and that no change is therefore not an option.

Our engagement activities have included informing residents about the purpose and requirements of LGR, so this process has already begun. Based on discussions and shared information, it appears that more residents now understand the national government's requirements. Although some express a preference for maintaining the current system, there is recognition that change will occur.

Many people were also aware of the wider plans for devolution, ranging from conversations about combined authority mayors to potential increased roles for parish and town councils. Future information will need to include references to what will happen here as soon as possible, to avoid the current information spreading which could be misleading.

Next steps: Clear communications

It is important to build on the engagement already carried out, to keep residents' trust and prevent any misinformation. The key learnings of the engagement show which concerns were raised and where reassurance will be needed in future communications.

People wanted to see financial efficiencies – but not a service reduction: Those who preferred a unitary system cited financial efficiencies and the main priority was effective council tax spending and day-to-day services. Presenting evidence that supports these outcomes would strengthen the case.

People are confused about which council they belong to and who is responsible for what, leading to frustration when passed between councils. Messaging should highlight that a simpler system would be easier to navigate and encourage more engagement.

Each area has a distinct identity, so it must be made clear that the change is aimed at improving administration and efficiency, rather than changing altering the local character. Neighbourhood initiatives can help maintain a sense of community and clear roles for parish and town councils.

Another primary consideration is maintaining a sense of belonging to Gloucestershire, balancing local representation with broader identity. It should be noted that local representation will remain in place, and it will become more straightforward to identify and contact representatives.

Concerns were raised that larger councils will mean decisions are made for areas by people further detached from the area in question. Measures will need to be put in place to ensure officers or councillors handle this carefully.

Residents currently happy with the council services provided will need reassurance as to how services will be managed during the period of transition – mentioning the shadow council period and being open about the fact it may take a while but will provide a better service long term.

There were concerns raised that there was no real chance to state preference for the system. Since this was a period of engagement, rather than a formal consultation, the materials clarified that an official consultation would follow. When recommendations go to the government, local messages should make it clear that people can and should provide feedback.

As detailed plans to guide the choice of options are formed by officers, these facts and figures should then be used to support communications to residents, to work together to bring forward the future of Gloucestershire.

Appendix 1: Survey questions

Section 1: A sense of belonging

What is the first part of your postcode (e.g. GL5)?

What is your local council (tick all that apply)?

- Cheltenham Borough Council
- Cotswold District Council
- Forest of Dean District Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Gloucester City Council
- Tewkesbury Borough Council
- Stroud District Council
- Not sure
- Other (please specify)

Where do you live?

What do you consider to be your local area?

Thinking about your answer to the last question, tell us how much you agree with the following statement: 'I feel a sense of belonging here'

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

How important are the following aspects in contributing to your sense of belonging to where you live?

Local places to go like shops, community centres, sports and fun places.

- Very important
- Important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important
- I don't have a view

Things happening nearby like festivals and events.

- Very important
- Important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important
- I don't have a view

People you know in your area like friends, family, and neighbours.

- Very important
- Important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

I don't have a view

Green areas like parks, communal gardens, nature, and open spaces.

Very important
Important
Slightly important
Not at all important
I don't have a view

Easy to get to important things like buses, schools and the GP.

Very important
Important
Slightly important
Not at all important
I don't have a view

How safe you feel in your area.

Very important
Important
Slightly important
Not at all important
I don't have a view

History and heritage like important things from the past and local traditions

Very important
Important
Slightly important
Not at all important
I don't have a view

Section 2: Council services

For each of the following everyday council services, please rate how well you believe they are working in your area.

Rubbish and recycling collection

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Roads, pavements and streetlights

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Parks, gardens, and other green spaces

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Schools and education

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Libraries

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Sports facilities/festivals/events

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Local buses

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Social care and benefits

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

I'd like to rate a different service:

Very good
Good
Not good
Not very good at all

Do you know who your DISTRICT or COUNTY councillors are, and have you contacted them within the last two years?

Yes, and I've contacted at least one of them
Yes, but I've not contacted them
I'm not sure
No, I don't know who they are

If you answered 'Yes, and I've contacted at least one of them', overall, how happy were you with how the dealt with your questions, concern or comment?

Very satisfied

Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied

Have you contacted a council department (for example, parking, council tax, housing, etc) in the last two years?

Yes - several times a year
Yes - once or twice a year
No

Which council(s) did you contact?

Gloucestershire County Council
Cheltenham Borough Council
Cotswold District Council
Forest of Dean District Council
Gloucester City Council
Stroud District Council
Tewkesbury Borough Council

Think about the last time you contacted your council. Overall, how happy were you with the experience?

Very happy
Happy
Not happy
Not at all happy

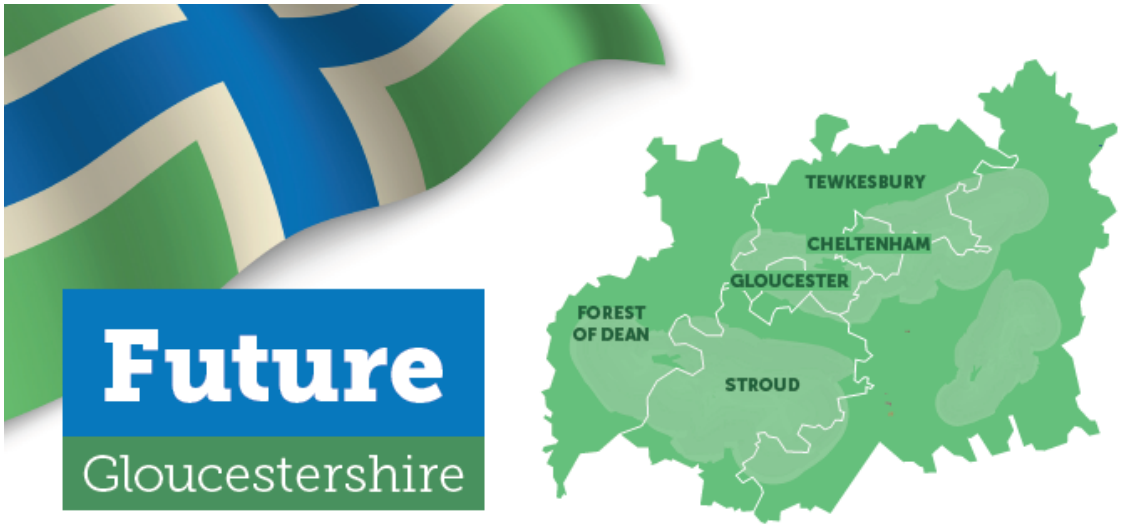
Section 3: Local government reorganisation – what matters to you?

What are your top priorities when it comes to reorganising councils in Gloucestershire? Please rate the following priorities from 1-4 (where 1 is the most important) based on how important they are to you:

Make local services better: This means improving things like rubbish collection, parks, and other services you use every day.
Make sure your council tax is well spent: Provide good local services without wasting your council tax.
Provide a stronger voice for residents – listening and responding to your concerns.
Provide a sense of community and belonging – respect the unique character of Gloucestershire, like its history and culture.

Is there anything else you think should be a priority, or anything you would like us to think about when putting together plans to reorganise Gloucestershire's local government structure?

Appendix 2: Flyers and banners



What is Local Government Reorganisation?

The national government wants to change how local councils work. You currently have one county council and six smaller district councils in Gloucestershire. The different types of councils are responsible for different services (explained overleaf).

The plan is to swap them for fewer, bigger councils that look after all services. These are known as 'unitary' authorities, and have existed across the UK in many places for several years - they can cover a whole county, part of a county or a large town or city.

The government produced an official document in 2024, showing their plans for devolution (handing power from national to local government) and saying that a unitary council system is the best way to achieve this.

What does it mean for Gloucestershire?

Rather than stating the plans for reorganisation, the government asked local councils to produce proposals on how they would like to move to a unitary model. In Gloucestershire, this could involve combining all six districts into one unitary council or dividing into two separate unitary councils.

The district councils and the county council are discussing what the best plan would be, both individually and as a group. The views of residents and communities are an important part of the decision-making process.

These changes give us a chance to check all the services we offer, to give people in Gloucestershire good, strong, and effective public services for years to come.

When will be know what is happening?

The deadline for all seven local councils to submit a joint final plan is the end of November 2025. If the seven cannot agree a shared plan, each council can submit one proposal, and the government would make the final decision.

The transfer of services would take place gradually over two years, and the unitary authority or authorities would be up and running fully by 2028.

www.futuregloucestershire.org.uk

Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

What do councils do?

County Council Services that Gloucestershire County Council is responsible for include:

- Helping children, including fostering and adoption
- Helping older people and adults who need support
- Making sure roads, paths, and cycle routes are safe and usable
- Buses, park & ride, and school travel
- Streetlights and traffic lights
- The fire and rescue service
- Making sure shops sell things fairly (Trading Standards)
- Registering important life events: births, deaths, marriages, and civil partnerships
- Working with businesses to create more jobs and help people learn new skills
- Free bus passes for older people and blue badges (parking for people with disabilities)
- Education
- Public Health - services that support people to become or remain healthy
- Libraries
- Large recycling centres and disposal of household waste collections

District Council

Cheltenham Borough Council · Cotswold District Council · Forest of Dean District Council · Gloucester City Council · Stroud District Council · Tewkesbury Borough Council

- Home rubbish and recycling collection, and street cleaning
- Collecting Council Tax
- Public spaces like footpaths, parks and trees on streets
- Planning and Building Control - Looking at plans for new buildings
- Culture, sport and leisure e.g. events and museums
- Providing homes and reducing homelessness
- Community safety teams, preventing and dealing with issues such as vandalism or noise complaints
- Community wellbeing - looking how to make people happier and healthier
- Managing benefits to help people pay their rent and council tax
- Licencing - permits for things like pubs, taxis, and events.
- Making sure places like restaurants are clean and safe
- Collecting taxes from businesses in the area (Business Rates)
- Public toilets

Town and Parish Councils

The most local voice you have is the town or parish council, although they do not have as many required roles to carry out as district, county or unitary councils. Each one could carry out different roles than their neighbour, and not all areas will have one. These will be unaffected by any plans for local government reorganisation. Responsibilities can include:

- Supporting local community groups
- Allotments
- Car parks
- Community centres
- Providing local grants
- Playgrounds
- Vandalism
- Neighbourhood plans
- Providing an official neighbourhood voice e.g. on planning applications

Future Gloucestershire

SCAN ME



Have your say!

Your district and county council want to hear from you:

How well do you feel council services in our area work?

Have you ever spoken to your local council or councillors?

What about your community is most important to you?

How can we make Gloucestershire run as smoothly as possible?

To fill out our survey, scan the QR code or visit www.futuregloucestershire.org.uk

Future
Gloucestershire

SCAN ME



Local Government Reorganisation

Did you know there are national plans to re-structure the way local government works?

The system will change from a 'two-tier' to a 'unitary' authority – come and ask us what this means!

Help your local councils shape the future of Gloucestershire.

To fill out our survey, scan the QR code or visit
www.futuregloucestershire.org.uk

Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Appendix 4: Summary Report of Feedback from Partner Organisations (Engagement conducted June - August 2025)

Background

Ministerial guidance for LGR has provided clarity about the role and purpose of Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) stakeholder engagement in the proposal development process. Criteria 4c of the Ministerial criteria makes clear that:

'Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed'

In addition, GCC has been mindful of its role in providing most of the 'crucial services' referenced in criteria 3c:

'Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety'

Guidance has also been provided to ensure wider public sector providers are engaged as proposals are developed. The relevant guidance is contained within the Letter to Leaders from the (former) Local Government Minister.

In this context, it was necessary for a stakeholder engagement exercise to be undertaken, at pace, to ensure GCC's county-wide stakeholders were positively engaged. All engagement was conducted in the context of GCC Cabinet policy to be agnostic of structural options.

The feedback from stakeholder groups has been considered alongside the outcomes of other forms of engagement and is addressed clearly in the substantive engagement chapter of this proposal.

Objectives and methodology

Over June – August 2025, senior GCC officers held stakeholder meetings concerning LGR, focusing on services or matters of relevance to the council's work.

The objectives of the engagement process were to:

1. Ensure stakeholder views were taken into account as proposals for the single unitary and east/west two-unitaries were developed;
2. Gather intelligence about the impact of LGR on stakeholder organisations;
3. Understand what aspects of LGR were of most importance to stakeholders, as well as any concerns; and
4. Gauge appetite and interest for future involvement in LGR (and Devolution).

To achieve these objectives, the following information was provided as part of each meeting:

- An update on how LGR proposals and Devolution discussions are progressing in Gloucestershire;
- An update on the LGR policy position of GCC's new Cabinet (i.e. to be agnostic and evidence-led in considering both a one unitary and two unitary model); and
- The timetable and key processes underway.

A total of 41 meetings were held. Many of the meetings, particularly those involving Gloucestershire associations, were attended by multiple attendees. Some stakeholders chose to write to us after the meeting setting out their views. Where consent has been obtained, this correspondence is appended.

Analysis of responses – key themes

The stakeholder discussions have been synthesised and anonymised. Four key themes, together with short quotations, are set out in the table below:

Theme 1: Structural options

There was a preference amongst stakeholders for a single county unitary model. This was described by one as the *"only workable solution"*. Further comments included that two unitary authorities would *"create economic chaos and a social divide"*, whereas a single unitary would *"open up opportunities, creating aspiration"*.

Creating two unitary authorities was referred to as *"risky"*, potentially resulting in *"confusion, disruption and duplication"* and creating *"barriers and bureaucracy where it isn't needed".*

Further comments included that a two unitary model would *"exacerbate existing disparities, particularly in rural western areas such as the Forest of Dean"* and *"create greater division over time, due to the further potential different political leadership".*

Concerns were expressed that *"job losse*s", *"delay and disruption in services"* and *"loss of local identity"* would follow as a result of a two-unitary solution.

Some stakeholders supported a two-unitary model for its targeted benefits. One noted potential *"savings of £4–6 million annually"*, and argued that the West would not be disadvantaged, citing evidence of *"affluent people moving to the Forest of Dean"*.

Stakeholders that supported the two unitary model emphasised its potential to deliver more localised and responsive governance. As one stakeholder observed, *"Splitting the county would enable each authority to focus on the*

priorities unique to their communities, providing services that truly reflect local needs." Another stakeholder remarked, *"With two unitaries, there's an opportunity for healthy competition, driving innovation and ensuring better value for our residents."*

An education leader commented that a two unitary model would *"lead to a long period of protracted negotiation and uncertainty"* and *"make the delivery of public services more challenging and not achieve the same economies of scale"*.

Special school headteachers felt that a two unitary model would *"make it even more challenging to place all the children who require specialist provision in an appropriate setting – sufficiency is already one of the key barriers".*

Stakeholders from the adult social care sector raised a concern about continuity of care under a two unitary model with one stakeholder feeling that, *"waiting times for adult social care services would increase."*

Theme 2: Local identity

There was widespread support for a stronger neighbourhood approach and a place model to drive increased engagement, with repeated calls for *"co-design"* and consultation informing boundaries.

Faith and voluntary leaders highlighted that *"relationship is at the heart of what it means to be human,"* urging that *"an emphasis on neighbourhood-level engagement and the creation of place-based structures"* should underpin reform.

Theme 3: Devolution/strategic partnerships

Some stakeholders felt that West of England Combined Authority (WECA), based on patterns of economic activity and travel, was the right devolution partner. However, there was also support for considering broader Devolution models (e.g., three counties) to maximise economic opportunities and regional collaboration.

Some also saw merit in partnerships with Herefordshire / Worcestershire, especially for sectors like cyber and agri-tech. However, there was also concern that Devolution would result in "*loss of local voice"* and *"funding competition*".

Theme 4: Finances and implementation

A stakeholder stated that analysis shows *that "single unitary models incur lower transition and ongoing costs"* and *"clear benefits in annual gross savings, payback period and net savings".*

Business groups felt that *"the two unitary model would create confusion and lack identity outside of the county. They also felt that it would weaken our ability to promote the place for investment and create an artificial economic split"*.

Stakeholders mentioned the benefits of simplification, cost savings, and better use of resources under a single unitary authority.

A risk highlighted was the potential for *"paralysis in any of the seven existing authorities, during the period of change/implementation and public sector realignment"* and whether *"the anticipated savings being promoted in the LGR take into account the investment required to create the best countywide service departments"*.

There was also concern over central government interference potentially impacting coordinated implementation.

Stakeholder Meetings

Engagement took place with the following organisations and individuals:

Name	Organisation	Notes
Alistair Russell	Laing-Russell	Business Membership Group Member
Sam Holliday	Federation of Small Businesses	Representing 4,000 small business members in Gloucestershire
Helen Bojaniwska, Chair	Gloucestershire Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)	
Mark Gale, Chief Executive	Gloucestershire Gateway Trust	
Matt Lennard, Chief Executive	Gloucestershire VCS Alliance	On behalf of VCSE Strategic Partnership and Integrated Locality Partnership representatives in Gloucestershire. Eight organisations represented in meeting
Barbara Piranty, Chief Executive	Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC)	
Simon Pickering, Chair	Energy Business Group	14 individuals in meeting representing different

Name	Organisation	Notes
		businesses and other organisations
	Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers	Numerous attendees
	Federation of Principals – Further Education and Higher Education	Numerous attendees
	Gloucestershire Association of Special School Headteachers	Numerous attendees
	Gloucestershire Association of Secondary School Leaders	Numerous attendees
Francesca Inman	Chief Executive, Cheltenham Business Improvement District	
Andy Bates, Chief Financial Officer	Gloucestershire College	
Robert Nettleton, Chief Executive & Martyn Blackman, Chief Investment Officer	Bromford Housing	
Ruth Dooley, Partner	Hazelwoods LLP	
Anonymised	CyNam	
Rupert Waters	Social Value Gloucestershire	
Simon Carey, Managing Director	Barnwood Construction	
	Northrop Gumman	Name not shared for security reasons
Rob Stemp	Deepminds Ltd	
Bishop Rachel Treweek	Bishop of Gloucester	Joined by senior clergy including Deans of the Diocese
Michael Ratcliffe	MR Insurance Services & Cheltenham Chamber of Commerce	
	Adults Collaborative Board	A group of people with lived experience of adult social care
	Gloucestershire Care Providers Association	GCPA Board Members: • Cathy Andrews • Chris Atkins

Name	Organisation	Notes
		• Claire Hopkins • Della Gilby • Josh Isaac GCPA Staff: • Pip Wilson • Riki Moody
Sarah Bell-Hartley	Barclays Bank	
David Goodall	FW Capital	
Suzanne Hall-Gibbins, Angela Edwards	C2S Ltd	Business membership organisation
Chris Farr, Regional Adviser (South West),	Country Land and Business Association (CLA)	
Michael Jones, Warden	The Honourable Company of Gloucestershire	
	Construction and Infrastructure Business Group	Numerous attendees
Chris Haine, (Chief Executive), Kerrin Wilkinson (Strategic Support Officer)	Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC)	
	Cyber Tech Business Group	Numerous attendees
Ruth Greenwood (OPCC Chief Officer), Chris Nelson, (PCC), Maggie Blyth, Chief Constable	Gloucestershire OPCC, Gloucestershire Constabulary	
Sarah Truelove (CEO), Dame Gill Morgan (Chair)	Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board	
Phil Smith, Chief Executive	Business West	
Matt Bishop MP, Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, Alex McIntyre MP, Simon Opher MP, Cameron Thomas MP, Max Wilkinson MP, Roz Savage MP	Gloucestershire Members of Parliament	

Written responses

Some stakeholders, listed below, chose to provide further feedback via email or letter. Their responses, together with any other organisation or association who chose to write to GCC, are included below:

Name	Organisation
Matt Lennard, Chief Executive	On behalf of VCSE Strategic Partnership and ILP Representatives in Gloucestershire
Maggie Blyth, Chief Constable	Gloucestershire Constabulary
Stephen Limbrick, Chair on behalf of the group	Construction and Infrastructure Business Group
Fran Inman, Chief Executive	Cheltenham BID
Bishop Rachel Treweek	Diocese of Gloucester
Gill Blackwell, Chair	Hucclecote Parish Council
Gloucestershire FE Colleges (Federation of Principals)	Gloucestershire College, South Gloucestershire and Stroud College, Cirencester College, Hartpury College and University, National Star College
Hollie Wakefield	CyNam and Cyber Tech Business Group Member
Kerry Cunningham, Co-chair	Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers (GAPH)
Barbara Piranty, Chief Executive	Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC)
Steve Rudd, Associate Director of Strategy and Transformation and Gloucester GP	Gloucestershire GP Collaborative (GDOC)
Sarah Truelove, Chief Executive	Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board

Response from VCSE sector

Date: 05/08/2025
From: VCSE Strategic Partnership and ILP Representatives in Gloucestershire
To: Siobhan Farmer and Alex Khaldi

Firstly, we would like to thank Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) for engaging meaningfully with the VCSE sector throughout this process. We have welcomed the opportunity to take part in open and constructive dialogue about the future of local government in our county.

As representatives of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, we recognise the scale and significance of this reorganisation. The decisions taken will shape how communities are supported and how services are delivered for many years to come. It is therefore vital that the voice of the VCSE is heard and that the implications for our sector, our communities, and the wider population are carefully considered.

One of Gloucestershire's longstanding strengths lies in its coterminous structure. This alignment has enabled strong partnership working, effective strategic planning, and efficient use of resources across the public and VCSE sectors. A move away from this model, by dividing the county into two separate unitary authorities, would risk undermining these strengths. For the VCSE sector, the consequences could include duplicated relationship management, more complex and fragmented commissioning and monitoring processes, and reduced capacity for coordinated delivery at scale. These risks carry both financial and operational costs, particularly for organisations already operating under significant pressure.

We are also particularly concerned about the impact of structural changes on smaller, place-based VCSE organisations. Many of these groups are deeply rooted in specific districts and neighbourhoods and play a critical role in supporting their communities. Splitting the county into two unitary authorities could dilute the visibility and influence of such organisations. In contrast, a single countywide unitary, if designed with strong local engagement in mind, offers a more stable platform for inclusive, locally responsive governance. It would allow for consistent commissioning approaches, clearer points of contact, and reduced administrative complexity, ensuring that smaller groups are not required to navigate multiple, potentially inconsistent systems.

We understand that the move to a unitary structure is part of a broader national policy direction, as outlined in the 2024 English Devolution White Paper and reiterated in the June 2025 *Local Government Reorganisation: Summary of Feedback on Interim Plans*. These documents emphasise the importance of clear rationale in decision-making, particularly where population thresholds are concerned. However, we do not believe the case for splitting Gloucestershire into two unitaries

has been sufficiently made. There is currently no robust evidence that such a model would improve outcomes for residents or offer any advantage to the VCSE sector.

On the contrary, analysis from PricewaterhouseCoopers suggests that single unitary models incur lower transition and ongoing costs compared to two-unitary models. Furthermore, Gloucestershire's unique geography and the clustered distribution of employment, housing, and inequalities suggest that a single structure would be better placed to support equitable development. There is a real risk that a split would exacerbate existing disparities, particularly in rural western areas such as the Forest of Dean and reduce the strategic capacity of each authority to respond to future challenges.

We appreciate the ongoing engagement from GCC officers and the commitment to working with the VCSE. Our shared ambition is for a Gloucestershire where all communities thrive, inequality is actively addressed, and services are delivered efficiently, equitably, and in partnership with the people and organisations who know their communities best.

We believe that a single unitary authority offers the clearest path toward this vision by preserving the strengths of our current system while enabling more joined-up and responsive governance.

We look forward to continuing this important conversation and to working together to co-produce a future that works for everyone in Gloucestershire.

Signed,
Matt Lennard
CEO, Gloucestershire VCSE Alliance
On behalf of the VCSE Strategic Partnership and ILP Representatives

Response from Gloucestershire Constabulary

Gloucestershire Constabulary
Police Headquarters
No.1 Waterwells, Waterwells Drive
Quedgeley, Gloucester. GL2 2AN
www.gloucestershire.police.uk

Jo Walker

Chief Executive

Gloucestershire County council

Shire Hall

Gloucester

Thursday 7th August 2025

Dear Jo,

I am writing to congratulate you on behalf of Gloucestershire Constabulary on your recent Ofsted inspection of your Children's Services. This is a tremendous achievement and a complete acknowledgement of the work that Ann and your wider leadership team have done to drive through improvements for children in Gloucestershire.

I know that my chief officer group, led by our ACC for Crime, Rich Ocone, are absolutely clear that working with and supporting you in keeping children safe is a top priority for Gloucestershire Constabulary. I am reassured that you and I have already met as Lead Safeguarding Partners to outline the key areas in which we will work together, and I am supportive of our joint plans for the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Clearly, from our perspective it is vital that policing, alongside the local authority and health service fully discharge our joint statutory safeguarding duties and you have our full chief officer group support.

There are a couple of areas I thought it may be worth reinforcing as we move forward.

Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) and MASH

Firstly, I am aware that Rich will continue to work with Ann in overseeing the detail of evolving multi agency safeguarding arrangements and will continue to work with Ann and partners to make sure these are successful. We are keen to help shape these, and I know Rich and Ann will update us accordingly. We can also keep close in our CEO roles so we can create the most effective and coordinated response to child protection concerns, with improved communication and information sharing and putting children's needs and interests at the heart of our joint MASA. From our

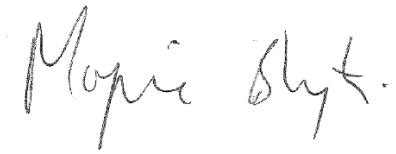
perspective our one MASH enables one front door for our respective workforce to ensure the right assessment, identification of risk and support for children requiring intervention or protection happens swiftly and robustly- we are keen to maintain one MASH to ensure consistency and coordination across the partnership, and swift assessments to respond to all children in need/requiring protection. I know that as you and colleagues work through your plans for local government and devolution you will be considering different options for the local authority. From a policing perspective, as PCC Chris Nelson and I reinforced when we met you and Cllr Lisa Spivey, we much prefer the positioning of one unitary authority so we can maintain and improve our coordination of vital capability, such as the MASH. Moreover, as we increase our analysis of our joint responses for children at risk of CSEA, criminal exploitation, going missing and the ever-increasing harm of online threat, we know that a focus on coordination, pooling of resources, identification of specialist capability and careful and swift risk assessment will be key. We are keen to ensure that we are not in a position where we dilute our current MASH capability but build on it together as a crucial front door to a range of services across the County, including police investigation and resource where required.

Secondly, we are really keen to ensure that our front-line workforce continues to receive the latest training and CPD on the threats facing children in our County. I am pleased that we have identified the joint training day on CSEA in February 2026 and we are also keen to develop our approach to responding to online harm, perhaps working with wider colleagues in CT policing and wider law enforcement. I know there are early meetings to take this forward already.

Finally, we will be disseminating our improvements since our national child protection inspection undertaken in December 2024 – we are pleased that we are making progress and would be keen to share this with you over the next month.

I look forward to working with you,

Kind regards,



Maggie Blyth, KPM MA, BA (Hons)
255558
T/Chief Constable
Gloucestershire Constabulary
Police Headquarters | No. 1 Waterwells | Quedgeley | GL2 2AN
Office – 01452 752313
www.gloucestershire.police.uk | X page | Facebook page

We are committed to being an anti-discriminatory organisation. This means not only acting in a non-discriminatory way, but addressing systemic inequalities, disadvantage and discrimination.

Response from Business Groups

For the kind attention of David Owen, Director of Economy and Environment, GCC

Ref: Responses from the Construction and Infrastructure Business Group on the Local Government Re-organisation and Devolution plans.

Date: 4th August 2025

LGR – Have you a preferred model?

- Our preference is the Single County Unitary Option.
- This should help to enable and create planned and managed strategic, sustainable growth and social regeneration throughout the county.
- It should ensure a whole county approach which does not disadvantage businesses in rural areas or urban hubs that continue to need long term investment and regeneration solutions
- This option meets the Government's size criteria

Devolution – Have you a preferred geography?

- Our preference is for Gloucestershire to be a standalone, single authority.
- If we are required to combine with another authority as part of Devolution, then we consider that South Gloucestershire has more established and relevant links with important business sectors in Gloucestershire including: - Defence, Cyber, Advanced Manufacturing, Creative, Education and Sustainable Energy.

What are the big economic opportunities from change?

- Planned strategic and sustainable growth.
- An opportunity to create centralised exemplar departments for key services e.g. A Planning / Sustainable Environmental Growth Team. This should be a new team with strong leadership and resources combining: - Planning, Highways (building on their delivery capacity), Planning Legals, mains Services, Water, flooding etc., working around solutions to, and promotion of, a Countywide Strategic Plan for economic regeneration and development (already in its infancy). This could be an exemplar department providing a proactive, quality and effective service across the whole of the county in a balanced, joined up and integrated manner.
- A Utilities Czar could be a new role focusing on coordination and cooperation between all parties over challenging needs and requirements of development and infrastructure, helping to minimise log jams and delays across the county. This would also help to avoid strategic, countywide, economic planning needs being affected by individual district priorities and boundaries e.g. J10 and Cyber Park.It is accepted that to create such a department and

service will require new investment in new professional skills and resources, however, the benefits are anticipated to be considerable in assisting sustainable growth and regeneration for Gloucestershire.

- It is hoped that the anticipated savings being promoted in the LGR take into account the investment required to create the best countywide service departments as the one broadly outlined above.

What are the economic threats from change?

- It is anticipated that there will be job losses (especially at senior level) to achieve LGR.
- In the short term there is likely to be delay and disruption seen in services, however, it is anticipated that these issues will be outweighed by the long-term benefits.
- Lack of investment in the right personnel and resources in the detailed planning, establishment and management of new operational service structures will impact on the effective change and value of LGR. This is essential for their success.
- Risk of reduction in Government funding to the county following savings promoted in LGR.

Response from Cheltenham Business Improvement District

From: Fran Inman
Date: Thursday, 7 August 2025 at 11:16
To: OWEN, David
Subject: Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

Good morning David,

Please see below how devolution and local government reorganisation could provide both pros and cons for Cheltenham Business Improvement District:

Key Threats to the BID from Devolution

- Loss of local voice: A larger devolved authority may centralise decisions, weakening Cheltenham's influence.
- Funding competition: Risk of resources being directed to bigger centres.
- Reduced business engagement: Complexity and distance from decision-making may disengage levy payers.
- Policy misalignment: Devolved priorities may not reflect Cheltenham's business needs or placemaking ambitions.

Opportunities for Cheltenham

- Access to greater funding: For transport, regeneration, and skills development.
- Stronger strategic voice: If BIDs are embedded in governance structures as a key stakeholder, we can influence regional economic strategy.
- Joined-up planning: Opportunity to align infrastructure, town centre growth, and skills strategies.

2. Cheltenham as a hub: A chance to position Cheltenham as a key economic and cultural centre within a devolved geography.

Cheltenham BID does not take a position on the political decision of whether devolution or LGR should happen. However, if change does occur, we believe the voice of Cheltenham's businesses must be represented, local decision-making should be protected, and opportunities for investment in our town centre should be maximised.

Always happy to discuss further.

Best wishes,
Fran

Francesca Inman

Chief Executive

Response from Diocese of Gloucester

The Rt Revd Rachel Treweek
Lord Bishop of
Gloucester & Anglican
Bishop for HM Prisons
The Bishop's
Office 2 College Green,
Gloucester, GL1 2LR
bgloucester@glosdioc.org.uk
Tel: 01452 835511

+RG/AODP
29 July 2025

Siobhan Farmer
Director of Public Health
Gloucestershire County Council
Shire Hall
Westgate
Street
Gloucester
GL1 2TG

Dear Siobhan

Reflections following our recent meeting on Local Government Reform

Thank you again for meeting with the Bishop's Staff Team on 17 July 2025 to explore the implications of the proposed Local Government Reform for Gloucestershire. We appreciated the opportunity to contribute to your thinking at this formative stage and to reflect together on both the risks and opportunities for our communities.
As you noted, the shift to a unitary authority model raises complex questions of identity, representation, and place.

Our discussion focused heavily on the importance of identity. Gloucestershire as a whole lacks a single, cohesive identity. Many communities are orientated more towards external centres - Bristol, Birmingham, London, and even Wales—than towards a unifying county centre. This is reflected in regional media coverage, patterns of travel, and informal networks. Interestingly, many communities feel as if they are 'on the edge' (e.g. bordering Oxford, Wales etc).

As a diocese (covering an area from just south of Stratford upon Avon to just north of Bristol-the old ceremonial county) we have two Archdeaconries (Gloucester and Cheltenham), each with a number of what we call deaneries (clusters of parishes). The Gloucester deaneries are Gloucester City, Stroud, Forest, Wotton and Severn Vale; and the Cheltenham deaneries are Cheltenham, North Cotswolds, Tewkesbury and Winchcombe, and Cirencester.

About 10 years ago we did an analysis of the social context, and Benjamin Preece Smith (Diocesan Secretary) would be very willing to share that with you. One of the things we observed is three key areas in the county: Forest, Vale and Hill. Neither Cheltenham or Gloucester are big enough as single entities and are quite insular settlements. In Gloucestershire, a number of settlements are quite old, and several of the market towns act as hubs for the villages and surrounding areas e.g. Northleach/Moreton-in-Marsh,

Stow and Chipping Campden.

Each of the 42 dioceses in the church of England are grouped into regions. This diocese is formally in the SW region but we have removed ourselves to the West Midlands region as we have far more in common with Worcestershire and Herefordshire (not least regarding events such as the Three Counties Show and the Three Choirs Festival). We are curious about how connections with these counties are being considered in proposals.

Gloucestershire is actually relatively small compared to many large cities and counties, and we are concerned that the discussion is around dividing what is already small into something even smaller. What does this mean in terms of critical mass for the University, our schools etc? Dividing the county into east and west could weaken rather than strengthen local governance and complicate partnerships—particularly in areas such as education and health, where scale and consistency matter.

When we appoint new clergy to the diocese we always talk about the diocese as being large enough to be well-resourced and small enough that we know each other. In all of your discussions, we would want to keep an emphasis on relationship, which is something that is not emphasised enough in political thinking, new housing, governance and policies etc. As Christians, we believe that relationship is at the heart of what it means to be human and to be made in the image of God, and we believe that people of different faiths and of no faith would recognise the fact that, in the UK, we have diminished the importance of relationship across so much of our society. We would want you to be asking questions about relationship and community. Thus, we strongly support your emphasis on neighbourhood-level engagement and the creation of place-based structures that reflect where people actually live and relate. This is what we endeavour to live as a diocese, encouraging local community engagement.

We were encouraged to hear that any neighbourhood model will be co-designed and that consultation will inform how boundaries are drawn. We would welcome the opportunity to support that work and would be glad to contribute parish and deanery mapping to help build a fuller picture of local networks.

In all of this, there are also questions about social identity. There is undoubtedly much greater diversity in Gloucestershire than some people wish to acknowledge, not least regarding social background and racial diversity. In areas which are often characterised as middle-class and affluent, there are many pockets of hardship, and much greater inequality than many people want to recognise. I also believe we have to be asking the hard questions about why young people choose not to come back to Gloucestershire once they have left home.

Finally, it was good to acknowledge that, in all these discussions, we are certainly not saying that the structures we currently have work really well. Some district councils are performing better than others, and we note that authority and influence are pretty poor in other areas. For example, we would certainly want to acknowledge that the city centre in Gloucester has changed hugely, and no one seems to have a grip on owning it or bringing about change.

Having said that, we did also comment on the fact that Gloucestershire punches above its weight when it comes to charities, voluntary organisations and the third sector. How will proposed changes affect the activity of civil society?

Finally, we were glad to note the commitment to continued engagement and consultation.

Thank you again for your time and partnership. Please do keep us informed as the process develops - we would be very glad to remain part of the conversation.

Yours sincerely.



Copy to:

Benjamin Preece-Smith (Diocesan Secretary)

Lucy Taylor (Head of Diocesan Comms & Engagement & Deputy Diocesan Secretary)

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Response from Gloucestershire Further Education Colleges

Campus,
Llanthony
Rd
Gloucester
GL2 5JQ
0345 155 2020

29th July 2025

To whom it may concern

Response from the Gloucestershire Further Education Colleges to Unitary Authority Proposals for Gloucestershire

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing discussion around local government reform in Gloucestershire. Further education (FE) colleges play a central role in delivering technical and professional education, improving social mobility, and addressing the region's skills needs. Whilst we will ultimately work proactively with whichever model is adopted, we strongly favour the creation of a single all-county unitary authority. This model offers the most coherent, equitable and strategic approach to supporting learners, employers, and the county's economic development.

We believe that option has the following advantages:

- Strategic Alignment Across the County - A single authority enables a joined-up approach to economic development, transport, housing, and education -all of which are essential to integrated skills planning.
- Simplified Relationships - Colleges currently operate county-wide, working with multiple stakeholders and systems. A single point of engagement would reduce duplication, streamline planning, and improve accountability.
- Efficient Commissioning and Funding - Fragmentation risks are likely to increase commissioning costs, with more overhead and bureaucracy -meaning less funding reaches the learner. A single authority offers economies of scale and consistent commissioning decisions.
- Equitable and Impact-Led Resource Allocation - A county-wide authority is better positioned to allocate capital and revenue funding where it delivers the greatest impact for learners and employers, not simply within rigid administrative boundaries.

- Unified Voice in Devolution and Investment - A single authority would be a stronger and more coherent partner in any future devolution deals or combined authority arrangements. This is essential to secure fair access to devolved budgets and influence key strategic decisions.

Whether through an East/West division or a "Greater Gloucester" configuration, we have significant concerns about the impact of splitting Gloucestershire into two unitary authorities. Some of us already have experience or working across multiple local government areas and the attendant administrative and strategic consequences which include:

- Multiple EHCP and Transition Pathways - Working with multiple local authorities risks increasing inconsistent approaches to EHCPs, transition planning, SEND funding, and placement decisions - adding complexity and creating inequity for vulnerable learners.
- Diverging Priorities and Governance - having to align to multiple sets of political priorities, governance structures, and reporting processes. This reduces clarity for the communities we serve and adds pressure to strategic and operational planning.
- Fragmented Transport, Careers and Support Services - Inconsistent approaches to transport policy, travel subsidies, and wraparound support (e.g. mental health, careers advice) can undermine participation and progression -especially for rural and disadvantaged learners.
- Risk of Geographic Ring-Fencing of Funding - If future funding (including capital) becomes restricted to specific local authority areas, this creates distortions in investment decisions and reduces the ability to deliver provision where it is most needed - especially where college catchments span boundaries.
- Devolution Misalignment - There is a risk that different parts of Gloucestershire could become aligned to different combined authorities or mayoral areas. This would fragment influence, reduce coherence, and complicate FE's ability to engage with regional priorities.

In conclusion, based on our experience and the operational realities of FE delivery, we believe that the single all-county unitary model represents the best option; and have reservations about any structure that splits the county and introduces duplication, inconsistency, or competition for resources.

We look forward to engaging further as proposals develop.
Signed on behalf of:

Gloucestershire **College, South Gloucestershire and Stroud College, Cirencester College, Hartpury College and University, National Star**

Response from Hucclecote Parish Council

HUCCLECOTE PARISH COUNCIL

Ms Jo Walker
Chief Executive
Gloucestershire County
Council Shire Hall
Westgate Street
Gloucester
GLI 2TJ

13th August 2025

Dear Ms Walker

Hucclecote Parish Council discussed the recent Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) engagement exercise that is being undertaken at its 28 July meeting, and we could not understand why the survey did not clearly ask which of the three current LGR options we preferred.

As we could not state our preference, we felt we had to set out why we strongly support the single countywide unitary option.

- It is likely to result in the most cost effective and efficient delivery of services.
- It will also provide the opportunity for early Community Governance Reviews would enable the uniting of fractured communities to be considered: -
    - The majority of the existing Hucclecote Parish within Tewkesbury and the remainder ofHucclecote currently within the City of Gloucester.
    - The creation of a single parish to cover Coopers Edge, which currently straddles the border between Tewkesbury Borough and Stroud and is split between three parish councils.

It should also be noted that the single unitary option is also supported by the County Councillor for the Brockworth Division, as well as the Borough Councillors for the Churchdown Brookfield and Hucclecote Ward.

We believe the suggested two unitary split of East and West Gloucestershire would permanently re-enforce the current difficult local boundaries for local communities.

We therefore seek your assurance that you will actively advocate for a single unitary council for the county.

Yours sincerely



Gill Blackwell
Chair of Hucclecote Parish Council

CC:
Cllr Lisa Spivey, County Council Leader
Alistair Cunningham. CEO Tewkesbury Borough Council Cllr Richard Stanley, Tewkesbury Borough Leader
Jon McGinty, MD of Gloucester City Council
Jeremy Hilton, Gloucester City Leader
Alex McIntryre, MP Gloucester Cameron Thomas, MP Tewkesbury Max Wilkinson, MP Cheltenham
Matt Bishop, MP Forest of Dean Dr Simon Opher, MP Stroud
Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, MP North Cotswold

Response from Cyber Tech Group

From:
Sent: 07 August 2025 12:37

To: CAMPBELL, Karen
Cc: WOODHOUSE, Paul
Subject: Re: Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

Hello Karen,

Thank you for the note. Please find my feedback below.

Whilst I do not have a deep understanding of the implications of selecting a single unitary authority, or two unitary authorities, or the Greater Gloucester model, my preferred model would be a single unitary authority. There are ovbious benefits like cost savings and efficiencies, alongside the ability to develop a strong narrative and plan for the whole of Gloucestershire which competes on a national and international level. I am not sure how much I buy into a couple of arguments specifically put forward about the east/west model. Specifically:

1. Whether the average person understands the role of their local councillor (especially the younger population), how often they utilise their local councillor and their MP, and whether a person identifies with their ward, their town/city, or their county. It would be interested to know what the turnout of the population voting in the local elections versus the general election in the 6 authorities, as this would likely show how much of the population would be affected by less localisation.
2. Forest of Dean being put into the clean energy cluster - they have huge advanced manufacturing capability and so would surely align more with the defence and advanced manufacturing organisations in Tewkesbury for example
3. Cotswolds in the secure tech cluster - not sure what capability exists in this authority for this rationale

Regarding devolution, preference seems to be WECA as government has made it clear funding will be funnelled through mayoral authorities, yet there is a slight concern that Gloucestershire's tech cluster will be overshadowed by Bristol and Bath, and the funding they have already received. If mayoral elections could be held for the Herefordshire/Worcestershire option, I would welcome more information on Worcestershire and Herefordshire's key sectors to think about alignment. There is a defence alignment that I am aware of already, for example.

The main economic opportunity I see is funding, and how the accessibility of this funding will be impacted by the option we choose.

The main threat I see is the disparity in the services and the costs associated with them provided by each Council, and how future service provision and associated costs will be calculated, as this is what will impact the average person the most. E.g.

Cheltenham and Gloucestershire's licensing fees are more expensive than the other 4 authorities, and Stroud has the highest council tax rate in the county. I also mentioned above about competing for funding with other established strategic authorities and the places within them.

Thank you,

Member of Cyber Tech Group – Name withheld for security reasons

Response from Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers (GAPH)

Director for
Education
Gloucestershire
County Council
Shire Hall,

Westgate
St
Gloucester
GL1 2TG

Sent by email to Kirsten Harrison cc: Ann James

16.07.25

Dear Kirsten

Thank you so much for the meeting on Thursday 10.07.25 and for introducing us to the potential change for Gloucestershire.

As Co-Chair of Gloucestershire Association of Primary Headteachers (GAPH), on behalf of the Executive, I am writing to you in your capacity as Director of Education, to set out our views on this proposal.

We would have waited until the GAPH Executive Meeting in September, which you will attend, however, as you explained in your presentation, you have a meeting on 17th July 2025, with the Chief Executives group and we therefore wanted to make our position clear on this very important issue for Gloucestershire as a whole and in particular the Education sector, for which the District Councils have no jurisdiction, nor responsibility.
The Government Criteria for Change:

- *Establish a single tier for the whole of the county area*
- *The right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand shocks (aim for 500k population or more)*
- *High quality public services with specific mention of 'crucial' services (children's, SEND, homelessness)*
- *How devolution will be unlocked*
- *Enabling stronger community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment*

As conveyed by the unanimous views of the members of GAPH Executive, with representation from each Partnership, we hold the view that one, single tier, Unitary

Authority is the only workable solution for Gloucestershire, with reasons including the following:

- Children's Services and the Education sector's current working model (countywide) for statutory duties (for example: Admissions, EHCPs and timely access to support for children with SEND, Hospital Education, Social Care) would need to be split in an East/West model, creating potential difference and division over time, due to the further potential different political leadership.
- How would the Designated Schools Grant this be apportioned fairly and equitably, with schools located as they are geographically in an East/West model?
- The potential costs of splitting the single authority responsibilities of Children's Services- Education into two authorities will lead to a long period of protracted negotiation and uncertainty. You cited Northamptonshire as an example of disaggregation, which, having created two Authorities in 2018, only in August 2024 finally came to agreement over the financial settlement.
- The standard for a Unitary Authority is 500,000. The current county size is 650,000. Creating East and West would make those two Authorities smaller than the proposed standard size, which would making the delivery of public services more challenging and not achieve the same economies of scale that a single Unitary Authority would make, creating higher overall vulnerability to 'shocks'.
- How would the current countywide High Needs debt be apportioned fairly, in a two-tier system?
- Forming two Authorities from one, would create an additional border for the county and result in working an 'out of county' services model, for services which sit within the same postcode.
- The geography of schools means that schools working in Partnerships, Federations and/or in Gloucestershire MATS could find themselves working with two different Authorities, making effective and efficient running of these settings more challenging.

In your meeting with the Chief Executive Group, we are seeking written reassurance that you and Ann James, as our representatives, advocate strongly the view of GAPH and our position that a single county Unitary Authority is the only workable solution to this Government Strategy.

Yours sincerely,



Kerry Cunningham
Co-Chair of GAPH and Executive Headteacher of The Longlevens Primary Federation

Response from GRCC

GRCC Community Action in Gloucestershire

Formal Feedback from GRCC
Local Government Reorganisation County Options

There is an overwhelming need for the whole process of Local Government Reorganisation to be properly managed due to the risk of becoming a major distraction, take longer to implement, and cost significantly more to achieve meaningful rationalisation.

GRCC has a role in supporting Parish and Town Councils, whose concern is that this first tier of government will get either bypassed or forgotten or, worse still, be required to take on, possibly by default, delivery of local services without the wherewithal, especially financial, to ensure continued, viable service delivery.

The concept of Local Neighbourhoods, with populations of between 20- 50,000 is an interesting one, possibly comparable with the old Rural District Councils. However, there are currently major questions which remain unanswered:

- How would the Local Neighbourhoods be configured?
- Where would the local alignments be set?
- What responsibilities and powers would they have?
- What relationships would they have with the upper tier?

Within these higher population configurations, smaller communities, particularly those situated on the periphery of the county, perceive a risk of being subsumed into larger clusters with which they perhaps share neither natural connections nor established relationships. More concerning still is the fear of being entirely overlooked. Such communities frequently express apprehension that their perspectives will be marginalised, leaving them with limited or no opportunity to have their voices acknowledged or meaningfully heard

GRCC is in a position to support local communities in the transition to new models of local government and enable them to step in to help provide local services. Most of these services are currently delivered by District Councils which may otherwise struggle, for example: management of allotments, playing fields and open spaces; maintenance of highway verges; management of public toilets etc.

It is noticeable that there is no GCC cabinet member with a specific remit / portfolio for rural. Gloucestershire is the 33rd most rural authority in terms of its geographic area.

It is in the top 20% of authorities in terms of rurality, and 87.5% of its area is classified as rural, therefore a specific rural focus would be beneficial. We would of course be happy to support this work as rural specialists.

A question that needs to be answered also is whether Devolution would come with a recalculation of funding for Gloucestershire.

Options Appraisal

Single Unitary Authority

A single unitary authority meets government criteria in terms of size, will be more cost effective, and will eliminate the confusion of the current fragmented county and district council system.

It also preserves 'Brand Gloucestershire' – a clear identity which is stronger with all constituent towns and parishes taken together, speaking with one voice on a regional and national level. 'Brand Gloucestershire' is more marketable as a single countywide authority. It would provide a strong, cohesive entity which would play its full part in the operation of any upper tier Strategic Authority, irrespective of whether Gloucestershire is combined with WECA or with Herefordshire / Worcestershire.

The single unitary option will also provide an opportunity to create strong community hubs to address local matters, supporting small communities.

The single unitary option makes eminent sense and is the only option which would achieve the Government's stated objectives, with the following benefits:

- With a population of circa 652,000 it would meet the Government's aspiration for Councils to have a population of over 500,000. One unitary authority would be a considerable size, but would mirror the county's current footprint.
- The current three tier authority model is outdated and creates dissention between the differing tiers, especially over planning, waste management, etc., as well as causing confusion for communities as to 'who does what'. The single unitary is simpler, saving the most amount of money, and communities already know this governance model.
- It has the potential to achieve significant operational and financial savings by:
    - removing duplication of service delivery, e.g., planning, waste collection / disposal, etc.;
    - rationalising property, particularly office accommodation;
    - securing economy of scale benefits generally
- It has the potential to:

  - strengthen the County's voice at national and regional levels;
  - achieve effective strategic alliances with Health, Police, Highways;
  - provide more attractive career pathways for staff to progress, which will in turn help recruitment and retention;
  - enable proper countywide strategic thinking and planning to take place, especially in terms of:
    - land use disposition;
    - new housing allocations;
    - proper forward planning;
    - development of creative economic models to enhance growth and employment;
    - flood management
- It removes confusion in the minds of the general public and could provide opportunities to establish genuine 'One Stop Shop' Local Service Delivery points around the county
- From the perspective of the rural communities we serve and smaller VCS organisations and groups we support, there is a real fear around loss of voice and loss of funding to support the most vulnerable

East and West Option

The only real benefit is the improvement on the current seven district and county council arrangement for most of the reasons set out above, albeit to a lesser extent due to there still being two councils operating within the geographic county area instead of one. It would also allow communities to keep a local identity, and not feel as if they are being swallowed up by the county.

If this option were to be pursued there would be an overwhelming case for not aligning it around the current District Council configuration because this would perpetuate, indeed exacerbate current boundary anomalies and tensions. Much of this is currently being played out in the case being made by Gloucester City Council to create a Greater Gloucester to overcome largely historical inconsistencies created in 1974 when Tewkesbury Borough Council in particular was established.

The major disadvantage of the two-council split model is that it could lead to the disaggregation of services currently delivered on a countywide basis by Gloucestershire County Council, such as Social Care, Education, Fire and Rescue, Highways Management, Libraries, County Farms, etc., into two separate organisations. It raises concerns around consistency and quality of care provision, such as mental health and social care services, where Gloucestershire County Council

has taken on responsibility for more of these services from Gloucestershire Health and Care Trust.

More boundaries add complexity for support and service delivery, contracting may be become a logistical nightmare, and ultimately it could result in fragmented and inequitable service provision across the county. This split of services into two organisations could be avoided by joint board or lead authority models being put into place, but this would largely defeat the object of adopting this option in the first place. This model would also exacerbate cross-border issues, especially in health provision, cause confusion for communities, and cause a wealth divide.

Overall, adoption of this model would be a major missed opportunity to create an organisation with identity and presence, and many of the benefits of a single council option would be significantly diluted or dissipated.

General Issues

Affordable Housing delivery

Local Government Reorganisation offers both potential benefits and drawbacks in terms of affordable housing delivery. While the pros include greater clarity for residents, potentially more efficient and cost-effective service delivery due to larger scale, and easier strategic decision making, these must be balanced against a list of cons that might involve a key potential loss of local responsiveness, difficulties in achieving projected savings, and challenges in boundary alignment with functional economic areas.

Rural areas already face significant challenges in delivering affordable housing due to a combination of factors including: high house and land prices; area designation; relatively low wages and limited development opportunities. These issues are exacerbated by factors like second homes, short-term lets and restrictive planning policies.

Differing policies within the districts in terms of planning and allocation policies are also an issue. When we add that loss of “localness and clarity” that is essential in the delivery of truly affordable homes to those challenges, the difficulties faced by those in dire housing need in rural Gloucestershire become insurmountable. We have started to witness areas within rural Gloucestershire that are becoming gated, dying communities with unbalanced demographics, where socioeconomic development is stagnant. The reduction in the number of Local Registered Providers is becoming a real issue as more and more merge, with a significant and detrimental effect on the delivery of small numbers of homes in rural villages. However, Rural Affordable Housing is finally being recognised as a significant and important topic for everyone.

It is about much more than just building a house; it is actually the foundation of everything else in our society.

Affordable housing must become a KPI of every major sector, be they Public or Private, and this is especially true in rural areas such as Gloucestershire. Affordable Rural Housing delivery is crucial for a thriving economy and society, impacting heavily upon various industries and communities as well as public sector bodies such as health and education. This means that policies and initiatives, including Local Government Reorganisation, must consider the housing needs of rural regions. In the refresh of the Leadership Gloucestershire group, GRCC feels decision makers should seriously consider a place for planning. Having this level of expertise available to the group would enable efficient countywide strategic planning to take place in terms of housing, land use, and the economy.

As LGR emerges in Gloucestershire it is vital that there is a uniform and consistent approach from all sectors at all times. The more boundaries and borders there are, the more difficulties and costs faced by sectors such as Health, Education and the Police, and the delivery of Rural Affordable Housing becomes even more challenging. This at a time when all sectors need to be able to work coherently and seamlessly together in order to deliver sustainable, quality services that can also work together, forming strong partnerships.

One Health Authority, one Education Authority, one Police and Emergency Authority, one Planning Authority, and one Rural Affordable Housing organisation could mean faster, more efficient partnership-based delivery of affordable housing. Lack of affordable housing affects all areas including economic growth, social equity, health and wellbeing, education, hospitality and retail.

In conclusion, as a neutral, independent Voluntary Sector organisation and rural specialist whose role is to represent and serve the communities of Gloucestershire, we hope to have provided a balanced and constructive view/opinion of both options based on over a century of understanding and knowledge of the county, along with our multi-level connections and reach into those communities.

August 2025

Response from GDOC (Gloucestershire's GP provider organisation)

Hi Alex,

We tested this with our GP Collaborative Summit today, comprising all of our Gloucestershire GP practices and Primary Care Networks. There was a clear majority decision from our practices, which has informed the response that I'm pleased to provide below:

Gloucestershire General Practice Collaborative, on behalf of our general practice providers across Gloucestershire, welcome the opportunity to comment on proposals for future local government structures in our county. Our primary objective in providing this feedback is ensuring that the health and care system best supports the delivery of high-quality, sustainable and integrated care for our population and the patients we serve on a daily basis.

We believe that a **single unitary authority for Gloucestershire** would bring clear benefits compared to establishing two smaller unitary authorities:

1. **Clearer Alignment with NHS Structures**
   - Gloucestershire is a clearly defined 'place' within the new Gloucestershire and BNSSG Integrated Care Board (ICB). Furthermore, our primary care structures are also aligned to our Gloucestershire footprint, such as our GP Collaborative, our Local Medical Committee (LMC) and our Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC). A single unitary authority would align with this geography, avoiding the duplication and fragmentation of relationships that two authorities would inevitably create.
   - This alignment would streamline joint planning for population health, prevention, and service delivery.

2. **Simplified Partnership Working**
   - General practice is engaging in system-level programmes, through our GP Collaborative, our Primary Care Networks, our Integrated Locality Partnerships and our ICB. Having one local government partner makes collaboration more straightforward, saving time and resources.
   - A two-unitary model would double the number of political, officer, and governance forums practices would need to engage with, stretching already limited leadership capacity in primary care.

3. **Consistency for Patients, Communities and Neighbourhoods**
   - A single authority provides residents with a more consistent offer for public health, social care and other services that directly affect health and wellbeing.
   - In contrast, a two-unitary model risks divergence of policy and provision, leading to inequities between communities and confusion for patients, potential boundaries in our recognised primary care networks and neighbourhoods and inequalities being exacerbated by two-unitary authorities with potentially quite divergent economic positions.

4. **Efficiency and Value for Money**
   - From a health system perspective, the fewer the boundaries, the less duplication in commissioning, contracting, and monitoring arrangements. This efficiency ultimately releases more resource for front-line services.
   - At a time when both the NHS and local government face severe financial pressures, avoiding duplication is essential.

5. **Stronger Strategic Voice**
   - A single Gloucestershire authority would be a more robust and influential partner when working with NHS England, regional bodies, and government departments on health and care issues.
   - It would reduce the risk of competing priorities or fragmented lobbying across different councils.

Conclusion

Gloucestershire General Practice Collaborative strongly favours a single unitary authority for the county. This model is most compatible with the way health services are organised now and also with the future plans for organisation, best supports effective partnership working, and minimises duplication. Most importantly, it provides the clearest and fairest route to improving outcomes for patients, communities and neighbourhoods across Gloucestershire.

With best wishes,

Steve

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Response from Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB)

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2nd October 2025

Jo Walker
Chief Executive
Gloucestershire County Council
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Westgate Street
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(sent via email)

Dear Jo

Local Government Reorganisation

Following the ICB Board seminar agenda item on Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution that Sarah Scott led I am writing to give the feedback on behalf of the ICB to the three options presented. The strong preference from the ICB is for the Single County Unitary option. The key points that we felt supported this view were as follows:

- Having developed social services at a whole Gloucestershire level we think it would be a backward step to move to two social work teams for the county. This would increase complexity for those working in our NHS services, to have two sets of processes and teams to engage with to ensure the flow of people through our care.
- There is also significant risk that we have a higher concentration of people with complex needs living in the West of the County because as commissioners of services that have been driving to achieve best value for the whole county we have physically placed certain care settings where property prices are lower (in the West of the County). This is a risk that in an East/West split of unitary authorities that there will be an imbalance of responsibility for high need groups that will cause unforeseen consequences and exacerbate inequalities.
- The PWC financial option analysis shows a clear advantage to having a single unitary authority from a financial perspective and in a period when all public services are under considerable pressure to deliver best value to our population we feel this is an important consideration.
- We recognise that we need to work closely with you to ensure we continue to shift our care models to meet the changing needs of our population. This is best done in neighbourhoods and we feel the option described as Greater Gloucester may disturb some of those natural communities and the good strong working that we have developed in our localities.

Becky Parish has shared evidence with Siobhan and Sarah from previous public engagement exercises which shows little difference in what is important to people from their public services.

I hope this response is helpful as part of the business case development and I am happy to discuss this further at our next 1:1 if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Truelove

Sarah Truelove
Chief Executive Officer
NHS Gloucestershire

cc: Shane Devlin
Jane Cummings

Appendix 5: Detailed Options Analysis

This appendix provides additional detailed commentary assessing a **Single Unitary Authority (1UA)** and **Two Unitary Authorities (2UA - East and West)**, against the nine criteria agreed for this business case.

Detailed analysis of **single unitary (1UA) model** against criteria

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Alignment Summary	RAG
1. Sensible single tier of local government	A) Establishes a single tier of local government for the whole of the area concerned.	Under a 1UA model, the current councils would be replaced by a single authority (albeit legally GCC would be a 'continuing authority'). This would remove structural duplication and create one point of democratic and operational accountability for all services across Gloucestershire. • **Removes two-tier complexity** – Seven existing councils (one county, six districts) would be replaced by one organisation delivering all functions • **Simplifies resident experience** – Residents would contact one council for all local services, reducing confusion and referral between tiers. • **Consolidates statutory roles** – All key statutory officers would sit within a single executive team, streamlining leadership and governance. • **Enables consistent locality governance** – The Place Model for Gloucestershire proposes establishing Neighbourhood Partnerships in every part of the county. A single council can embed this consistently across all areas, regardless of historic district structure. • **Supports whole-system working** – Joined-up delivery becomes easier when strategic and local functions sit within one structure.	G

		• **Meets MHCLG expectations** – The model delivers a complete single-tier structure for the area, as defined by government policy.	
	B) Sensible economic breakdown: with a tax base which does not create undue inequalities.	The 1UA model allows financial variation across Gloucestershire to be managed within a single council. This enables redistribution between areas, protects against localised risk, and supports a unified approach to tax and budget strategy. • **Enables pooled resources** - Council tax, business rates, and government funding can be allocated based on need across the whole county. • **Supports financial equity** – A single UA can help drive more equitable growth across the county as a whole balancing any disparities that might exist in productivity and growth across individual areas at the moment (e.g. Business Growth in the East is 1.10% v/s -1.15% in the West). • **Simplifies council tax alignment** - Aligning current tax levels has reduced political and legal complexity under one council. • **Increases fiscal stability**– A larger tax base and merged reserves lower the risk of localised budget pressures and increases the ability to effectively manage Local Authority Debt (£819 for countywide v/s £674 in the East and £948 in the West). • **Allows single financial strategy** – One Medium-term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and capital programme can be used to balance investment and risk county-wide, including place-based regeneration and neighbourhood infrastructure.	G
	C) Sensible geographic breakdown: which will help increase	The 1UA model keeps Gloucestershire's existing administrative and strategic footprint intact. This aligns with current health, community safety, transport, and economic delivery boundaries, reducing disruption and supporting long-term coordination.	G

	housing supply and meet local needs.	• **Alignment with existing partner geographies** – The ICB, Police, Fire and NHS all operate on a countywide footprint, reducing need for renegotiation or duplication e.g. in terms of engagement activities. • **Maximise the council's influence with the ICB -** Given the proposed changes with ICBs looking to take on more local authority areas, retaining a single UA across the county will enable Gloucestershire to retain a strong voice. • **Avoids the creation of administrative internal borders** – A 1UA structure removes the risk of current countywide services or geographies being split (e.g. children's admissions, SEND pathways, acute hospital discharge pathways etc). • **Supports more strategic spatial planning** – The model enables Local Plans, Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and the Gloucestershire Infrastructure Strategy to be aligned across the county. This would ensure strategic projects such as The Forum project in Gloucester City and the Berkeley Site low carbon energy park in the West are planned in a coordinated way, alongside shared housing and infrastructure corridors that link Gloucester, Cheltenham, and Tewkesbury • **Simplifies strategic countywide structures that already exist** – There are already numerous examples of successful countywide partnerships across all seven councils including Climate Leadership Gloucestershire; Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP); Gloucestershire Strategic Housing Partnership etc. These partnerships enable strategic countywide coordination and leadership for things like housing priorities, rough sleeping, cross cutting climate issues etc. A 1UA model makes this even simpler to drive with a single council. • **Strategic management of homelessness and housing land supply**- A single council could be better positioned to take a more joined up approach to homelessness and housing supply countywide, which could reduce variation in housing capacity and support in meeting the increasing demand and complexity particularly in temporary accommodation across the county. This would allow strategic allocation of sites, directing development to areas with greater capacity while managing demand hotspots. Consistent policy could be applied to meet the countywide shortfall against the	

		five-year supply target (East has 4.97 years and West has 3.83 years, with a countywide shortfall of 4.37 years).	
2. Right-sized local government	A) A population of 500,000 or more (unless specific scenarios make this unreasonable)	The 1UA option: • **Meets statutory benchmark** – The combined population of ~659,000 is above the MHCLG target of 500,000 or more. • **Supports strategic scale** – This population size enables the council to manage key statutory functions (e.g. ASC, education, planning) with scale and consistency. • **Aligns with successful precedent** – The population aligns closely with other approved unitaries (e.g. North Yorkshire, Cornwall, Buckinghamshire).	G
	B) Supports efficiencies and value for money for council taxpayers	By consolidating governance, systems, and staffing, the 1UA model offers significant opportunities to reduce duplication and generate savings over time. • **Delivery of potential net revenue savings from reorganisation of ~£21.1m per annum.** • **Reduces duplication** – Only one set of ICT systems, governance structures, and senior statutory roles e.g. one Director of Adults Social Care Services (DASS), one Director of Public Health (DPH) etc. • **Streamlines service delivery** – A single operating model for each service (e.g. One revs and bens team and set of policies and not seven) avoids overlapping teams and inconsistent standards or support offers for residents across the county. • **Contracting economies of scale** – Significant benefits from aggregation of contracts (particularly noting bringing together Line of Business system contracts for service areas etc). In addition to this,	G

	increased economies of scale and procurement leverage of procuring a single contract (as opposed to six smaller ones) for specialist services e.g. cyber, contaminated land, asbestos etc.	
C) Improves capacity and supports the council to withstand financial shocks	The 1UA model offers stronger resilience, especially in high-cost and high-risk areas like ASC and CSC. In addition to this, through aggregation of some fairly small and stretched teams, there is increased resilience in areas where there are already significant workforce recruitment and retention challenges and scarce professional expertise and capacity. • **Enablers better management of significant imbalances in demand across the County –** In particular, within ASC, there is significantly higher demand and cost for working age adults (specifically for supported living) between the East and West of the county. A single UA can deploy resources (incl. finances and staffing) more flexibly to service this imbalance in demand. • **Increased workforce resilience for highly qualified and specialist service professionals –** Skills sets which are already highly scarce (with national shortages) e.g. environmental health officers within public health, planners, social workers benefit from being in single organisation to enable pooling of expertise, support succession planning and reducing the risk of exacerbating workforce challenges through duplicating or splitting staff across multiple organisations (or creating competition between authorities for the same staff). • **Frontline workforce flexibility –** A single UA can flexibly deploy front line staff incl. casual staff across the county to support delivery e.g. library staff currently working across multiple libraries or even the registrars team maintaining a single pool of c.80 casual celebrants who are deployed flexibly to deliver weddings and ceremonies across the county. • **Supports statutory resilience** – A single set of statutory roles reduces recruitment pressure and minimises significant additional ongoing costs of senior roles. • **Protects Place Model delivery** – Central support functions (finance, HR, data) are key to enabling locality-level delivery across Gloucestershire.	G

		• **Strong support resilience for front-line services –** Core services such as fire and rescue rely on local authority support services and financial support e.g. HR, legal, finance etc to support delivery. A single larger UA is likely to offer strong financial resilience and create less administrative burden of apportioning out support costs etc. • **Decreased senior management capacity –** Due to the aggregation of senior management roles, the 1UA model could potentially have a reduced capacity at senior levels to sustain financial shocks	
	D) Manageable transition costs	A single authority model allows for less structural duplication and avoids the cost and complexity of standing up two separate organisations, through reduced disaggregation • **Requires creation of only one new authority and legal structure, minimising transition costs** - estimated to be ~£21.3m. *Assumption based on assuming a continuing authority being in place.* • **Simplifies legal setup** – Only one constitution, shadow authority, electoral review, consultation and governance framework would need to be designed, approved and run. • **Reduces portfolio and programme duplication** – A single implementation portfolio required to manage the transition and implementation. • **Lower ICT migration and integration costs –** Currently shared countywide systems such as Liquid Logic (for ASC) would not need to be disaggregated or duplicated. In addition to this, data and systems migration could be managed on a service by service once (as opposed to multiple sets of systems migrations activities for each service). Lastly, one single website can be developed for the new council. • **Minimises duplication of senior roles** – One executive team avoids the need to recruit and fund parallel statutory leadership posts which can be significantly costly. • **Reduces duplication of county input –** Current county council stakeholders can be a part of a single implementation portfolio and would not need to spend additional time in multiple meetings, governance forums, working groups (i.e. county council stakeholders would need to be involved in all conversations if there were multiple UAs being created given disaggregation implications).	G

		• **Reduced risk of disruption to traded services –** Reduced risk of disrupting effective traded services that operate on a countywide footprint particularly in relation to services provided to schools.	
3. High quality, sustainable services	*A) Improves local government and service delivery, avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation*	The 1UA model would preserve current integrated delivery structures in areas like social care, education, and public health. A single unitary within Gloucestershire, if designed with strong local engagement in mind, offers a more stable platform for inclusive, locally responsive governance. Colleagues currently operate countywide, working with multiple stakeholders and systems. A single point of engagement would reduce duplication and improve accountability. • **Preserves current service integration** – Existing countywide delivery in areas such as transport, ASC, CSC, SEND, and safeguarding would remain intact, avoiding risk to safeguarding, statutory thresholds, and pathway coordination. • **Supports end-to-end planning** – Joined-up pathways for prevention, care, education, and housing can be planned across one structure (particularly important for high-risk residents who cross multiple services). • **Enables minimum disruption to significant transformation and improvement journeys that are ongoing** – e.g. there are significant multi-year transformation programmes planned in ASC which could continue with minimum disruption under a 1UA scenario. • **Minimal disruption to multi-agency partnership arrangement** – Only one set of safeguarding boards, ICB pathways, youth justice panels, and place-based health partnerships are required, making service collaboration easier and more effective. • **Resilience through scale and leadership continuity -** Professional Service Leads consistently highlight that larger authorities reduce risk during transition by retaining experienced senior leadership teams and service delivery infrastructure. • **Challenges of delivering services across diverse geographies -** The 1UA model would require the integration of two urban centres (Cheltenham and Gloucester) and expansion of capabilities to	G

		meet the rural needs across the county. This could complicate existing operating models and ways of working and risking inconsistencies in access and quality that could endure into the future. • **Increased aggregation risk** – A 1UA model would require aggregation of six district-specific services into one collective service which is likely to be significantly complex e.g. aligning six different council tax support schemes etc.	
	B) Opportunity for public service reform including where this will lead to improved value for money	The 1UA model enables a unified transformation strategy and consistent investment in digital tools, analytics, automation, workforce planning, and shared infrastructure, all of which are already underway through the transformation initiatives and emerging Place Model design. • **Creates a single platform for change** – Transformation programmes in ICT, workforce, data, and estates can be delivered countywide. • **Enables shared innovation** – AI, automation, and digital case management tools can be designed once and used everywhere. • **Supports cultural alignment** – One council avoids divergence in practice or priorities, allowing consistent reform over time. • **Improves analytical capacity** – Shared data infrastructure can support predictive and population-level service planning, particularly linking to public sector partners like Police and NHS – this is key to continuing to drive a focus moving away from eligibility to focus on prevention and early intervention (i.e. not waiting for the crisis to happen first). • **Backed by service insight** – Service leads across ICT, libraries, revenues and benefits, asset management, housing and homelessness etc consistently stated that a 1UA model would remove duplication in systems and governance, strengthen programme alignment, and enable investment to scale across the county. • **Improved strategic influence and collaboration with partners –** A single larger UA is likely to have more influence and scale to negotiate with local and national partners incl. educational	G

		institutions, DWP, ICB etc to drive stronger system-wide leadership and delivery of improved shared outcomes locally. • **Increased scale and financial resilience to innovate –** A single larger UA is likely to have access to large amounts of resources (workforce, finances, connections with others) to innovate, fail fast and learn. This is critical to driving improvement and reform. • **Better value for money** – In services such as ASC, CSC, public health and commissioning, the scale of a 1UA model could provide better value for money through economies of scale and single strong voice in the market. • **Creation of a single trusted front door for residents and partners** – A 1UA model can retain a simple, universal, trusted front door for residents to simplify their experience but also drive efficiencies in contact and delivery.	
	C) Improves delivery of, or mitigates risk of negative impact on, crucial services	A single authority can manage variation in service demand and outcomes across the geography by redistributing resources and targeting investment based on need. This supports equity in access and outcomes, especially for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public protection services including for public safety. • **Enables flexible resource allocation** – Investment can be targeted where demand is highest (e.g. higher ASC and CSC spend in the West) can be managed effectively. • **Improves consistency** – A single authority can maintain common standards and expectations for service access across the county, with flexibility built in at the point of delivery. • **Supports data-led prioritisation** – Systemwide data enables identification of emerging needs across urban and rural areas and supports early intervention strategies that can be locally delivered. • **No need for disaggregation of critical countywide services delivered to the most vulnerable in society** - Service leads across CSC, education, public health, and commissioning warned that two unitary authority models would pose risks of disaggregating safeguarding, school admissions, EHCP timeliness, statutory performance oversight etc.	G

		• **Reduces postcode variation** – Residents in different areas would experience equal levels of service and support which drives fair and equal access for all. • **Protects Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) and MASH –** Minimum disruption to the single front door to make sure the right assessment, identification of risk and support can be provided to children at most risk who need to be protected. In line with engagement with stakeholders from the Police, *"a 1UA provides the best opportunity to continue to maintain and improve coordination of this vital MASH capability with a focus on driving consistency, pooling of resources and alignment"* between the Police and local authority workforce. • **No borders created between the county** – A countywide model makes it easier to coordinate placements for education or social care to be considered across a bigger geography without the need to negotiate potential 'out of county' placements if administrative boundaries were to be created. • **Addresses homelessness strategically** – A single housing and commissioning function can plan across high-demand urban areas (e.g. Gloucester and Cheltenham) and rural areas, ensuring consistent prevention and support offers.	
4. Meets local needs	*A) Meets local needs and is informed by local views*	While formal public consultation has not yet taken place, this options analysis has been informed by engagement undertaken with the public through surveys and in-person events, officers from service areas and partners across the county (including county council, district councils and other partners including Police, VCSFE, health etc). Many countywide partners, including further education, health, VCFSE, Constabulary and the Diocese, voiced strong support for a single voice and shared strategic frameworks to maintain coherence across Gloucestershire. The EqIA analysis that has been conducted also indicates that a single council could strengthen consistency in engagement with groups with protected characteristics (e.g. disabled residents, ethnic minority communities) by creating one countywide approach to inclusive communications and accessible consultation materials, reducing risk of variation in how voices are heard across areas.	**A**

		• **Reflects strategic partner input** - The 1UA structure aligns with preferences expressed by the NHS, Police, and some economic partners for a single interface, highlighting that a single accountable authority would reduce duplication and improve clarity for service users. • **Backed by some VCFSE organisations** – Some VCFSE representatives who have been engaged emphasised that a single UA would make partnership working and funding engagement "simpler and more consistent," reducing the duplication they currently face when working across multiple districts. • **Supported by some of the county's local business networks** – Feedback from business representatives, including the Federation of Small Businesses, highlighted the benefit of "one clear voice" for economic development, inward investment, and regulatory services, making Gloucestershire easier to promote to investors and government. • **Based on current delivery structures** - The model builds on the existing approach to ASC, CSC, public health, transport - all delivered at county scale. • **Enables future local engagement** - Under a 1UA model, the council would have capacity to design and invest in community-level consultation structures. • **Capacity to combine strategic oversight with local delivery-** Services such as HTST, EHCP delivery, and ASC benefit from being managed by a single larger UA which has the scale to sufficiently manage and resource but with the ability to flexibly deploy resources locally. • **Places local voice at the centre** - The Place Model workstream (co-led by GCC and partners including OPCC, VCS Alliance, and ICB) has designed mechanisms for neighbourhood engagement within a single authority. • **Service-led locality feedback** – Discussions across ASC, CSC, libraries, ICT and education consistently supported a single authority with locally delivered services. Officers favoured retaining local footprints for operational delivery, noting this was already how people experience services. • **Risk of reduced local visibility if locality model is not prioritised** – Several stakeholders, including parish councils and VCSFE representatives, expressed concern that without sustained investment in neighbourhood governance, a single UA could appear more distant from communities,	

		particularly in rural areas such as the North Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean, where access to decision-makers is already seen as limited.	
	B) Improves / mitigates risk to issues of local identity, cultural and historic importance	The 1UA Model has been designed to protect and celebrate the many places of Gloucestershire. 267 parish councils currently cover the majority of the county and our Neighbourhood Partnership proposals seek to decentralise services and give greater voice to communities of place, interest and identity. • **Local identities –** There could be concerns that a single UA could dilute the distinct cultural, social and economic identities of Gloucestershire's two key urban centres (Gloucester and Cheltenham) which therefore may not gain local support. However, this can be mitigated as noted below. • **Civic identity retained** – Town and parish councils, mayoralties, and ceremonial roles would remain in place. For Gloucester a parish (city council) would be created, and similarly for Cheltenham, a parish (town council) would be created. These new parishes would serve to strengthen the identity and significant cultural and historic value of each city/town within Gloucestershire • **Allows for place-based branding** – Services can retain local naming, visual identity, and signage to reinforce place association, a priority raised in the Diocese and VCFSE stakeholder engagement responses. • **Reflects community affinity** – Feedback from planning, libraries and safeguarding services emphasised that residents associate more strongly with place-based identities than with institutional structures, making it essential to maintain visible local identity alongside a single governance tier. • **Neighbourhood Partnership proposals will make the new council closer to the places people know.** – The model will create a coherent offer for populations of 30k-50k, bringing the council and decision making closer to residents • **Supports visibility of place** – The new authority can retain ward and locality names to reflect place-based identity across the county.	**A**

		• **Builds on community infrastructure** – Areas like the Forest, Stroud, and the Cotswolds already have strong place-based partnerships in place. The 1UA model enables these current strengths to be built on with a more powerful place-based emphasis and approach. • **Builds on current area-based practice** – e.g. ASC and CSC already hold case review forums and safeguarding panels at area level, often aligned to the current districts. This culture of place-based accountability would continue to be retained and formalised under the single authority. • **Successful precedents exist** – Unitaries such as Buckinghamshire and North Yorkshire have adopted area boards and neighbourhood forums to maintain local visibility, improve outcomes and encourage community participation.	
	C) Addresses local concerns	The 1UA model enables county-wide service planning while allowing targeted investment in places with higher levels of need. This supports consistency of offer while maintaining flexibility to respond to local variation. • **Could be perceived as overcentralisation –** A single larger UA could be perceived by some stakeholders and residents as moving services further away from people and creating less understanding and tailoring of services to meet local needs. However, this can be mitigated with robust locality governance and retaining operational delivery close to people (as is the case already e.g. with locality based social work teams etc). • **Supports differentiated planning** – Strategic services (e.g. ASC, education) can be commissioned based on local demand and vulnerability indicators. • **Addresses inequality** – The model enables planning across areas with different outcomes (e.g. West: 16,609 children in low-income families per 100k vs East: 12,274). The 1UA model maintains the ability to respond strategically while allowing delivery to reflect place. • **Place-sensitive commissioning already in use** – Commissioners in ASC and education noted that funding allocations already account for variation in deprivation, demand and access (e.g. funding per	**A**

		capita is higher in the West for ASC and in the East for transport access). A 1UA model protects this flexibility while enabling oversight of equity countywide • **Supports coherent infrastructure and regeneration investment** – Officers stressed the value of having one capital planning and housing function able to target investment into high-need areas (e.g. brownfield regeneration in the West; affordability and access issues in the East), rather than splitting strategic capacity across two smaller councils. EQIA findings highlight current East–West disparities in transport access for disabled and older residents, and a 1UA model enables these to be addressed in a single transport accessibility strategy linked to Local Transport Plans.	
5. Supports devolution arrangements	*A) Helps to support devolution arrangements / unlock devolution*	The 1UA model simplifies engagement with Whitehall and regional partners. • **Streamlined governance** – A single authority avoids internal fragmentation, simplifies representation, and strengthens Gloucestershire's strategic negotiating position. A single council gives partners a single door in for strategic collaboration and funding opportunities. • **Improves visibility and scale** - A bigger footprint and unified leadership increase Gloucestershire's credibility and profile in national negotiations. • **Compatible with existing regional structures** – Gloucestershire currently aligns with the South West for funding and some aligned service delivery (e.g. South West Ambulance Service) and also shares ties with the West Midlands (e.g. through economic corridors and shared events). A single council can better preserve overlapping relationships and flex across both without splintering Gloucestershire's strategic position or regional partnerships. • **Improved clarity in negotiations** – Members and senior officers highlighted that a single unitary would allow Gloucestershire to present itself with clarity in devolution negotiations, and avoid unnecessary complexity in areas like housing, infrastructure and skills.	G

		• **Attractive investment platform** – A single council is better positioned to attract investment in growth sectors like advanced manufacturing, cyber, and clean energy, which operate across county boundaries. These areas require joined-up strategic leadership and investment. • **Improving transport connectivity -** There are already plans in place across the county to improve transport connectivity. Devolution offers opportunities to build on this and connect Gloucestershire with other economic corridors enabling further regional collaboration and enabling residents to access further opportunities.	

	B) Sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Under a 1UA model, Gloucestershire would join any future Combined Authority or Strategic Authority as a single partner, with a population of ~659,000. This contributes meaningfully toward the 1.5 million minimum benchmark used in current legislation and policy design for deeper devolution.
		
		• **Compatible with multiple strategic groupings to meet minimum population thresholds by and large –** With one voice, Gloucestershire can engage in potential Combined Authorities including:
		  ○ Gloucestershire + West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Core: 1.6m
		  ○ Gloucestershire + WECA (incl. North Somerset): 1.81m
		  ○ Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire: 1.45m (falls a little short of the 1.5m threshold).
		  ○ Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire + Swindon: 1.63m
		• However, concerns were noted around the relative size of a single Gloucestershire Unitary Authority in comparison with other partners in a Combined Authority. For example, in the case of a WECA option, Gloucestershire would be the largest partner in WECA, with a population of c. 659,276, compared to Bristol's c.472,400, South Gloucestershire's c.290,400 and Bath and North East Somerset's c.193,400 (population figures based on ONS 2021 census). This could potentially make a single unitary less appealing for other partners.
			G

6. Local engagement and empowerment	*A) Enables stronger community engagement*	The 1UA model removes local district councils but can introduce new forms of local representation and democratic engagement. Its success in this area would depend on strong designs and investment in locality arrangements. Some partners expressed concern that community engagement in a 1UA model must be deliberately designed, with one noting: 'if you don't build in real localism, people will feel even further away". • **Could be perceived to be further away from communities –** A larger authority may be perceived by some stakeholders to be moving further away from communities with a much larger and more diverse geography to consider. • **Requires active design** – The model does not automatically strengthen participation; new structures would need to be developed (a process already initiated through the Neighbourhood Area Partnerships proposed by the Place Model programme). • **Supports consistent frameworks** – A single council can create countywide standards for local structures including Neighbourhood Area Partnerships. • **Avoids duplication of democratic processes** – One tier of governance reduces overlap and potential confusion over responsibilities (a key concern in feedback from the VCFSE sector and the Diocese). • **Can be designed to enable inclusive local representation** – Governance can be shaped to reflect towns, parishes, and historic communities across Gloucestershire. • **Rooted in ongoing local work** – The Neighbourhood Partnership model, co-designed by GCC, OPCC, the ICB, and the VCS Alliance, is already testing place-based forums that bring residents, councillors and service teams together to shape local priorities. • **Allows for a strengthening of capacity to support engagement** - The 1UA delivers the highest overall savings of options being considered (c.£21.1m annual net savings). In turn, this may allow for its Neighbourhood Partnership proposals to be given greater financial support and expert officer capacity.	G

	B) Delivers genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment	The 1UA model allows the council to embed neighbourhood governance into its core structure, particularly through the development of Neighbourhood Partnerships and Locality Hubs. It can formalise new models of area-based working and build on existing parish and community networks. There are also projected to be greater financial benefits from a 1UA model (noted above), which can support investment in place-based working and visible local governance across the county. • **Facilitates locality working** – Existing family hubs, community wellbeing teams, and parish clusters can be aligned to formal locality areas, ensuring operational delivery remains close to communities. • **Enables shared design** – Area committees (formal sub-committees of a local authority that operate at a more local, geographical level) or Neighbourhood Partnership can be co-designed with communities and elected members. The Place Model being worked on already in Gloucestershire explicitly sets out a roadmap for co-production. • **Formalises locality governance** – Proposals are being co-designed with partners including OPCC, ICB and VCS Alliance, with clear plans for shared decision-making at place level. • **Supports consistent service access** – Local service offers can be standardised, targeted and resourced across the county. • **Backed by services and partners** – Service professionals including CSC, planning, and ASC leads stressed the importance of retaining area-based decision-making capacity, noting that local visibility matters for legitimacy. • **Raises the visibility and role of local councils and VCFSE organisations**: The creation of a Civil Society Covenant and a Local Councils charter elevate the role of vital local and hyperlocal organisations • **Protects equity of access** – A single council can strive to ensure that every locality, rural or urban, has the same opportunity to develop Neighbourhood Partnerships and access resources. However, this may sometimes be harder to achieve on such a big footprint.	G

		• **Reduces risk of divergence** – Feedback from ICT, audit and planning services highlighted that neighbourhood working is best enabled by shared systems, standardised training, and joint commissioning, which is possible under a 1UA model. • **Builds on existing models** – Several services (e.g. ASC, children's services, housing) already operate with area-based or district-level coordination. For example, in CSC, local safeguarding hubs and area panels are already delivering place-based oversight. • **Risk of democratic deficit** – By removing layers of government people feel as though the unitary is far removed from their local issues which can decrease engagement.	
7. Environmental and climate protection	A) Ensures the new authority/authorities have clear capabilities to deliver existing and future climate and nature plans.	The 1UA model offers scale and continuity in environmental governance. It enables strategic investment, consistent targets, and stronger institutional leadership on net zero, nature recovery, and flood resilience while safeguarding key partnerships and plans. • **Preserves existing plans and partnerships** – Gloucestershire's Climate Strategy, Local Nature Recovery Strategy, Climate Leadership Gloucestershire and Strategic Flood Risk Management approach are all designed countywide and can continue seamlessly under 1UA. • **Enables scale of investment** – Environmental budgets, procurement, and staffing can be centrally coordinated, with local delivery shaped through Neighbourhood Partnerships. • **Avoids duplication of leadership** – A single structure prevents gaps or overlaps in environmental governance. • **Aligns with existing officer capacity** – Current small specialist teams in areas such as flood risk and climate strategy can be consolidated. • **Enables neighbourhood engagement** – Through the Place Model, the new authority can embed environmental priorities into Neighbourhood Partnership plans, empowering communities to lead on climate actions suited to local needs.	G

		• **Bolster the role of the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) -** Pooled resources between County and Districts, and the ability to direct those resources according to need across the whole county would maximise the resources we do have (i.e. whether based on the location of consenting and enforcement cases, schemes, planning consultations or individual flooding events). In addition to this, a single authority would have single ownership of Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (Levels 1and2) and could also drive a more coordinated approach to identification and delivery of flood alleviation schemes and associated bids to national funding	
	B) Reflects local priorities in areas with sensitive landscapes (e.g. Forest of Dean, Cotswolds AONB).	The 1UA model supports joined-up spatial planning and stewardship across protected landscapes. It maintains geographic continuity and ensures consistent protections across jurisdictional boundaries. • **Avoids splitting landscape governance** – Natural assets such as the River Severn catchment, Cotswolds escarpment, and Forest woodlands would remain under one set of policy and delivery arrangements. • **Supports integrated land-use planning** – The Local Plan and planning policy can incorporate rural, urban, and protected areas under one authority. Officers confirmed that issues like nutrient neutrality need consistent policy and joint delivery at county level. • **Retains current plans for Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** – Developed at a county level over the past three years and to be delivered by upper tier / unitary authorities. • **Retains current infrastructure for biodiversity net gain (BNG)** – Gloucestershire Nature and Climate Fund (GNCF) is a not-for-profit body supported by all seven LAs to trade BNG development units within Gloucestershire • **Preserves cross-boundary programmes** – Flood schemes, biodiversity corridors, and green infrastructure plans are easier to deliver through one capital plan and Local Plan framework. • **Allows local tailoring within one system** – Local protections (e.g. Cotswold design codes, Forest regeneration priorities) can be embedded in area-specific planning and delivery through the Place Model.	G

		• **Supports rural stewardship through locality governance** – Parish partnerships and community networks, particularly in the Forest and Cotswolds, can be empowered through Neighbourhood Partnerships to influence local environmental strategy.	
	c) Builds on existing commitments (e.g. "Fairer Greener Forest", Climate Emergency responses).	The 1UA model provides the governance platform to protect, expand and align Gloucestershire's district-led climate initiatives. It strengthens monitoring and accountability while enabling communities to drive action locally. • **Does not erase local ambitions** – Protects locally developed climate action - Programmes such as "Fairer Greener Forest," Stroud CAN, and Cheltenham's net zero route map which can continue with local leadership but benefit from countywide funding, systems, and legal support. • **Allows integration of district priorities** – The new authority can build a single climate plan that draws on existing strategies. reducing duplication and aligning priorities without weakening local ownership. • **Supports accountability** – A single scrutiny framework allows monitoring of commitments made at both county and locality level. • **Enables targeted support –** Rural off-gas areas, high-deprivation urban communities, and at-risk flood zones can be prioritised in capital investment using a shared dataset and single capital plan. • **Backed by partners** – Stakeholders, including public health, VCFSE and environmental partners, emphasised that 1UA would simplify joint action on climate and support more joined-up community participation.	G

8. Civic engagement and participative democracy	*A) Promotes civic engagement and strengthens participative democracy.*	The 1UA model creates the scale and reach to invest in countywide civic engagement, while retaining flexibility for local communities to shape how they participate. It provides the infrastructure to support both digital and in-person engagement through the Place Model. • **Supports digital and in-person tools** – Investment in consultation platforms, community budgets, and resident panels can be made at county scale, supported by the central functions of the new council • **Embedded in service design** – Housing, planning, transport, ASC and CSC services are already designing resident input into locality plans and Local Development Frameworks. A 1UA allows this to continue without duplication. • **Protects equal access to voice** – A single model of civic engagement ensures that all areas, including rural parishes and urban neighbourhoods, can participate on equal terms. • **Supports community leadership** – Officers emphasised that strong place-based leadership is already being built through co-design pilots in the Forest and Cheltenham, and that a single authority enables these structures to scale. • **Anchored in Gloucestershire's tradition of community partnership** – The VCFSE sector and local clergy highlighted the need to maintain grassroots decision-making. The 1UA model can help to make sure the local voice can be protected and funded within a single, countywide democratic framework. • **Risk of democratic deficit -** Given LGR will reduce the number of elected councillors and create larger electoral divisions, this will increase the number of residents each councillor represents. This could risk a democratic deficit.	**A**

9. Inclusive growth and equity	*A) Ability to tackle disparities in wealth setting up one unitary authority or two unitary authorities.*	The 1UA model allows the council to address local disparities across the county through joined-up economic, transport, and skills planning with the ability to redistribute funding and focus support on areas of need. A single structure would be well-placed to support equitable development and reduce strategic risk. • **Enables countywide planning** – Economic development, employment, and regeneration can be designed to benefit the full geography, not just high-growth areas. • **Targets investment to areas of need** – Indicators show clear differences between areas (e.g. GDHI: £26,149 in East vs £21,191 in West, and job density is 1.01 and 0.82 respectively) that can be addressed through unified policy and without governance friction. The West also has higher deprivation scores (IMD 17.16 vs 12.71 in the East) and carries 60% of the county's children in low-income households - factors that a single authority can address through pooled resources, targeted regeneration, and shared preventative service funding. • **Reduces risk of postcode inequality** – A single structure avoids divergence in access to services or funding between two separate councils. • **Improves delivery of levelling up goals** – National funding (e.g. LUF, SPF, Homes England) can be more effectively coordinated through a single accountable body, improving Gloucestershire's attractiveness as an investment partner. • **Supports area-based targeting** – Through Neighbourhood Partnerships, the council can ensure each area has a local regeneration plan focused on its specific barriers to growth and access.	G

	B) Prioritises vulnerable residents and community-level regeneration.	The 1UA model allows for pooled budgets and shared commissioning strategies that prioritise support for those most in need. Vulnerability and deprivation can be addressed without artificial boundaries between areas. • **Supports consistent targeting** – Shared datasets and analytics platforms allow services to target support to where indicators show the greatest unmet need (e.g. West Glos: 16,609 children in low-income families per 100k vs 12,274 in East). • **Enables flexible, place-based intervention** – Services such as ASC, housing, and CSC already work with local partners (e.g. Family Hubs, VCFSE, schools) to deliver support through local forums, which would be retained and enhanced under 1UA. • **Simplifies cross-cutting delivery** – Services such as mental health, substance misuse, and housing need require coordinated input across teams. A 1UA allows wraparound offers to be planned centrally and delivered locally. • **Retains current safeguarding structures** – Countywide safeguarding boards, early help pathways, and integrated commissioning would remain intact, avoiding disaggregation risk. • **Builds from neighbourhood action plans** – The Place Model already includes a neighbourhood planning model for co-produced regeneration strategies, which can be aligned to countywide outcomes under a single council.	G
	C) Ensures that financial sustainability is not achieved at the expense of service levels.	A 1UA model enables savings and efficiencies through consolidation - not service withdrawal. It allows services to be protected by reforming back-office structures, harmonising systems, and pooling reserves, particularly important in high-cost statutory functions like ASC and CSC. • **Improves efficiency through strategic consolidation** – Consolidation savings can be achieved through shared platforms, aligned contracts, and joint infrastructure investment, as confirmed through extensive engagement with both upper and lower tier service professionals.	A

		• **Supports strategic commissioning and market shaping** – A single commissioning function can set consistent pricing, improve leverage with providers, and reduce fragmentation in markets such as ASC or education placements. • **Enables financial flexibility and cross-subsidy** – Shared MTFS, pooled reserves and countywide income allow high-cost services in one locality to be sustained without placing disproportionate strain on that area's council tax base. • **Reduces service fragmentation risk** – Disaggregation of statutory services like SEND and CSC was seen by officers as high-risk under 2UA. The 1UA model removes that risk entirely. • **Supports long-term value** – Investment in digital, prevention, early help and neighbourhood working can be delivered once, reducing cost over time without cutting access or quality. • **Reinvestment in frontline service delivery** – Most of the savings noted by service professionals are across back-office functions (and not directly from already overstretched front line teams). These savings can be reinvested back in front line delivery and interventions focussing on prevention and early intervention to drive improved outcomes. • **Countywide Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit projected to reach ~£234m by Vesting Day (1 April 2028).** If statutory override is not maintained or an alternative solution implemented, then both a 1UA and 2UA would face significant financial risks. • **Impact of the Fair Funding Review** – This also remains unknown at this time presenting further financial uncertainty to both 1UA and 2UA scenarios.	

Detailed analysis of **east/west two unitaries (2UA)** model against criterion

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Alignment Summary	RAG

1. Sensible single tier of local government	A) Establishes a single tier of local government for the whole of the area concerned.	The 2UA model fully removes two-tier governance by creating two all-purpose councils. While this simplifies governance within each new authority, it introduces an internal boundary that cuts across several existing countywide systems and partnerships. • **Removes two-tier structure** – Both county and district councils would be replaced by two new single-tier organisations which meets the overall criteria. • **Simplifies local service access** – Residents would interact with only one council for all services within their local area. • **Establishes clear internal governance** – Each authority would hold its own statutory roles and make decisions independently.	G
	B) Sensible economic breakdown: with a tax base which does not create undue inequalities	The 2UA model creates two financially independent authorities. While their tax bases are broadly similar at the point of transition, underlying income, need, and reserve disparities mean each council would have to manage its own risk, cost pressures, and investment strategies. • **Creates separate tax bases and MTFSs** – The East and West would operate independent financial strategies, with no shared reserves or risk-pooling between councils. • **Similar tax base across both areas** - The 2024 tax-base (Band D equivalents after council tax support) for two-unitary authorities model, shows a tax base in the West of 49% compared to 51% in the East [62]. • **Potential fiscal disparities** – Local Authority Debt is much higher in the West (£948) compared to the East (£674) and there is also a higher household benefit claimant rate (17.87% in the West compared to 13.79% in the East). These pressures would need to be	A

[62] Council Tax Receipts, 23/24, MHCLG

		managed by each individual authority with limited ability to create more fiscal resilience overall e.g. through pooled reserves etc. • **Increased potential exposure for West** – Higher service costs particularly for ASC where spend per resident is £629 in West vs £405 in East. This is likely to put a significantly higher pressure on the West council given the majority of a unitary authority budget is attributed to ASC Spend. • **Opportunities to drive economic growth based on the unique strengths of each authority –** Opportunities to drive a coherent narrative within each authority for their sector specialisms (Clean Energy in the West and Technology in the East). This will support in creating more job opportunities, upskilling young people and attracting inward investment to kickstart economic growth across both UA areas.	
	C) Sensible geographic breakdown: which will help increase housing supply and meet local needs	The proposed East/West boundary reflects historic district groupings but introduces a new internal division across some shared service areas and travel-to-work zones. While this may support visibility and identity at a local level, it creates complexity in coordinating planning, housing, transport, and environmental strategy, all of which currently operate at county scale. • **Builds on existing urban centres in the county –** Gloucestershire has two significant urban centres (Cheltenham and Gloucester) and the proposed East / West 2UA model aligns with these. In addition to this, the 2UA model is based on familiar district boundaries which will continue to enable the retention of unique local identities. This could also be helpful in designing place-based governance. • **Reduces alignment with partners -** The Police, Fire and Rescue, ICB, Education partners all largely operate on a countywide footprint currently and the creation of 2UAs would mean partners likely need to engage with two different organisations which is inefficient and can also drive reduced influence for each of the respective UAs.	**A**

		• **Each UA can retain its own housing and HRA –** There are currently two councils in Gloucestershire with their own housing stock (c.5,000 homes each) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA): Stroud and Cheltenham. In the proposed 2UA model, there would be minimum disruption or change required to this arrangement given one of these is in the West and one in the East. • **Challenges around private housing market** - Average house prices illustrate that the private housing market faces greater challenges in the West, where values are lower [63] (e.g. Gloucester £225,000; Forest of Dean £291,000) compared to the East (e.g. Cotswolds £419,000; Cheltenham £324,000), reducing profit margins and making it less likely that the private sector will deliver sufficient supply without public intervention. • **Variations in housing supply** –Homelessness is higher in the West compared to the East [64] (0.21% in the West and 0.11% in the East) with housing land supply following the opposite trajectory (lower in the West at 3.83 vs 4.97 in the East). This could result in more demand for housing in the West with less supply to meet this efficiently within the new UA borders. • **Risks inconsistency in spatial planning** – Without a shared framework, the East and West could pursue divergent housing policies, development standards, and regeneration priorities, which could make Gloucestershire less coherent in the eyes of investors and government. • **Fragmentation of strategic housing functions and engagement -** Fragmentation of delivery partnerships and engagement / negotiations with housing associations, developers, and Homes England, increasing the risk of inconsistency in policy, pipeline delivery, and tenant standards across East and West Gloucestershire.	

[63] House Prices, 2025, ONS
[64] Homelessness, 2024, ONS

2. Right-sized local government	A) A population of 500,000 or more (unless specific scenarios make this unreasonable)	Under the 2UA model, each authority would have a population above the 300,000 minimum threshold, but below the 500,000 MHCLG guideline. The East would serve ~310,641 people and the West ~348,635. • **Meets the viability threshold** – Both authorities exceed 300,000 population, in line with recent two-unitary models (e.g. Cheshire East/West). • **Falls short of MHCLG guidance** – Neither authority reaches the preferred 500,000+ benchmark for strategic scale but this could enable each UA to target their resources and focus on manageable population sizes and geographies (noting both the East and West would each have a densely populated metropolitan area with surrounding rural areas). • **Comparable to successful precedent** – East (~310k) and West (~349k) align with other approved two-unitary areas such as Cheshire East/West, Dorset, and Somerset, which have demonstrated operational viability. • **Aligns with precedent** – Dorset and Cheshire provide examples of approved two-UA models operating at similar population sizes.	**A**
	B) Supports efficiencies and value for money for council taxpayers	The 2UA model can continue to offer some efficiencies within each authority, but also introduces duplication of systems, statutory posts, and governance. Gloucestershire also has some good examples of shared working across existing councils which can continue to be built on under a 2UA model (where beneficial and appropriate to do so). • **Creates duplication for county wide services** – County-wide infrastructure would likely need to be split or duplicated e.g. in relation to governance structures; statutory roles e.g. two Director of Children's Services (DCCs), DASSs etc; Upper tier service systems used by adults and children's services etc. This will reduce the overall net savings achievable in a	**A**

		2UA scenario (potential net revenue savings from reorganisation of ~£10.7m per annum under a 2UA model). • **Reduces potential economies of scale** – Whilst there remain continued opportunities to jointly commission specialist services e.g. cyber between the two authorities, it is possible that over time strategic contracts would be negotiated separately within each authority e.g. for Childrens and Adults. This is likely to result in less market influence and a potential risk of suppliers 'playing both authorities against each other'.	
	C) Improves capacity and supports the council to withstand financial shocks	Each new authority would need to independently build and sustain specialist teams and leadership capacity. Smaller scale may reduce resilience, particularly in hard-to-recruit areas such as social care. • **Supports competitive positioning** – Each council can engage in targeted regional partnerships (e.g. East with WECA, West with Midlands Engine) to maximise sectoral strengths and funding opportunities. • **Continued opportunities to share services in a targeted way to drive efficiencies and improve outcomes -** A 2UA model can continue to build on the strong foundation of shared services and wholly owned companies in Gloucestershire already (e.g. Ubico for waste management, Publica for transactional services, One Legal, audit and counterfraud etc). However, this can be done in a targeted way to enable the 2UAs to operate independently where tailored approaches are required to serve their populations but come together to achieve scale where it drives more value and increases resilience / capacity e.g. continuing to operate waste collection via Ubico to reduce costs, offer improved scale and a more consistent offer to residents. • **Overall tax base similar across both UAs –** There is not likely to be significant variations in total council tax receipts between both UAs.	**A**

		• **Increased senior officer capacity** – In a 2UA model, both authorities may have to recruit for identical senior officer roles, allowing for greater capacity in senior leadership. • **Could result in a significant financial burden for the West authority –** Given the significant imbalance in demand and cost between the East and West for ASC (e.g. £405 spend per resident in East v/s £629 in West), there could be a significant risk around Ordinary Residence implications which could create a financial challenge for the West authority. • **Reduced workforce resilience -**Smaller teams are more exposed to capacity pressures and recruitment risk, especially in specialist roles. Service leads flagged risks in safeguarding, SEND, commissioning, and public health with concerns that "we'll each be half as strong". • **Limits financial flexibility in hardship** – Without pooled reserves or a shared workforce, each council would need to absorb shocks (e.g. market failure, inflation) independently which does reduce overall financial resilience for both statutory and non-statutory services. • **Additional overheads / administrative burden for shared services –** Where services are retained as shared, there is likely to be additional costs of managing governance, performance, budgetary allocations, potential disputes etc. • **Potential budget deficits for the West on day one -** Current financial analysis indicates that the East council in a 2UA scenario would be established with a day one General Fund surplus of ~ £21.9m. Whilst a West council would be established with a day one General Fund deficit of ~ £21.9m. This assumes the full delivery of unidentified savings required by all seven councils between now and Vesting Day (1 April 2028) and does not fully account for the impact of the Fair Funding Review (subject to further detail from government).	
	D) Manageable transition costs	Transitioning to two authorities would involve higher implementation costs and programme complexity compared to a single authority (currently estimated at ~ £29.0m). This means potentially	**A**

		higher legal, staffing, ICT, and governance setup costs than a single-authority model, alongside increased programme complexity and coordination risk. • **Requires two sets of transition and implementation governance** – Two constitutions, two electoral reviews, two consultations, two shadow authorities, and dual branding would be required. • **Lowered aggregation risk -** A 2UA model would require aggregation of three district-specific services into one collective service per region, resulting in reduced administrative and transitional risks for aggregated services. • **Disaggregation of systems and contracts** – High-risk, high-cost systems like Liquidlogic, Capita One, SAP, and GIS platforms would need to be split or reprocured, which are flagged as major risks and costs from discussions with service leads across ASC, ICT, and education. • **Increased implementation portfolio staffing costs -** Two separate transition and implementation portfolio teams are likely to be set up (noting close working between the two in some areas). This is likely to result in additional internal and external costs particularly in areas such as programme management, Legal and governance support, IT support etc. • **Prolonged implementation timelines -** Shadow arrangements, TUPE consultations, contract revisions, and legacy system exit timelines could vary between East and West. • **Additional ongoing costs of additional shared services arrangements** - Any new shared services arrangements (e.g. potential considerations around coroners, registrars, archives etc) would require formal governance and charging frameworks to operate across both councils which are likely to add increased ongoing running costs and effort to delivery. • **Costs to key services –** Essential services such as ASC and CSC require the appointment of statutory senior roles. These positions are mandated by law and therefore represent unavoidable costs that will be incurred by both councils.	

3. High quality, sustainable services	A) Improves local government and service delivery, avoiding unnecessary service fragmentation	The 2UA model would require the disaggregation of services that are currently delivered at county scale. This may increase the risk of fragmentation and inconsistency, especially where delivery depends on cross-county governance or shared systems. Delivery challenges have also been noted by stakeholders from the VCFSE sector particularly given increased duplication, fragmented commissioning, and reduced ability to coordinate delivery at scale. • **Aligns delivery to distinct area profiles** – East could design services around its rural access needs, building on the Cotswolds' established community transport networks and the Tewkesbury Garden Communities. West could integrate regeneration and safeguarding priorities for Gloucester and the Forest of Dean. • **Strengthens local partnerships** – Smaller geographies make it easier to work intensively with anchor institutions such as the University of Gloucestershire in the West and Royal Agricultural University Cirencester in the East, embedding them into local economic and education strategies • **Potential disruption to countywide transformation pipelines** – Significant multi-year transformation and digital programmes, largely at county level, already underway would likely need to be paused and rescoped for each authority – This could slow down improvements to service delivery. • **Requires disaggregation of critical countywide services** – ASC, CSC, education, SEND, public health, emergency planning, transport would each need to be split out in a 2UA scenario (or at a minimum with some form of shared arrangements in place to enable delivery across two sovereign organisations). Given the statutory responsibilities associated with these services and the legislative requirements and governance, it is most likely services would need to be fully disaggregated to maintain clarity in accountability and enable long-term service stability. While this is possible, it is noted it will be extremely complex e.g. issues regarding ordinary residence (i.e. who pays for the cost of delivery) in social care as well as the disparity of need across the two unitary authorities.	**A**

		• **Requires the creation of a standalone Fire and Rescue Authority -** Under the provisions in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, fire and rescue will need to move to non-local authority governance, financial, and service arrangement (i.e. the creation of an independent Fire and Rescue Authority), which will incur additional costs and may increase risk to sustainable service provision. • **Reduces potential operational flexibility for transport and highways services** - Operational flexibility may be reduced if contractors are restricted to specific UA boundaries, limiting the ability to respond efficiently to local issues. • **Introduces governance complexity** – Safeguarding, legal, and commissioning leads confirmed that multi-agency boards would need to be split or restructured, adding complexity to ICB engagement and joint delivery with NHS and Police. • **Could lead to variation** – Differences in resources, priorities or capacity could lead to divergence in how services are delivered across the two areas with residents close to boundaries experiencing variations in provision. • **Disaggregation introduces risk of fragmentation** – Education, ASC and public health services warned that users moving between East and West may face different systems, policies, and access routes. • **Challenges for cross-border services** – School trusts, Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs), and regional partnerships may have to deal with two education strategies, SEND policies, and admissions frameworks, which was flagged by GAPH and FE as significant risks to consistency and collaboration. • **Place-based delivery becomes harder to coordinate** – With two sovereign councils, divergence in how neighbourhood models are resourced and prioritised becomes more likely. • **Lack of a unified capital programme** - Service leads across strategic finance, ASC, and planning emphasised the importance of a unified capital programme that allows resources to flow toward the county's most deprived areas, including Gloucester, Cheltenham, and the Forest, without needing to negotiate priorities between councils.	

		• **Examples of inter-authority collaboration** - Gloucestershire already operates several shared service models, including Ubico, One Legal, Publica, and shared audit arrangements. These demonstrate that inter-authority collaboration is possible and has worked successfully in Gloucestershire. *However, it is important to note that professional service leads emphasised that disaggregating countywide statutory functions such as ASC, CSC, and public health would be significantly more complex than these current arrangements given the significant cost, legal and care implications associated with them.*	
	B) Opportunity for public service reform including where this will lead to improved value for money	Each new authority would be responsible for designing and funding its own service transformation agenda. While local flexibility may increase, fragmentation of platforms and investment plans may limit the pace and scale of change. • **Enables local flexibility** – each council can shape its own digital investment, reform priorities, and neighbourhood model in line with community needs and political ambition, alongside being agile and flexible enough to implement • **Focused investment in area-specific reforms** – The East could prioritise digital health outreach and rural connectivity upgrades, and the West could channel regeneration funds into brownfield redevelopment and city-centre renewal in Gloucester, as identified in local growth plans. • **Reduces scale for innovation** – Smaller transformation budgets and teams may limit ability to adopt digital and analytics tools at pace. • **Increases technology fragmentation** – Without aligned procurement, the two authorities may implement incompatible systems (e.g. finance, social care case management, HR), reducing future interoperability and driving long-term inefficiency.	**A**

		• **Undermines shared learning and replication** – Innovation tested in one council may not scale to the other, limiting transferability of successful models and requiring duplicated discovery work and investment.	
	C) Improves delivery of, or mitigates risk to negative impact on crucial services	Separate authorities could create inconsistency in design and delivery of crucial services. • **Risk to homelessness prevention** – Housing and homelessness services flagged that disaggregating commissioning and housing capital programmes could make it harder to manage countywide pressures, especially with differing homelessness rates in both regions (0.21% in the West and 0.11% in the East) • **Public safety governance** – Disaggregating safeguarding structures would require new MASA boards and potentially separate Police partnership frameworks. Senior Police stakeholders stressed that this could weaken consistency of response in child protection and community safety. • **Disrupts end-to-end service planning** – Care pathways, school placement systems, early help, and transition into adult services are all currently managed across one system, and disaggregation would complicate coordination and risk continuity. In addition to this, splitting services like admissions, EHCPs and SEND into East/West would create division over time and risk undermining delivery. • **Disruption to hospital discharge and integrated care pathways** - This is an area of concern for service professionals, particularly as Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, located in the West, serves as the county's central acute site. The countywide discharge-to-assess (D2A) model, which provides short-term bedded care for assessment (Pathway 2), often leads to placements that become individuals' long-term homes. Introducing a requirement to source placements based on the boundaries of two separate unitary authorities, depending on ordinary residence, could reduce placement options and delay discharge processes.	**A**

		• **Ordinary residence implications for ASC -** The challenge around 'Ordinary Residence' is not only operationally / financially complex but impacts the most vulnerable residents if there are implications in terms of moving people across the County specifically those with long-standing placements. • **May increase outcome variation** – Differing financial starting points, access to reserves, and workforce size could affect ability to maintain parity of service quality. In addition to this, divergent policies on exclusions, admissions, and SEND support could result in inequity between areas. • **Inequitable access for vulnerable residents** - Splitting education commissioning and admissions could lead to inequitable access to the county's 14 specialist schools, especially for children with rare needs. • **Disruption to home to school transport (HTST)** - due to disaggregated placement decisions and geography, particularly availability of drivers, fleet, and routes to special schools. • **Requires robust governance and assurance** – Without shared framework; monitoring, escalation, and intervention pathways may vary - which service leads warned could expose gaps in statutory performance (e.g. SEND timeliness, EHCP outcomes). • **Creates complexity for regional partners** – Public health, education and safeguarding professionals expressed concern about splitting countywide responsibilities and the need to co-manage performance across two legal bodies. • **Increase in out of county placements** – The creation of 2UAs would create an additional border for the county and result in working an 'out of county' services model, for services which sit within the same postcode.	
4. Meets local needs	A) Meets local needs and is	The 2UA model aims to reflect established localities, with an East/West split broadly aligned to existing district boundaries. This may support a stronger sense of local identity and enable more	**A**

	informed by local views	localised leadership and governance. However, some stakeholders raised concerns that splitting into two authorities would risk 'fragmenting already fragile cross-county partnerships' and pull focus away from place-wide strategies for education, health, and climate. • **Localities do not always follow district lines** - Some communities span the proposed boundary or rely on countywide services and networks. The 2UA model risks weakening connections between these areas. Alongside this, Education, safeguarding and housing teams noted that many communities rely on shared infrastructure and networks. A 2UA model risks creating artificial barriers around lived geography. • **Supported by some local voices –** Stakeholders in Cheltenham and some parish councils suggested that smaller units may improve visibility and local responsiveness. • **Risk of undermining cross-county place design** – The Place Model assumes consistent Neighbourhood Partnerships and locality governance. Splitting delivery governance may result in inconsistent coverage or investment. • **Some community feedback highlighted risks around marginalising communities** – The Diocese and parts of the VCFSE sector expressed concern that splitting Gloucestershire would further marginalise communities already on the edge, especially in rural transition zones like the Severn Vale and North Cotswolds. • **Some resident feedback highlighted concerns around creating a divide** - Concerns were consistently noted by some residents (who responded to a survey issued out by all Gloucestershire councils in July 2025) around fairness, division, and efficiency – with particular references to "creating a rich side and a poor side of the county".	
	B) Improves / mitigates risk to issues of local identity, cultural	The 2UA model allows each new council to retain visible place identity, which may strengthen civic pride. It supports branding and ceremonial continuity, but only if local governance and engagement are properly resourced and consistent.	**A**

	and historic importance	• **Aligns to known geographies** – District geographies in the East and West already support local branding, parish engagement, and heritage-based governance. • **Reflects distinct demographic and community profiles** – EQIA work suggests the East UA combines a more diverse urban centre (Cheltenham) with older rural areas (Cotswold, Tewkesbury), while the West UA combines Gloucester's higher ethnic diversity with older rural communities (Forest of Dean, parts of Stroud). This supports locally tailored equalities frameworks across both UAs. • **Enables place-led branding** – East could emphasise its international tourism offer around the Cotswolds, Regency Cheltenham, and cultural festivals; West could promote the Forest of Dean's green heritage and industrial legacy and Gloucester's historic docklands regeneration as part of its identity. • **May enhance local connection** – Smaller organisations may allow residents to feel more seen, particularly in distinct areas like the Forest, Cotswolds, and Stroud Valleys. • **Strengthens local heritage partnerships** – Smaller authorities could work more intensively with heritage bodies, e.g. Gloucester Cathedral Chapter in the West and Cotswold Conservation Board in the East, to protect and showcase local assets. • **Not a guarantee of civic strength** – As several service leads noted, "having smaller boundaries doesn't automatically deliver stronger community governance." Success depends on local design and sustained political investment. • **Civic identity retained** – Town and parish councils, mayoralties, and ceremonial roles would remain in place. For Gloucester a parish (city council) would be created, and for Cheltenham, options would be considered for parishing unparished areas of the town. These new parishes would serve to strengthen the identity and significant cultural and historic value of each city/town within Gloucestershire • **Supports continuity of place names** - Councils can adopt names, branding, and narratives rooted in local geography and history.	

		• **Inconsistent rollout of locality models** – Without a shared vision or resourcing strategy, Neighbourhood Partnerships and area boards may develop unevenly between the two councils, risking postcode variation in access to voice and influence. • **Risk from divergence in civic promotion -** Without coordinated messaging, the two councils could present different external identities for Gloucestershire, weakening the countywide brand. • **Heavy focus on the two urban centres** - Findings from local engagement with residents in July 2025 highlighted that it could be difficult to create local identities for each unitary that do not revolve around the largest towns which would exclude other areas.	
	C) Addresses local concerns	The 2UA model could also increase inconsistency in service design and delivery unless shared frameworks are agreed. • **Enables localised service design -** West Gloucestershire could focus on tackling urban deprivation and higher ASC/CSC demand, drawing on targeted regeneration in Gloucester and the Forest of Dean. The East could prioritise rural access needs, while maximising the economic impact of Cheltenham's Golden Valley Development and related secure tech sector, alongside the Cotswolds' tourism and agri-tech industries • **Magnifies financial and capacity disparities** – Demographic and Economic data shows that the West has higher ASC costs, higher household benefits claimant rates, higher homelessness, lower income, and higher deprivation. This may create potential challenges for the West Authority in terms of financial resilience and the ability to meet local needs effectively. • **Opportunities for joint working will remain across the 2UAs** – Employment zones, housing markets, transport corridors, and flood risk do not respect the East-West divide. For example, major commuting flows link Cheltenham, Gloucester, and Tewkesbury across the	**A**

		proposed boundary; the Golden Valley tech corridor and proposed Severn Edge energy project both require countywide planning to maximise investment potential.	
5. Supports devolution arrangements	A) Helps to support devolution arrangements / unlock devolution	In a 2UA structure, each new council would be the accountable body for its own area so there would not be a single Gloucestershire voice in national negotiations for devolution. • **Scope for tailored devolution asks** – Two councils could negotiate complementary but distinct devolution priorities, enabling the East to focus on innovation and cyber skills linked to The Innovation Village at Royal Agricultural University Development, while the West prioritises clean energy investment and infrastructure for the Berkeley Site. • **Potential to broaden regional alliances** – East could strengthen alignment with WECA and Oxfordshire for tech and high-value manufacturing; West could align with Worcestershire/Herefordshire or the West Midlands to secure agri-tech, tourism, and industrial regeneration funding. • **Could increase coordination demands** – The two councils may need to join up on priorities, funding bids, and delivery models for housing, transport, skills, and climate programmes to drive increased influence and negotiating power. • **Adds negotiation complexity** – Government may seek assurance that the two councils can act with unity on countywide matters. Stakeholder feedback from FE colleges and the VCFSE sector emphasised that clarity of leadership is essential to secure confidence from Whitehall. • **Risks divergence in place vision** – Without a shared countywide strategy, the two councils could set different priorities for Neighbourhood Partnerships, local regeneration, and climate action, weakening a consistent Gloucestershire offer in negotiations. • **Feedback from Economic development and planning**: Service leaders in economic development and planning warned that without joint frameworks for infrastructure, skills, and housing, the county's competitive edge could be diluted in a crowded regional market.	**A**

		• **May require dual representation** – Combined Authorities like WECA or Oxfordshire may need to engage with two Gloucestershire councils, complicating governance and coordination. • **Place delivery risks** – Without countywide oversight, devolved funding for Neighbourhood Partnerships could be designed and resourced differently between East and West, creating variation in local empowerment models.	
	B) Sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority	Under a 2UA model, Gloucestershire would be split into two councils, East and West, with populations of ~310,000 and ~349,000. There is a chance that each of the two UAs may join a different strategic authority if there is political divergence which has implications for scale and coherence. • **Still meets 1.5m minimum if coordinate groupings** – If both councils join different groupings (e.g. East joins WECA; West aligns with West Midlands), the full benefits of scale could be lost, and we could fall short of the minimum thresholds, but if they coordinate with each other then the minimum thresholds can be met • **Worcestershire and Herefordshire group** - Two smaller Gloucestershire authorities would cause concerns around meeting the minimum 1.5m benchmark in all potential combined authority scenarios e.g. Herefordshire and Worcestershire have a combined population of c.806,000 so if only of the one Gloucestershire authorities was to form a combined authority with these two areas, this would fall short of the minimum 1.5 million threshold (at a max, it would be c.1.2m). • **Flexibility in regional partnerships** – By joining different Combined Authorities, each council could target the most relevant funding streams and policy platforms for its local economy, increasing the total range of investment opportunities for Gloucestershire. • **More comparable relative size with partner authorities -** In terms of relative size of two smaller Gloucestershire authorities compared with potential partners, this may be more	G

		palatable. The populations of c.300,000-350,000 for Gloucestershire would not be significantly higher than potential partners particularly in the case of a WECA option.	
6. Local engagement and empowerment	A) Enables stronger community engagement	By reducing the size of each council to ~310k (East) and ~349k (West), the 2UA model could allow councillors and officers to work more closely with their local communities. Some stakeholders believe this scale feels more approachable than a single countywide body. However, the quality of engagement would depend on how each council designs, resources, and sustains its locality governance model. • **Smaller footprint may improve visibility** – Members and officers could be more locally embedded, with shorter travel distances and potentially closer relationships to communities. • **Allows more localised decision-making** – Committee structures and warding arrangements can be designed to reflect local culture, population density, and settlement patterns in each area. • **Service leads stressed importance of design** – ASC, CSC, and housing officers emphasised that engagement structures need dedicated staffing, budget, and authority to work effectively, with size alone not guaranteeing impact. • **Improved councillor–resident connection** – Smaller populations and geographies make it easier for members to be directly accessible, as already seen in district-level ward surgeries in Stroud, Cotswold, and Cheltenham. • **Potential to embed local culture in governance** – Allows warding and committee structures to reflect distinctive settlement patterns, e.g. rural parish clusters in the Cotswolds or ward-based representation in Gloucester. • **Risk of inconsistency** – Each authority may take a different approach to engagement, leading to uneven governance strength across the county.	G

		• **Maintaining partner coherence is harder** – VCFSE and parish representatives warned that cross-county organisations may face duplication in engagement, consultation, and partnership work.	
	B) Delivers genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment	Each authority would be responsible for designing and maintaining its own locality governance offer in a way that aligns with its geography, culture, and service profile. This could create opportunities for innovation but risks fragmentation if frameworks are not aligned. There is strong support around an emphasis on neighbourhood-level engagement and the creation of place-based structures that reflect where people live. Feedback suggested that two smaller councils might 'create stronger local ties,' but this would depend heavily on capacity and willingness to devolve power within each. • **Allows place-based design** – Each council could shape governance in dialogue with parish and town councils, community groups, and residents to reflect local traditions and priorities. • **May reflect civic identity more closely** – The West could prioritise structures for strong rural parish engagement in the Forest and Stroud Valleys, while the East could focus on urban–rural connectivity in Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, and the Cotswolds. • **Scope to pilot local decision-making** – Smaller councils could trial devolved budgets for specific localities, mirroring models in Buckinghamshire and Dorset, but adapted to Gloucestershire contexts. • **Encourages innovation in community partnerships** – Each authority could adapt the Neighbourhood Partnership principles to local capacity and needs, enabling diversity in engagement while keeping community leadership central. • **Risk of fragmentation in place delivery** – The Place Model envisions consistent Neighbourhood Partnerships across Gloucestershire. Under 2UA, these could evolve differently in each council, leading to unequal investment or capability.	G

		• **Risk of duplication or gaps** – Where partnerships (e.g. safeguarding boards, housing associations, climate forums) span the East–West boundary, separate locality models could create administrative complexity and reduce efficiency. • **Risk of democratic deficit** – By removing layers of government, some residents may feel as though the unitary is far removed from their local issues which can decrease engagement.	
7. Environmental and climate protection	A) Ensures the new authority/authorities have clear capabilities to deliver existing and future climate and nature plans.	The 2UA model could potentially mean splitting existing specialist teams, strategies, and funding streams, creating a higher risk of inconsistency and duplication. • **Could still retain strategic Climate Leadership Gloucestershire –** This already operates across seven councils currently and could continue to provide an overarching collaboration mechanism between the two UAs to strategically coordinate some activities where scale offers improved outcomes / efficiencies. • **Requires duplication of plans and delivery** – Each council may produce separate climate and nature plans, scrutiny arrangements, and reporting cycles, increasing administrative cost. • **Risks weaker investment leverage -** Countywide funding bids (e.g. for nature recovery, flood defence, EV charging infrastructure) may lose scale and competitiveness if submitted separately. • **Feedback from Flood Risk and Planning leads** – Officers stressed that some climate and flood issues are inherently cross-boundary and require shared governance to avoid duplication or gaps. • **Neighbourhood Partnerships could diverge** – Without a shared approach, local environmental action plans could vary in scope, resourcing, and ambition between East and West.	G

	B) Reflects local priorities in areas with sensitive landscapes (e.g. Forest of Dean, Cotswolds AONB).	The 2UA model is still likely to require cross-boundary coordination for shared natural systems. • **Aligns to clear geographic distinctions** – East: Cotswolds AONB, river catchments, rural agricultural land; West: Forest of Dean, Severn Estuary, urban-rural interface. • **Still requires joint governance for shared assets** – River catchments, wildlife corridors, and flood plains cross the proposed boundary would need shared planning and investment to remain effective. • **Service leads warned of coordination risk** – Planning and environmental health officers flagged that without aligned design codes and infrastructure plans, developers and land managers could face conflicting requirements in different parts of the county.	G
	C) Builds on existing commitments (e.g. "Fairer Greener Forest", Climate Emergency responses).	Each authority would be able to maintain and expand current district-led climate commitments, but with differing capacities and investment potential depending on their starting points. • **Allows continuity of local plans** – Existing commitments like “Fairer Greener Forest,” Stroud’s climate strategy, and Cheltenham’s climate targets could be retained and developed. • **Maintains political accountability** – Climate and environmental decisions would remain close to elected members and communities, which some stakeholders believe would encourage stronger local ownership. • **Requires alignment where appropriate** – Shared goals such as emissions reduction, transport decarbonisation, and biodiversity corridors would still need coordinated policy to prevent gaps or duplication. This is particularly relevant to countywide assets like the proposed Severn Edge project, which spans clean hydrogen, nuclear, and synthetic aviation fuel production, and contributes directly to Gloucestershire’s net zero targets. This is	G

		something that could be coordinated by a strategic countywide forum (building on the existing Climate Leadership Gloucestershire principles).	
8. Civic engagement and participative democracy	A) Promotes civic engagement and strengthens participative democracy.	Both authorities would be able to develop civic engagement strategies suited to their geographies and communities. The smaller scale may enable closer relationships between councils and residents, but investment and commitment will vary depending on resources and leadership. • **May feel more accessible to residents** - Councils serving 310k–350k residents may be seen as more approachable, with shorter decision chains and closer member–resident relationships. • **Risk of unequal investment** - Financial or political priorities may lead to different levels of civic participation infrastructure. • **Requires long-term commitment** - Strong participative democracy relies on consistent leadership and culture, not just structural change. • **Risk of democratic deficit -** Given LGR will reduce the number of elected councillors and create larger electoral divisions, this will increase the number of residents each councillor represents. This could risk a democratic deficit.	**A**
9. Inclusive growth and equity	A) Ability to tackle disparities in wealth setting up one unitary authority or two unitary authorities.	The 2UA model would allow each council to focus on its own economic geography and priorities, which may improve local targeting of interventions. However, without a shared tax base or pooled reserves, there is no direct mechanism to redistribute resources between East and West, meaning inequalities may persist or grow over time without intervention.	**A**

		• **Greater ability to focus on local economic drivers** – East could align its growth strategy to maximise Cheltenham's festival economy, and Cotswolds tourism; West could drive regeneration of Gloucester's city centre redevelopment, and Forest of Dean industrial renewal. • **Limits redistribution capacity** – Income and demand would need to be managed independently, reducing ability to manage known variations and inequalities across the East and West. • **Service leads voiced concern** – Finance, ASC, and CSC officers warned that over time, the West could face greater difficulty sustaining service quality and investment without a countywide balancing mechanism. Demographic projections show the West has higher deprivation levels and demand pressures. This has implications for long-term financial sustainability, preventative care, and integration with NHS partners. • **Neighbourhood regeneration may diverge** – The Place Model's ambition for consistent Neighbourhood Partnerships could be undermined if each council invests at different levels in deprived areas. • **Risk of splitting resources** - EqIA analysis shows that economic challenges are different in each part of the county and can affect groups protected under equalities law. In the West, young people face higher unemployment. In the East, there is less access to apprenticeships and training, which can particularly impact young people and disabled residents. A 2UA model could target these local issues more directly, but splitting resources may make it harder to run countywide programmes to reduce these gaps.	
	B) Prioritises vulnerable residents and community-level regeneration.	The scale of need, particularly in the West, may place more pressure on local finances and delivery unless partnership structures or funding mechanisms are established. There is a risk that different parts of Gloucestershire could become aligned to different combined authorities fragmenting influence and complicating engagement with regional priorities.	G

		• **Closer integration with local VCFSE networks** – Smaller councils could embed local community organisations (e.g. GL Communities in the West, Cotswold Friends in the East) directly into regeneration planning, improving reach and trust • **Exposes resource gaps** – The West's higher need may not be matched by local income, making it harder to fund regeneration and preventative work without external support. • **Requires robust local commissioning** – Each council would need strong capability to identify, fund, and measure interventions, which was a challenge raised in ASC and housing disaggregation discussions with service professionals, where market capacity varies significantly between East and West.	
	C) Ensures that financial sustainability is not achieved at the expense of service levels.	With two independent MTFSs, each council would control its financial decisions, giving flexibility to align budgets with local priorities. However, without shared reserves or risk pooling, cost pressures in high-demand services could lead to service reduction, particularly in the West. • **Enables local control over budgets** – Each authority can shape its own financial strategy to align with its values and priorities. • **Enables targeted financial planning** – East could direct reserves toward rural health access; West could prioritise safeguarding and early intervention in high-need urban areas. • **Potential to attract different funding streams** – Separate authorities could pursue distinct grant opportunities, widening the overall pool of external investment brought into Gloucestershire. • **Increases pressure on high-cost services** – The West, with higher ASC and CSC spend per resident, may face difficult decisions if cost pressures outpace funding. • **Creates risk of service variation** – One council may be able to protect frontline services more easily than the other.	**A**

		• **Could require trade-offs** – Without pooled reserves or cross-council subsidy, service levels may be more exposed to short-medium- and long-term budget constraints. • **High Needs funding uncertainty** – Stakeholders raised concerns about how Gloucestershire's current countywide High Needs deficit would be apportioned fairly, warning that uneven settlement could undermine education support in one area. • **Countywide Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) deficit projected to reach ~£234m by Vesting Day (1 April 2028).** If statutory override is not maintained or an alternative solution implemented, then both a 1UA and 2UA would face significant financial risks. • **Impact of the Fair Funding Review -** This also remains unknown at this time presenting further financial uncertainty to both 1UA and 2UA scenarios.	

Appendix 6: Proposed Service Delivery Models

Scope of services considered

Corporate services

- Digital & ICT
- Asset Management & Property
- Strategic Finance
- Pension Fund
- Insurance & Counter Fraud
- HR
- Transactional Services incl. Payroll, AP / AR
- Legal Services (Incl. One Legal)
- Democratic Services & Elections
- Communications
- Transformation
- Planning, Performance & Insight (Data)
- Information Governance
- Customer Management

Front-line upper tier services (only county council services currently)

- Public Health
- Adult Social Care
- Children's & Education
- Transport & Highways
- Archives
- Fire & Rescue
- Trading Standards
- Coroners
- Libraries
- Registrars
- Employment and Skills

Front-line lower tier services OR both (only districts OR both county and districts currently)

- Public Protection
- Emergency Planning
- Revenue & Benefits
- Housing Strategy, Maintenance & Homelessness
- Leisure & Culture
- Economy & Sustainability (incl. Tourism & Visitor Economy)
- Planning & Building Control
- Development & Regeneration
- Waste & Environmental Services
- Parking
- Cemetery and Crematoria

Defining the key parameters used

	High	Medium	Low
Change Required - Transformation or alignment needed to realise the benefit.	**Fundamental redesign of team structure, roles, and processes; introduction of new systems or services; significant cultural change.**	**Moderate restructuring, role changes, or process improvements; some new tools or systems introduced.**	**Minor adjustments to workflows or responsibilities; no structural or system-wide changes.**
One - off Costs - The upfront investment required to implement the change	**Over £1,000,000 – Includes major IT systems, infrastructure, consultancy, or large-scale training programmes.**	**£500,000–£1,000,000 – Includes moderate system upgrades, recruitment drives, or targeted training.**	**Under £500,000 – Includes minor equipment, short-term consultancy, or small-scale training.**
Recurring Cost - Ongoing annual expenses to maintain or operate the new arrangement.	**Over £500,000 annually – Ongoing staffing, licensing, or service delivery costs.**	**£250,000–£500,000 annually – Include staffing, subscriptions, or maintenance.**	**Under £250,000 annually – Minimal ongoing costs such as software licences or admin support.**
Aggregation Benefits - The benefits of aggregating services based on both financial and non financial benefits	**Strong efficiencies and strategic gains from combining services; consistent delivery and reduced duplication.**	**Some coordination and savings achieved, but benefits are limited**	**Minimal improvement realised through aggregation**

Corporate Services

Corporate Services | Summary (1 of 3)

			2UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
Joint Officers meeting	**Digital & ICT**	Different delivery models across the Councils. County / Tewkesbury / Glos City / Stroud - In-House Cotswold / Forest of Dean / Chelt - Publica	**Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary.** *(Noting that some specialist functions e.g. cyber security,* *(Noting that some specialist functions e.g. cyber security, hardware and software may be jointly outsourced / shared across the two)*	**High**	**High**	**Low**	**Medium**
Joint Officers meeting	**Asset Management & Property**	**All councils currently deliver property and asset services largely in-house.** *However, there are external consultants and framework partners utilised for specialist services by councils.* *Note services previously delivered by Publica were brought in house with the exception of one health and safety advisor.*	**Hybrid: In-house strategic teams with some shared services of technical functions under an SLA and hosted arrangement.** *Strategic ownership and direction would remain local to each authority.* Note: This excludes commercial property	**High**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**Medium**
County Council Officer meeting	**Pensions**	**Operated and administered in-house via the Gloucestershire Pension Fund within GCC for all councils in Glos**	**One of the two new UAs is designated as the administering authority for the Gloucestershire Pension Fund;** the other becomes a scheme employer within the fund (similar to current arrangements with district councils).	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**Low**
No discussions so far	**Strategic Finance**	**In House**	**Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary.**				
No discussions so far	**Insurance & Counterfraud** ***CFEU*** ***ARA*** ***SWAP – South West Audit Partnership***		**Shared Countywide Service –** Hosted in the east with traded services				

Corporate Services | Summary (2 of 3)

			2UA				
Engmnt to date	Service Area	Current delivery model	Recommended Delivery Model	Level of change required	One off Transition Costs	Additional ongoing recurring costs	Aggregation Benefits
Joint Officers Template	**Democratic Services**	**In-House across all councils**	**Two separate in-house , one per unitary** with local delivery teams. Also combined Democratic services and elections teams into one team.	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**	**Medium**
	Elections	**In-House across all councils**	**Two separate in-house , one per unitary** with local delivery teams. Also combined Democratic services and elections teams into one team.	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**	**High**
No discussions so far	**Legal Services** **Incl. One Legal**	**Mixed –** One Legal between 4 councils, quasi shared service between 2 councils and in-house for county	**Hybrid:** shared services or hosted on day 1 –with some functions independent and traded services. Will need 2 monitoring officers				
No discussions so far	**Comms**	**In house**	**Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary.**				
No discussions so far	**HR**		**Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary.**				
No discussions so far	**Transactional Services incl. Payroll, AP / AR**		**Shared service – hosted by one of the two organisations with traded services**				
No discussions so far	**Planning, Performance & Insight (Data)**	**In house**	**Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary**				

Corporate Services | Summary (3 of 3)

			2UA				
Engmnt to date	Service Area	Current delivery model	Recommended Delivery Model	Level of change required	One off Transition Costs	Additional ongoing recurring costs	Aggregation Benefits
No discussions so far	**Information Governance**	**In house**	**Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary**				
No discussions so far	**Transformation**	**In house**	**Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary**				
No discussions so far	**Customer Management**	In house	**Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary**				
No discussions so far	**Internal audit**	**Tewkesbury** – In-House **Cheltenham, Cotswold and Forest of Dean** – South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) **Gloucestershire County** – In-house service which is also provided to Gloucester City Council and Stroud.	**Delivery model to be determined following an options analysis of the different options.**				

Front-line upper tier services

Front-Line Upper Tier Services | Summary (1 of 3)

			2UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
Joint Officers meeting	**Public Health**	**In-House management & advisory with a range of commissioned services**	**Two separate in-house, one per unitary** *(disaggregated)* *Noting that there is still likely to be joint working in some limited areas where it makes sense to retain county wide provision and economies of scale e.g. sexual health.* *Will need* **2 DHPH** Could be joint commissioner of supply chain e.g. - out of hours	**High**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**Medium**
Joint Officers meeting	**Adult Social Care**	ASC is **delivered in-house by GCC**, and the care market is managed centrally, with countywide contracts and provider relationships	**Two separate in-house , one per unitary with its own DASS.** *(disaggregated)* delivered locally Noting: commissioning may take between 3 - 5 years to fully disaggregate. Commissioning jointly on areas e.g. - tech enabled care	**High**	**High**	**High**	**Medium**
Joint Officers meeting	**Childrens**	**Mixed Delivery Models** The service is managed overall in-house but there are also a number of elements of the service commissioned out e.g. Family and Youth Hub development	**Two separate in-house , one per unitary** *(disaggregated)* each undertaking their own commissioning and statutory partnership arrangements Will need 2 DCS And become 2 members of Adoption West	**High**	**High**	**High**	**Medium**
	Education	**In-house** *Note: Cross-authority music service*	**Two separate in-house , one per unitary** *(disaggregated)*	**High**	**High**	**High**	**Medium**

Front-Line Upper Tier Services | Summary (2 of 3)

			2UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
County Council Officer meeting	**Archives**	**In-house**	**Shared Countywide Service -** *Hosted by West given this is where the Heritage Hub is (Gloucester).*	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**
Joint Officers meeting	**Transport & Highways**	**In-House** With outsourced service delivery	**Two separate in-house , one per unitary** *(disaggregated)* Commissioning but flexibility on supply chain (over the long-term) but on day 1, may have to have the service hosted in one authority and providing services to the other.	**High**	**High**	**High**	**Low**
County Council Officer meeting	**Fire & Rescue**	**In-House -** GCC currently holds the governance and service responsibilities.	**Independent Fire and Rescue Authority** Legally cannot remain in-house	**High**	**High**	**N/A**	**N/A**
County Council Officer meeting	**Trading Standards**	**In-House**	**Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary**	**Medium**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**
County Council Officer meeting	**Coroners**	**In-House**	**Shared Countywide Service (Hosted) -** Hosted by the West as the Coroner's court is located in Gloucester	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**

Front-Line Upper Tier Services | Summary (3 of 3)

			2UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
County Council Officer meeting	**Libraries**	**In-House**	**Two separate in-house , one per unitary** *(disaggregated) Joint* Library Management System	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**
County Council Officer meeting	**Registrars**	**In-House**	**Shared Countywide Service -** Hosted *TBD which authority would be the host with shared Proper Officer*	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**
County Council Officer meeting	**Employment and Skills**	**In-House**	**County wide, Hosted by one authority**	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**

Front-line lower tier services OR both (only districts OR both county and districts currently)

Front-Line Lower Tier Services | Summary (1 of 3)

			2UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
Joint Officers meeting	**Public Protection**	**Mixed.** Most services are delivered in-house by district councils though Publica provides services for Forest of Dean and Cotswold with some local differences. There are also some services (in some councils) contracted out e.g. stray dogs, contaminated land.	**Two separate in-house teams** but with some specialist functions shared e.g. contaminated land.	**High**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**High**
Discussed under Public Protection	**Emergency Planning** *Discussed briefly under Public Protection but was not a detailed discussion – Ratings therefore may need to be refined*	**In-House across all councils currently**	**Two separate in-house teams with opportunity for joint working**	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**	**Low**
Joint Officers meeting	**Revenue & Benefits**	**In-House** Cotswold and FoD via Publica	**Two separate in-house teams Consider merging customer services**	**High**	**High**	**N/A**	**Medium**
Joint Officers Template	**Cemetery and Crematoria**	**In – House** across all 7 councils	**Two separate in-house team**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**Medium**
Joint Officers meeting	**Housing Strategy, Maintenance & Homelessness**	Mixed - All councils have some elements in-house but note: Stroud and Chelt have in-house DLOs and their own housing stock. FoD and Cotswold have shared housing staff in Publica (shared with West Oxfordshire too) Glos City host the Strategic Housing Partnership which is countywide across all 7 councils. All councils commission some services externally	**Hybrid -** Each UA would operate some services in-house and some under shared arrangements (hosted by one authority) *Unanimous consensus that Corporate Landlord services would be retained within each UA (not a shared service)*	**High**	**High**	**Medium**	**High**
Joint Officers meeting	**Economy & Sustainability -** *Climate & Sustainability*	In-House teams in each council but there is also a county-wide Climate Leadership Gloucestershire Team managed by Glos City. o be updated on 31.07.25	**Two in-house teams, with a shared partnership forum for collaboration**	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**	**Low**

Front-Line Lower Tier Services | Summary (2 of 3)

			2UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
Joint Officers meeting	**Economy & Sustainability -** *Economic Development*	All councils have in-house ED capabilities noting variations in terms of scope of services, structures and extent of partnership working	**Two in-house teams but with countywide partnership working (where needed)**	**High**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**High**
Joint Officers meeting	**Economy & Sustainability -** *Tourism & Visitor Economy*	All Councils have small in-house local tourism teams, but they are all also part of (and put varying amounts of funding towards) the Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).	**Strategic Countywide Visitor Economy Function with Local Place Marketing** *Not yet been determined if the strategic element would be in-house or as a separate organisation*	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**High**
Joint Officers meeting	**Leisure**	Stroud - **In-House model** **5 of the 6 councils outsource provision** *(3 to Freedom Leisure; CBC to the Chelt Trust and Tewkesbury to Places Leisure)*	**Harmonisation of current contractual positions over time to move to a sustainable and aligned model**	**High**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**Medium**
Joint Officers meeting	**Culture & Heritage**	**Mixed** A number of councils have this in-house; Cotswold outsource running of museum to Freedom Leisure; A lot of partnership working e.g. Glos City have a strategic partnership with Gloucester Culture Trust	**Codesigned future delivery models with the sector and communities with a consideration of future implications related to devolution**	TBD based on delivery models that are chosen	TBD based on delivery models that are chosen	TBD based on delivery models that are chosen	TBD based on delivery models that are chosen
Joint Officers meeting	**Planning & Building Control**	**Planning:** In-house	**Two separate in house teams both same as 1UA model - recognising SDS**	**High**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**Medium**
		Building Control: **Mixed -** Some in-house and some with shared arrangements e.g. - Gloucester City and Stroud partnership / Cheltenham and Tewkesbury	**Delivered as a shared service across both UAs, with joint governance, shared systems, and local operational teams**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**Medium**

Front-Line Lower Tier Services | Summary (3 of 3)

			2UA				
Engmnt to date	**Service Area**	**Current delivery model**	**Recommended Delivery Model**	**Level of change required**	**One off Transition Costs**	**Additional ongoing recurring costs**	**Aggregation Benefits**
Joint Officers meeting	**Development & Regeneration**	In house	**Two separate in house teams**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**Medium**
Joint Officers meeting	**Waste & Environmental Services (Incl. Ubico)**	**Waste Disposal and HRCs:** **Mixed Delivery -** Through in house teams and contractors such as Ubico and FCC (Javelin Park)	**Managed county wide by Ubico.** **Commissioned by two UA's Disposal**: In-House Strategic Service, and Disposal Authority Role for the new UA **HRCs:** Ubico continue to manage HRC Operations **FCC:** West would provide due to Javlin Park location	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**Medium**
		Waste Collection: **Delivered via Ubico**	**Remains delivered by Ubico**	**Low**	**Low**	**N/A**	**Low –** *Consistency and standardisation*
		Environmental Services - Mixed Delivery - in house team with some elements contracted out, some delivered by Ubico e.g. tree planting	**Two separate in-house teams**	**Medium**	**Medium**	**N/A**	**Medium**
Joint Officers Template	**Parking**	**Mixed.** Most services are delivered in-house by district councils though Publica provides services for Forest of Dean and Cotswold with some local differences. . All enforcement activities at GCC are outsourced	**Two separate in-house teams** for management and notice processing. Outsource physical enforcement	**High**	**Medium**	**Low**	**Medium**

Appendix 7: Equalities Impact Assessment (2UA)

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty which states that a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

This document demonstrates how the Council is meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty by setting out the findings of an equality analysis that has been undertaken in relation to a proposed change to assess whether it has a disproportionate impact on people who share a protected characteristic. The Council's Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) process covers additional groups not 'protected' by section149 of the Equality Act 2010, including care leavers and care experienced adults.

Background

Title of the proposed change being assessed i.e. the policy, service or other development	Local Government Reorganisation

Describe the purpose of the proposed change and the intended outcomes
This Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been developed to support the consideration of proposals to restructure local government in Gloucestershire, assessing both the single unitary authority (1UA) and two unitary authorities (2UA) options. This document focuses on the 2UA option only, the proposed makeup of which is set out in Table 8 below and involves creating two unitary authorities based on an East/West split of the county. Each unitary authority would be based on the footprint of three district councils:

Table 8: Structure and 2023 Population of Option 2[65]

East		West	
Cheltenham	120,255	Forest of Dean	89,104
Cotswold	91,490	Gloucester	134,991
Tewkesbury	98,896	Stroud	124,540
East Total	310,641	West Total	348,635
% of Gloucestershire population	47.1%	% of Gloucestershire population	52.9%

[65] *Ibid.*

The purpose of this assessment is to understand and evaluate the potential impacts of these changes on all service users and council staff with protected characteristics.

The reorganisation of local government is a significant change that could affect how services are delivered, how decisions are made, and how residents engage with their local councils.

This assessment aims to:

- Identify any potential positive or negative impacts on service users with protected characteristics
- Consider how these impacts might differ between the one-unitary and two-unitary models
- Highlight opportunities to promote equality and mitigate any adverse effects

It is intended for this EqIA to be a live document, updated as proposals are refined and further engagement with stakeholders takes place. Additionally, after a decision has been made by Government on the chosen model for Gloucestershire, to inform implementation.

Who is affected by the proposals?

Service users:	Yes
Wider community:	Yes
Workforce:	Yes
Other (please specify):	

Decision to be taken and decision maker	The decision under consideration is whether the local government structure in Gloucestershire is replaced by either: • A single unitary authority; or • Two unitary authorities (East / West) This decision will significantly impact how local services are delivered, how residents engage with local government, and how resources are allocated across the county. Although the ultimate decision will be made by Government, councils in Gloucestershire are able to make a local decision on their preferred model to present to Government.

Information and Data Collection

Summarise how you have collected the information and data required to assess the current situation (section 3.1 below) and the potential or actual impact of the proposed change (section 3.2 below) on those who share the protected characteristics and the additional groups (e.g. survey of services users, running community focus groups, analysing service usage data, engaging with staff networks). The actual information and data should be set out in Appendix 1 (Service Users) and Appendix 2 (district & county staff in Gloucestershire).

If there are any gaps, include an action in section 4 to fill these. This does not mean that you cannot complete the equality impact assessment, but you need to follow-up the action and revisit as part of the monitoring and review arrangements set out in section 5.

Stakeholders	Engagement and Consultation	Other Sources
Service Users / Wider Community	Workshops with services across the county council and district councils to understand the risks and opportunities associated with aggregation and disaggregation of each service. A public local engagement process has also been undertaken across Gloucestershire, designed and delivered by an independent, external engagement company - Cratus. The engagement process includes an online survey with both structured and open-ended questions, a dedicated microsite, 12 in-person events (two per district), and two online webinars. A total of 3,112 survey responses were received.	Outputs of disaggregation / aggregation service workshops. Cratus engagement report.

Workforce	A workforce pulse survey has been undertaken across all councils. Top line outputs from the survey are: top lines from the survey which you can see below: • 86% of staff understand what LGR might mean in Gloucestershire • 82% of staff understand what devolution might mean for Gloucestershire • 63% understand the difference between LGR / devo • 75% of staff think messages are being well communicated. • Email and staff briefings are the most popular ways staff like to hear messages about LGR/devo • 46% of staff don't feel confident their views will be listened to • 78% feel confident to ask questions • 69% have felt no impact on morale • 78% feel supported by leadership and management • 90% feel they can discuss with their line manager	Staff engagement outputs from the pulse survey on LGR and Devolution across the seven councils in Gloucestershire
Partners	To support the wider local engagement being delivered across Gloucestershire to inform the development of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposals,	

	Gloucestershire County Council's (GCC) senior leadership conducted meetings with key stakeholders, with whom they had established relationships, across June – August 2025. The meetings addressed the following, with some stakeholders choosing to provide further feedback via email or letter: • Update stakeholders on how LGR Full Proposals and Devolution discussions are progressing in Gloucestershire. • Update stakeholders on the LGR policy position of GCC's new Cabinet to be agnostic and evidence-led in considering both a one unitary and two unitary model. • Provide information on the timetable and key processes underway. • Understand more about how LGR / Devolution could impact specific stakeholders / organisations, what is important to them in relation to this topic and address any concerns or issues for them. • Gauge interest in further collaboration and engagement (as appropriate). Stakeholders engaged includes: • Various members of the business community	

	• Gloucestershire Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) • Gloucestershire VCSE Alliance • Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) • The Bishop of Gloucester, joined by senior Clergy including Deans of the Diocese. • Gloucestershire's schools associations • Gloucestershire College • Hartpury University • National Star College • SG & Stroud College • Bromford Housing • Adults Collaborative Board • Gloucestershire Care Providers Association	
Other		

Equality Assessment

Indicate the impact on each group and explain how you have reached your conclusions (i.e. through analysis of the information and data that was collected through the engagement, consultation and other sources / methods that were set out in section 2).

Consider sub-categories (e.g. different kinds of disabilities) and how the groups are interconnected (e.g. young women) resulting in particular needs or types of disadvantage and discrimination (sometimes known as intersectional or combined discrimination).

The Proposed Change

Summarise your assessment of the likely or actual impact of the proposed change on each of the groups. If an action is required, this should be recorded in Section 4.

Service Users						
Protected Characteristics / Additional Groups	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Not Sure	Summary of Impact	Action Required (Y/N)?
Age				X	There are some general risks posed by service disaggregation on groups of older adults and children who receive social care support. With the West area having greater overall Adult Social Care demand than the East. Gloucestershire has an ageing population. Demographics are projecting a dependency ratio of 0.69 by 2047. An increase from 0.65 in 2022. With the East being projected to have a greater dependency ratio than the West and Gloucestershire as a whole. For every 100 people the East will be supporting around 5 more dependents than the West, which could translate to higher demands on council services under a 2UA model, and more people who are not in the workforce than those who are working, potentially constraining growth in the local economy.	Y

					The West has a higher population of children than the East. The West also has a higher level of child safeguarding activity, and a greater rate of children subject to Education, Health and Care Plans. Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	
Detailed summary of Impact	Potential disproportionate impact: There is potential for impact to services dependant on the ways of working and delivery models that are agreed under the new authorities. Further analysis is needed once delivery models are agreed to review impacts to commissioned services for children and young people if commissioned services are disaggregated and commissioning power reduced. Examples include: School places planning, SEND, early years, education, children's specialist placements, some public health services, e.g. public health nursing, sexual health.					
Disability			X		It is considered that there is potential for a disproportionate impact on service users with a disability under a 2UA model. • The West has the highest proportion of residents with a disability (17.7%) exceeding the figure for the county as a whole and the	Y

					national average. The East area has the lowest proportion of residents with a disability (15.8%) below the county and national average. Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	
Detailed summary of Impact	Potential disproportionate impact: • With a higher proportion of residents with a disability in the West, there is a risk that services will lose the joined up approach across the new boundaries and commissioning power will be reduced. Opportunities to share and learn about the best accessibility approaches may be limited by the creation of two authorities. As part of implementation planning, further analysis will be undertaken to ensure appropriate mitigants are considered. For example: delivery of highways issues including local transport, adult social care services, planning implications for schools, commissioned services etc. • Potential negative impact on delivery of services for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) services, as SEND inclusion support is based on the setting the child attends, and early years support is based on where the child lives. Consideration needs to be given for access to specialist provision. • Demographics suggest a 2UA option would result in higher numbers of children requiring additional support, SEND and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in the West, resulting in higher costs and greater deficit. • As implementation plans are agreed, consideration will need to be given to service user networks to understand their needs. Such as parent-carer forums and children and young people voice.					

	Potential positive proportionate impact: • A model covering a smaller geographical area might be able to be more responsive to local needs and may therefore be able to respond to specific needs and requirements of residents with disabilities.					
Sex				X	Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Race				X	Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Gender reassignment				X	Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to	Y

					consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	
Pregnancy & maternity				X	Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Religion and/or belief				X	Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Sexual orientation				X	Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	Y

Marriage & civil partnership				X	Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Armed Forces community				X	Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Carers				X	Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Detailed Summary of Impact	• Parent-carer forums and networks are established as county-wide, so disaggregation could impact support					

Care leavers / care experienced adults			X		Under a 2UA delivery model there is potential for disproportionately negative impact on service users where commissioning power and existing services would be reduced. Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Detailed Summary of Impact	Potential disproportionate impact • Potential impact on breadth of commissioned services for care leavers if commissioned services are disaggregated and commissioning power reduced. • Children's services often commission supported living in Gloucester (West) due to wealth of wider support services. As a result, a greater number of Care Leaver Accommodation Based Support services are situated in Gloucester so redistribution of services might be needed to respond to changes in CYP models over time. • Unequal split of current supported accommodation provision across East and West. • There is a risk that service provision across each authority is not equal, therefore creating a postcode lottery of service across the East and West boundaries.					
Digital exclusion				X	Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to	Y

					consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	
Geography, for example, urban and rural areas				X	There is a risk of disproportionate impacts on service users with key geographical characteristics under a 2UA model, where location of existing services may change. Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	Y
Detailed Summary of Impact	Potential disproportionate impact: ▪ Impact on tenant farmers with potential change in T&Cs with new authority e.g. rent increases. ▪ Local Transport plan would be divided creating a less strategic approach ▪ Service users may experience reduced access to library services in each unitary ▪ Where services have District hubs, main HQ is often Gloucester (West), so some consideration needed by providers of property requirements. ▪ Travellers' sites are all located in the East. ▪ Provision of SEND services in rural areas: in smaller delivery units (2UA) there may be less resilience to support current arrangements. ▪ Reablement units, discharge services, and in-house facilities rely on shared access to county-owned or managed property assets currently ▪ Hospital discharge is a key area of concern in the context of LGR -. Gloucester Royal (located in the West) is the central acute hospital, and pathways are currently managed at county scale. LGR options need to consider how discharge responsibilities continue to be managed to					

	minimise clinical and operational risk. The countywide discharge-to-assess model, which provides short-term bedded care for assessment (Pathway 2), often leads to placements that become individuals' long-term homes. Introducing a requirement to source placements based on the boundaries of two separate unitary authorities, depending on ordinary residence, could reduce placement options and delay discharge processes. ▪ Adult Social Care is facing sharply rising demand, especially from older people and working-age adults with complex needs. West Gloucestershire carries a higher baseline demand and projected growth, particularly in supported living and long-term placements. ▪ Imbalance in demand between East and West - A 2UA model could potentially fragment delivery and reduce the ability to achieve consistent outcomes for residents as demand and supply patterns differ significantly across the county, and a split could exacerbate inequalities rather than resolve them. ▪ Disruption for the most vulnerable residents (Ordinary Residence) - The challenge around 'Ordinary Residence' is not only operationally / financially complex but impacts the most vulnerable residents if there are implications in terms of moving people across the county, specifically those with long-standing placements. ▪ Income deprivation is typically higher in more urban areas; and the West has higher deprivation compared to the East. Deprivation is a key determinant of health outcomes, and the differing health profiles and needs of the 2UAs need to be considered in assessing impact. ▪ Public health services are typically commissioned on a countywide footprint, with locality provision based on population need. Consideration will need to be given to how services are disaggregated in a 2UA model, and risk of a reduction in the breadth and scale of provision which can be afforded/supported across urban and rural communities if commissioned on a smaller geographic footprint.					
Socio-economic disadvantage				X	Under a 2UA model the risk to those with Socio-economic disadvantage characteristics is access routes to services. Both physically, depending on where a service is offered, and for referral routes.	Y

					Deprivation levels within the West Unitary will be higher than the deprivation levels within the East. Meaning that public health grants would be smaller for the East. There is concern that the grant would not be proportionate and the East could therefore be disadvantaged overall. There is also a potential impact of service delivery where additional roles may be needed under a 2UA model in services that are already encountering recruitment challenges. Socio-economic disadvantage is a key determinant of health outcomes, and the differing population and health profiles of the 2UAs will need to be considered when assessing impact on service users. Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	
Potential disproportionate impact:						

• The disaggregation of county-wide services (e.g. transport subsidies, or digital inclusion programmes) could reduce access or make service more expensive per resident. • Local Transport plan would be divided creating a less strategic approach • Given higher deprivation levels in West than East, West allocation of the public health grant is likely to be greater than East. Currently, in West there are 37,422 people living in the national 20% most deprived LSOAs in England, in the East this is just 13,900 people. Smaller budgets may impact on the scale and breadth of public health services which can be commissioned and staff capacity, potentially leading to differential service provision across the 2UAs. • Children and education service delivery could be impacted if a 2UA arrangement exacerbates recruitment challenges through increased competition for hard to fill posts, such as social work, Educational Psychology and Special Advisory Teachers, or other recruitment such as foster carers. Potential positive proportionate impact: • With smaller authorities there is potential that planning and procuring services can focus more on creating local jobs, training opportunities, and helping the local economy grow. • There is also the potential that more localised services would mean a possible reduction in travel costs associated and reduced distances being travelled by residents. • There is potential for more localised provision of public health services and neighbourhood/locality-based delivery aligned with population needs.						
Vulnerable groups of society			X		The potential for disproportionate impact here is based on the data where there are higher rates of vulnerable people in the West than the East. Consideration will be needed to mitigate risks of disaggregation to services under a 2UA model. As delivery models are developed and agreed, further consideration will be needed to	

					consider the potential equalities impact on service users.	

Potential disproportionate impact:

- Need to ensure continuity of provision through transition, notably for vulnerable, high-risk populations. Experience would suggest that we would likely see an adverse impact on service outcomes and team productivity through transition.
- Higher rate of co-morbidities and long-term conditions in the West than in the East. This makes the population more vulnerable to poor health outcomes, such as the impact of a pandemic (as observed during and following Covid 19).
- Distribution of inclusion health groups differs across East and West which needs to be considered in assessing impacts.
- Asylum accommodation predominantly located in West.
- Refugee population higher in East.
- Traveller accommodation all located in East.
- Homelessness/rough sleeper - predominantly in West.
- Care leavers – predominantly in West
- Two hospital discharge teams could result in reduction in service for effective support of hospital discharges

Council Workforce

Moving to Two Unitary Authorities (2UA) will bring changes to how we work and how teams are set up. Further assessment is needed to understand how these changes will affect different groups of staff across the councils.

Protected Characteristics / Additional Groups	Positive Impact	Neutral Impact	Negative Impact	Not Sure	Summary of Impact	Action Required (Y/N)?
Age				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • As the biggest age demographic for staff falls within the 45-59 age range, consideration will need to be given to this group • When jobs are reorganised or changed, there's a risk that older people might be treated unfairly in hiring. HR will need to take steps to prevent this. • There's a risk that HR policies and practices might not be consistent across councils that will be making up the new authorities. Potential for positive impact: • As roles change and teams are reorganised, younger staff might have more opportunities for promotion.	Y

					• The new councils could create policies that support staff of all ages, including training and flexible retirement options. • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Disability				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • Staff with disabilities might be more affected by changes in location, especially if transport or building access isn't properly planned. • When the new councils are created, there may be delays or gaps in providing workplace adjustments (like special equipment, flexible hours, or software) during team or office moves.	Y

					• Where services may be split up, there is a risk of losing important knowledge and support networks (like disability staff groups or equality officers) if these aren't kept in place in the new councils. • Changes to how people work or being moved to a new employer (TUPE) may disproportionately affect staff with mental health needs or neurodiverse conditions. Potential for positive impact: • The new councils have a chance to build accessible workplaces, systems, and flexible working options from the start. • The opportunity to ensure that the councils create stronger inclusion policies, which could lead to better support and visibility for staff with hidden disabilities or mental health conditions. • As part of implementation, efforts will be made to make sure staff policies around workplace adjustments are in place and that workspaces are accessible. However, the exact impact may vary between services, and a more detailed review will be needed. • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs.	

					As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Sex				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: As with other personal characteristics, the impact of changes will vary depending on the makeup of each team. However, changes that affect frontline staff and team leaders are likely to affect women more, where they make up a large part of these roles. It will be important to consider this when planning any potential staff restructures linked to LGR. Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • There's a higher risk of women being affected unfairly, as they make up over 70% of the workforce. Consideration should be given when affecting any contractual changes to ensure individuals are not disproportionately affected due to sex. • There is a risk that pay structures do not provide equity for those of any sex.	Y

					Potential for positive impact: • The new councils could use this to improve gender balance, especially in leadership, management, and technical roles. • There is an opportunity to ensure there are equal pay policies and structures • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Race				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Like with other personal characteristics, the impact of changes will vary depending on the makeup of each team or service. However, there is risk that staff from ethnic minority backgrounds are impacted: Considerations for disproportionate impacts:	Y

					• There's a risk that anti-racism work or equality efforts might lose focus if teams are split or priorities shift. • Communication could be harder during the transition, especially for staff who don't speak English as their first language. Potential for positive impact: • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Gender reassignment				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: There is no data available on staff who declare that they are going through or have gone through gender reassignment. Consideration will be needed to ensure there are no disproportionate impacts on staff with this characteristic.	Y

					Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • There's a risk that HR policies and practices might not be consistent across councils that will be making up the new authorities. For example, how names and pronouns are recorded, dress codes, or access to support. • Some councils may have different policies that will need to be aligned during the TUPE process. Potential for positive impact: • Setting up the new councils is a chance to improve support for trans staff. This could include better training, updated policies on gender identity, and more inclusive facilities. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. • Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Pregnancy & maternity				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration:	Y

					Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • Staff on maternity leave during the transition might feel concern about job security, changes in their manager, or changes to their role. • Through this process, working hours or locations might change. This could be difficult for pregnant staff or new mothers, especially if it's different from what they agreed before going on maternity leave. • As the new councils are set up, there could be problems with managing leave, pay, or flexible working during the change. • There is a risk that HR policies and practices and not consistent across councils that will be making up the new authority. There will be a need to harmonise HR policies. Potential for positive impact: • On the positive side, the new councils might be able to plan their workforce in a more local and flexible way. • This could lead to better support for returning to work, more flexible working options, and improved arrangements for staff with caring responsibilities. • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with	

					employee groups to understand their needs – such as physical space for breastfeeding As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Religion and/or belief				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Like with other personal characteristics, the impact will vary depending on the makeup of each team. Consideration will be needed to ensure there are no disproportionate impacts on staff with this characteristic. Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • There's a risk that religious needs might be missed during potential office moves or when new policies are created. For example, staff may need prayer rooms or multi-faith spaces if they're asked to work in a new location. • There is a risk that HR policies and practices are not consistent across councils that will be making up the unitary authority.	Y

					There will be a need to harmonise HR policies. Potential for positive impact: • Any changes to office spaces as part of creating the new councils should be a chance to design more inclusive workplaces. This might include multi-faith rooms, culturally appropriate food options, or more flexible leave policies. • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Sexual orientation				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Like with other personal characteristics, staff don't have to share their sexual orientation, so data is limited on this characteristic. As implementation plans are agreed there will be	Y

					more opportunity to work with employee groups, such as LGBTQ+ groups to understand their needs. Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • There's a risk that existing LGBTQ+ support networks or allies could be lost if teams are split up or moved. Potential for positive impact: • The new councils should show strong support for LGBTQ+ inclusion from the start by creating new networks, policies, and support systems for LGBTQ+ staff. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Marriage & civil partnership				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected.	Y

					As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Armed Forces community				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected. Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • There is a risk that HR policies and practices are not consistent across councils that will be making up the unitary authority. There will be a need to harmonise HR policies. Potential for positive impact:	Y

					• As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Carers				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Like with other personal circumstances, the impact on staff with caring responsibilities will need to be considered in more detail once detailed plans are developed. Workplace policies may need to be updated to support carers, including options for leave and flexible or hybrid working. Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • Staff who care for others may feel additional pressures if they're worried about job security or increased workloads.	Y

					• There is potential for loss of informal support, like understanding managers or flexible arrangements, during team changes. • Moving to a new work location, if required could mean longer travel times and higher costs, making it harder to manage their caring duties. • There is a risk that HR policies and practices are not consistent across the councils that will be making up the unitary authority. There will be a need to harmonise HR policies. Potential for positive impact: • The new councils could use this opportunity to improve support for carers by creating fair and consistent policies. For example, carers' leave and flexible working— across all areas. • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent.	

					Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Care leavers / care experienced adults				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected. As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	Y
Digital exclusion				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to	Y

					ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected. As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Geography, for example, urban and rural areas				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected. As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent.	Y

					Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Socio-economic disadvantage				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected. Considerations for disproportionate impacts: • Staff on lower incomes may struggle more with potential changes with moving to a new location, longer travel, or job uncertainty. • If there are redundancies or changes in pay, those already financially stretched could be disproportionately affected. However, based on the experiences of other local authorities who have already gone through this process, redundancies have been minimal and mostly limited to senior leadership roles (such as Chief Executives, Directors etc). Potential for positive impact:	Y

					• The reorganisation and TUPE process should be used to reduce inequalities - for example, by improving access to training, career progression, or digital tools. • As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs. As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	
Vulnerable groups of society				X	Based on the different needs of the current workforce, below highlights some general points for consideration: Consideration will be needed for any changes to or new internal policies and practices to ensure people with this characteristic are not disproportionately affected. As implementation plans are agreed there will be more opportunity to work with employee groups to understand their needs.	Y

					As with other areas, work will be done to make sure staff policies are consistent. Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on the workforce.	

Action Plan

Set out the key actions that will be undertaken, following the equality assessment in section 3, to further maximise the positive impact or mitigate the negative impact of the proposal on the protected characteristics and additional groups prior to implementation (any negative consequences should be eliminated, minimised or counter-balanced by other measures):

Identified Potential or Actual Impact	Recommended Action(s)	Owner	Target Completion Date
Further analysis is needed once delivery model is agreed to assess any potential equalities impact on service users and workforce.	As part of implementation planning, each LGR programme will need to complete an EqIA to consider the impact of proposed changes to service delivery and ways of working on those with protected characteristics and inform decision making.	Programme Managers	Nov ’25 - Aug ‘26
Depending on the implementation plan chosen, there is potential for equalities		People & Culture LGR Workstream	Nov ’25 – Apr ‘28

impact on workforce with protected characteristics. Mostly likely to be Geography and disability, should any change in working location be needed	People & Culture workstream to ensure all workforce risks are mitigated against through policy.		

Monitoring and Review

Public bodies must have regard to the aims of the duty not only when a policy, service or development is being created and decided upon, but also when it is implemented and at regular intervals thereafter. The Equality Duty is a continuing duty.

Lead officer(s):	Gareth Edmundson, Chief Executive – Cheltenham Borough Council Jane Portman, Chief Executive, Cotswold District Council Nigel Brinn, Chief Executive, Forest of Dean District Council Jon McGinty, Managing Director, Gloucester City Council Jo Walker, Chief Executive – Gloucestershire County Council Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive – Stroud District Council Alistair Cunningham, Chief Executive – Tewkesbury Borough Council

Part 1 – Initial arrangements (up to around six months following implementation)

Date of the post implementation review:	October 2028
Approach to measuring the impact of the change to enable a comparison between	Review on implementation to be completed by each LGR Programme as agreed under finalised implementation plans. Each programme will need an individual EqIA

the anticipated impact (as set out in section 3) with the actual impact: ▪ What mechanisms will be used? ▪ How will service users / the wider community / GCC staff and other stakeholders be involved?	to ensure there is consideration of equalities and ownership of actions throughout the process.

Part 2 – Ongoing arrangements (from around six months onwards)

Frequency of monitoring and review:	Ongoing monitoring via individual LGR programmes.
What mechanisms will be used? How will service users / the wider community / GCC staff and other stakeholders be involved?	Via individual programme EqIAs.

Appendix 1: Service User Data and Information

Details of service users affected by the proposed activity:

Groups	Service User Data and Information

Age

Dependency ratios are a measure that indicate the level of support that needs to be provided by the working age (16-64) population to the younger and older population, people aged 0-15 or 65+. A low dependency ratio indicates that there is a sufficient ratio of the working-age population to the dependent population. In contrast, a high dependency ratio indicates there may be more financial burden on the working population to support the dependent population

The West has a higher overall population than the East, it has a slightly lower proportion of those aged 65 and over, which are likely to require more targeted support.

Table 5: Age distribution of the mid 2023 Population, by the proposed unitaries[1]

	Gloucestershire		East		West	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	
Total Population	659,276	100.0%	310,641	100.0%	348,635	
0-16	115,485	17.5%	53,920	17.4%	61,565	
16-64	398,322	60.4%	186,241	60.0%	212,081	
65+	145,469	22.1%	70,480	22.7%	74,989	

Table 8 shows the projected dependency in 2047. The East area is projected to have a greater dependency ratio than the West and Gloucestershire as a whole. For every 100 people of working age the East will be supporting around 5 more dependents than the West, which could translate to higher demands for council services, and more people who are not in the workforce than those who are working, potentially constraining growth in the local economy.

Table 8: Projected dependency ratio, 2047, by the proposed unitaries[2]

	Dependency ratio
Gloucestershire	0.69
East	0.72

West	0.67

Figure 2 looks at the projected population across the three areas in more detail, breaking it down by sex and 5 year age band. Across all areas the largest 5 year cohort is those aged 55-59. All areas have a similar age profile, although the West area has a higher proportion of those aged 35-59, and a lower proportion of older people than other areas.

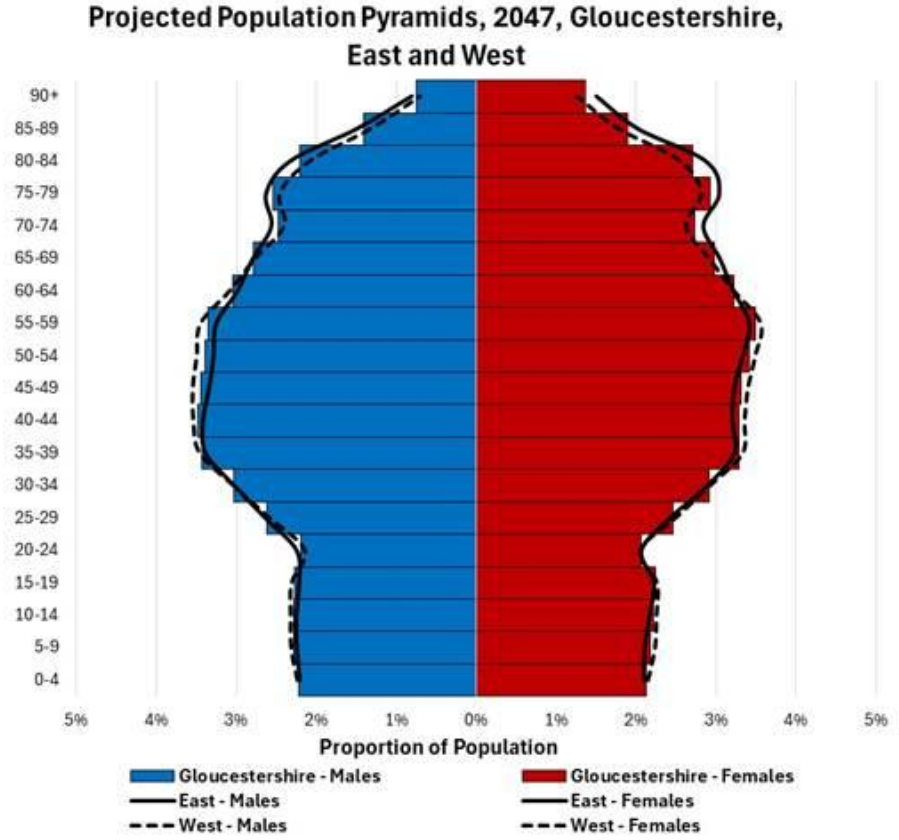


Figure 2: Projected Population Pyramids, 2047, Gloucestershire, East and West[3]

Adult Social Care

The information below shows a break down of the Adult Social Care case cohort by age groups, Gloucestershire, East and West areas and the component districts.

Table 9 shows the caseload for age groups over 75 are the highest across all areas. The West area has greater overall demand than the East.

Table 9: Adult Social Care Service Users by age, Gloucestershire, East and West, as at 31st March 2025 (DRAFT)[4] [5]

East Unitary

	Under 18	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85+	Grand Total
Cheltenham	0	56	80	99	81	167	165	319	328	1271
Cotswold	0	16	25	22	28	69	99	217	307	770
Tewkesbury	0	40	57	44	44	119	99	203	239	836
****	**0**	**112**	**162**	**165**	**153**	**355**	**363**	**739**	**874**	**2877**

West Unitary

	Under 18	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85+	Grand Total
Gloucester	<5	159	190	156	179	302	220	371	333	1865
Stroud	<5	82	101	79	87	187	164	294	340	1313
Forest of Dean	0	65	87	72	73	157	156	257	278	1113
****	**0**	**306**	**378**	**307**	**339**	**646**	**540**	**922**	**951**	**4291**

Countywide

	Under 18	18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85+	Grand Total
Cheltenham		56	80	99	81	167	165	319	328	1271
Cotswold		16	25	22	28	69	99	217	307	770
Tewkesbury		40	57	44	44	119	99	203	239	836
Gloucester	<5	159	190	156	179	302	220	371	333	1865
Stroud	<5	82	101	79	87	187	164	294	340	1313
Forest of Dean		65	87	72	73	157	156	257	278	1113
Out of County or Unknown	<5	18	24	50	54	60	42	55	49	349
Grand Total	**7**	**425**	**559**	**512**	**533**	**1042**	**939**	**1710**	**1871**	**7433**

Vulnerable Children

The information below shows a break down of the vulnerable children across Gloucestershire, East and West areas and the component districts.

The West has a higher population of children than the East. The West also has a higher level of child safeguarding activity, and a greater rate of children subject to Education, Health and Care Plans.

Table 10: Service demand for children's services as at 09/07/2025[6]

	Population aged 17 and under (MYE 2023)	All open referrals/cases[7]	CiN / CP / CIC[8]	CYP with EHCP[9] [10]

Area	Number	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Cheltenham	23,777	662	2.80%	333	1.40%	1,106	4.70%
Cotswolds	16,623	419	2.50%	270	1.60%	733	4.40%
Tewkesbury	20,515	575	2.80%	346	1.70%	1,235	6.00%
East	60,915	1,656	2.70%	949	1.60%	3,074	5.00%
Forest of Dean	16,192	460	2.80%	301	1.90%	867	5.40%
Gloucester	29,192	1,196	4.10%	617	2.10%	1,708	5.90%
Stroud	24,173	596	2.50%	308	1.30%	1,294	5.40%
West	69,557	2,252	3.20%	1,226	1.80%	3,869	5.60%
Gloucestershire	130,472	3,908	3.00%	2,175	1.70%	6,943	5.30%

[1] Mid 2023 Population Estimate, ONS

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

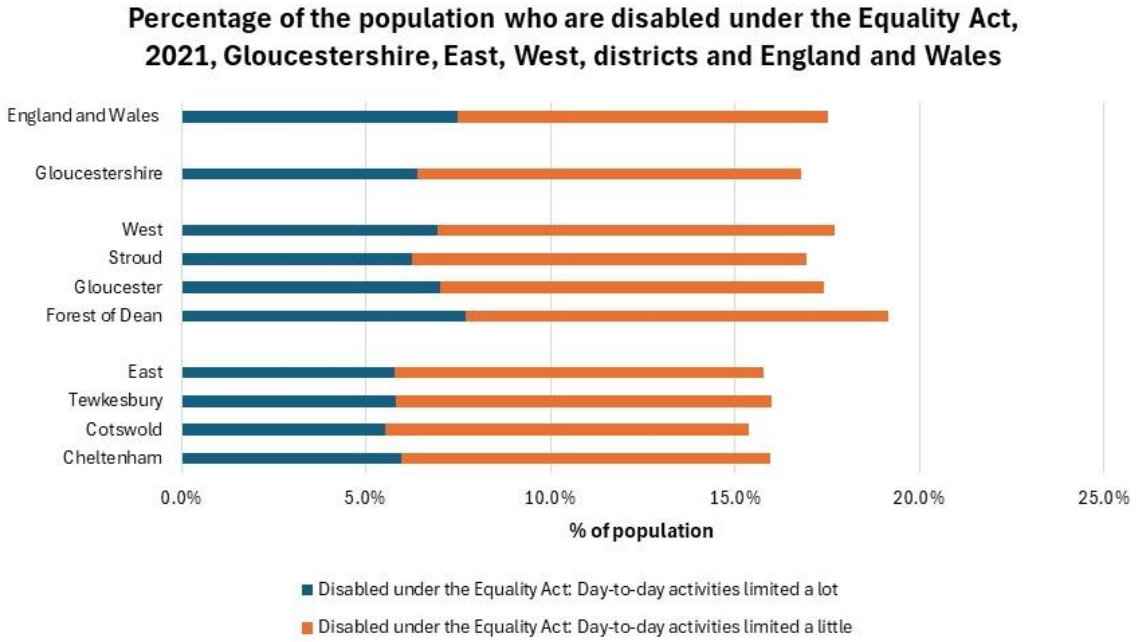
[4] DAIT, GCC

[5] The tables are based on our Client Level Dataset (CLD), representing a distinct count of individuals by age and postcode at the point of service commencement. Please be aware that the CLD is currently undergoing a comprehensive review and enhancement process, which may lead to future refinements in the data. All service types are included in this snapshot—this encompasses Health, Fully-Funded, Part-Funded, and selected Self-Funded services. No services have been excluded.

[6] DAIT, GCC

[7] Figures refer to all open Social Care referrals, as of 09/07/2025. Address information refers to Home Address as of 09/07/2025. Totals may not add up to 100% as either address information not being recorded or child residing outside of Gloucestershire at that time.

[8] Of the above children, those who were either subject to a CiN plan, CP plan or were a Child in Care, as of 09/07/2025

	[9] Figures include children and young people aged 0-25 with an EHCP maintained by the LA and are a snapshot as at 09/07/2025. Based on the child / young person's home postcode. [10] * EHCP runs from 0 to 25, but the majority of plans are for under-18's, so the same population (0 to 17) is used for the % for consistency
Disability	In 2021, 16.8% of Gloucestershire residents were classified as having a disability under the Equality Act. Looking at the East and West areas, the West area has the highest proportion of residents with a disability (17.7%) exceeding the figure for the county as a whole and the national average. The East area has the lowest proportion of residents with a disability (15.8%) below the county and national average. 

Sex

According to the 2023 population estimates, 51.1% of Surrey's population is female. This is in line with the national average. The East and West areas are also broadly similar to the national and county average with 51.2% and 51.0% of the population being female respectively.

Table 13: Sex breakdown of the mid 2023 Population, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales[1]

	Number			Percenta
	Male	Female	Total	Male
Cheltenham	59,011	61,244	120,255	49.1%
Cotswold	43,963	47,527	91,490	48.1%
Tewkesbury	43,698	45,406	89,104	49.0%
East	**146,672**	**154,177**	**300,849**	**48.8%**
Forest of Dean	66,984	68,007	134,991	49.6%
Gloucester	60,868	63,672	124,540	48.9%
Stroud	47,832	51,064	98,896	48.4%
West	**175,684**	**182,743**	**358,427**	**49.0%**
Gloucestershire	**322,356**	**336,920**	**659,276**	**48.9%**
England and Wales	29,835,992	31,018,735	60,854,727	49.0%

As age increases, females outnumber males by an increasing margin. In Gloucestershire in 2023, 52.8% of people aged 65-84 were female, whilst for people aged 85+ the difference was more marked with females accounting for 61.4% of the total population; this difference is observed across the East and West areas as well as at a national level.

	Table 14: Sex and breakdown of the mid 2023 Population, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales[2]

	0-15		16-64		65-84		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
East	50.6%	49.4%	49.1%	50.9%	46.8%	53.2%	38.3%
West	50.9%	49.1%	49.7%	50.3%	47.6%	52.4%	38.8%
Gloucestershire	50.8%	49.2%	49.4%	50.6%	47.2%	52.8%	38.6%
England and Wales	51.2%	48.8%	49.3%	50.7%	47.1%	52.9%	38.1%

[1] Mid 2023 Population Estimates, ONS

[2] *Ibid.*

Race	The Equality Act states that race includes colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins. The government refers to ethnicity and not race; this is because surveys usually ask people for their ethnicity and not their race, and using consistent terms helps people to understand the data. In Gloucestershire 87.7% of residents identified as White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British, which was considerably higher than the national average of 74.4%. The East and West have a similar proportion of residents who identified as White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British to Gloucestershire with 88.1% and 87.4% respectively. White Other accounts for the second largest proportion of residents in Gloucestershire, East and West. In Gloucestershire 5.3% of residents fall into this category, lower than the national average of 7.3%. In the East area 5.9% of residents are classified as White Other, slightly higher than the Gloucestershire figure but lower than the national figure, while in the West area 4.8% of residents fall into this category, higher than the Gloucestershire and national figure.

The Asian, Asian British and Asian Welsh category made up the largest percentage of the non-White Gloucestershire, East and West population and represented 2.9% of Gloucestershire residents, lower than the national average of 9.3%. The East and West areas have a similar proportion of Asian, Asian British and Asian Welsh as Gloucestershire as 2.6% and 3.1% respectively.

There are minimal differences in the proportion of Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African residents and Mixed or Multiple Ethnic Groups across Gloucestershire, East and West areas.

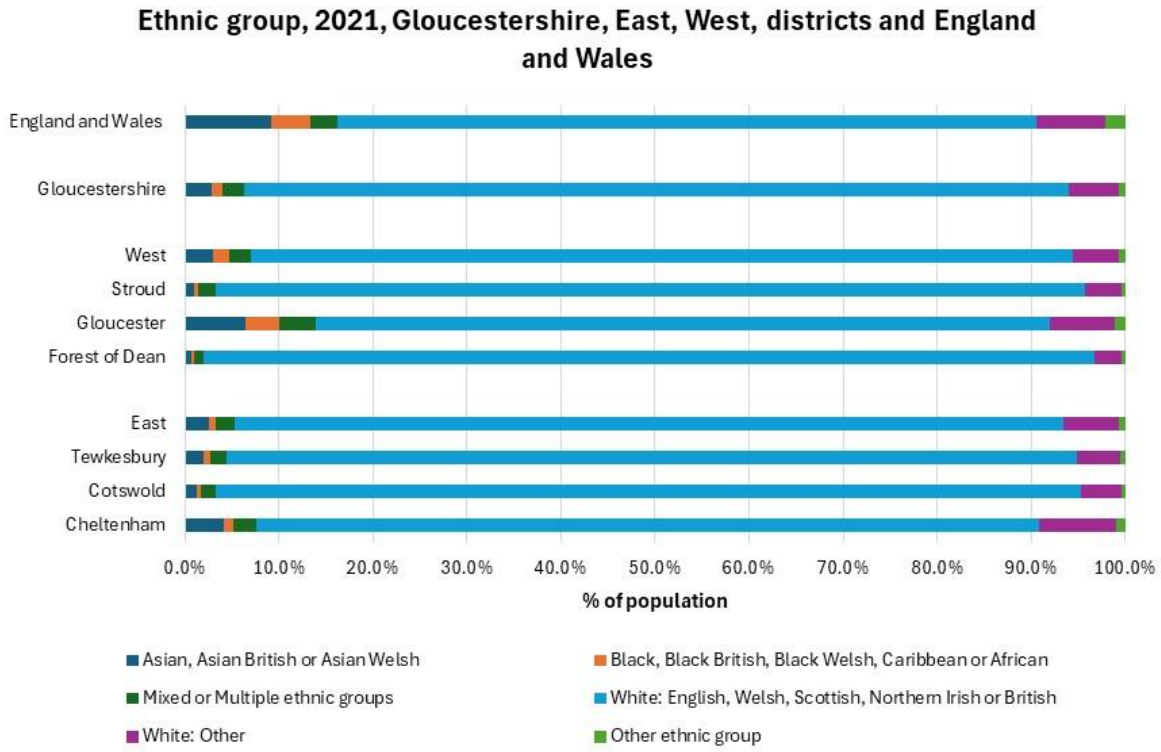
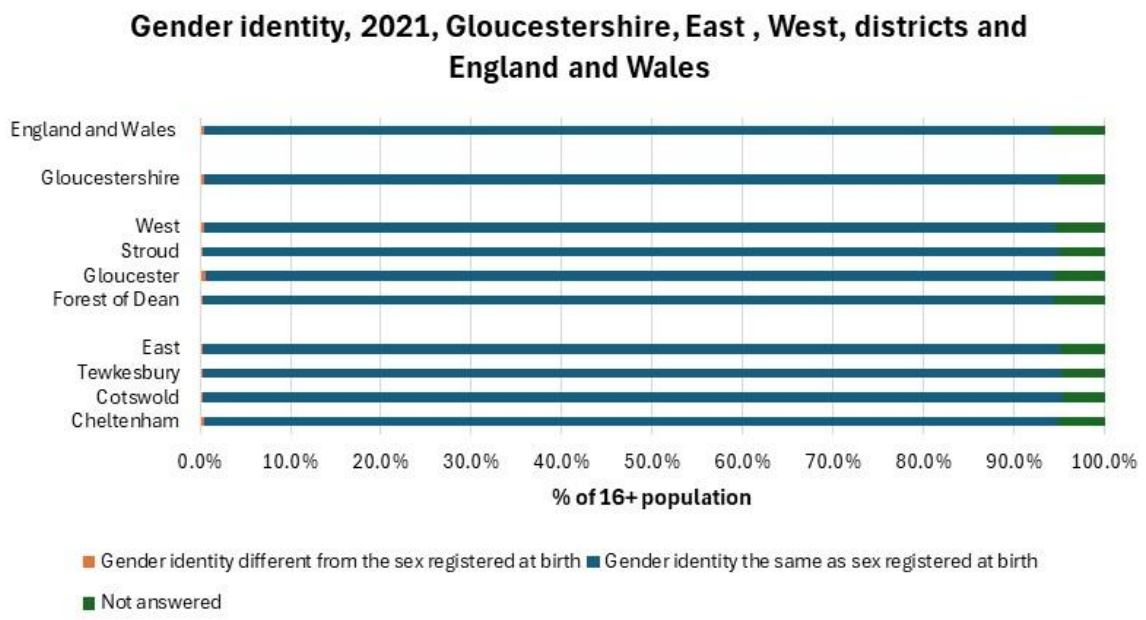


	Figure 6: Ethnic group, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales[66]
Gender reassignment	The Census 2021 has provided the first set of official data on gender identity in England and Wales. In the 2021 Census there was a new question around gender identity, asking 'is your gender the same as the sex you were registered at birth?'. The question referred to a person's sense of their own gender. It was directed only at people aged 16 and over, and answers were voluntary. However, as of November 2024, the Census 2021 data on gender identity no longer hold the accredited official statistics designation and have been reclassified as official statistics in development. ONS states: There are some patterns in the data that are consistent with, but do not conclusively demonstrate, some respondents not interpreting the question as intended; given other sources of uncertainty, not least the impact of question non-response, we cannot say with certainty whether the census estimates are more likely to be an overestimate or an underestimate of the total number of trans people aged over 16 years in England and Wales. Census estimates on gender identity are, however, broadly consistent with the best available comparator of the GP Patient Survey and international comparators. Overall, 94.8% of residents in Gloucestershire aged 16 and over answered the question. Of these, almost 2,200 people (0.4%) regarded their gender identity to be different from the sex registered at birth. The East and West areas also saw 0.4% of their population stating their gender identity was different from the sex registered at birth. However, in the East 95.1% of residents answered the question this was slightly higher than the 94.5% in the West.

[66] 2021 Census, ONS

	 *Figure 7: Gender identity, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales*[67]
Pregnancy & maternity	There were 5,839 live births in Gloucestershire in 2023, this equates to a crude fertility rate of 8.9 live births per 1,000 people of all ages. This was lower than the national average of 9.7 live births per 1,000 people of all ages. Looking at the East and West areas, the highest crude birth rate was in the West (9.1), which exceeded the county average but was lower than the national average. The East had a crude birth rate of 8.6 live births per 1,000 people, this was lower than the county and national average. Crude birth rates are affected by the

[67] *Ibid.*

demographic make-up of an area. Gloucestershire's relatively older population means it has proportionally less women of childbearing age than England, which may explain its lower crude birth rate.

Table 9: Crude birth rates, 2023[68]

	Live births	Total Population	Crude Birth Rate per 1,000 population
Cheltenham	1,009	120,255	8.4
Cotswold	657	91,490	7.2
Tewkesbury	1,001	98,896	10.1
East	**2,667**	**310,641**	**8.6**
Forest of Dean	709	89,104	8.0
Gloucester	1,448	134,991	10.7
Stroud	1,015	124,540	8.1
West	**3,172**	**348,635**	**9.1**
Gloucestershire	**5,839**	**659,276**	**8.9**
England and Wales	591,072	60,854,727	9.7

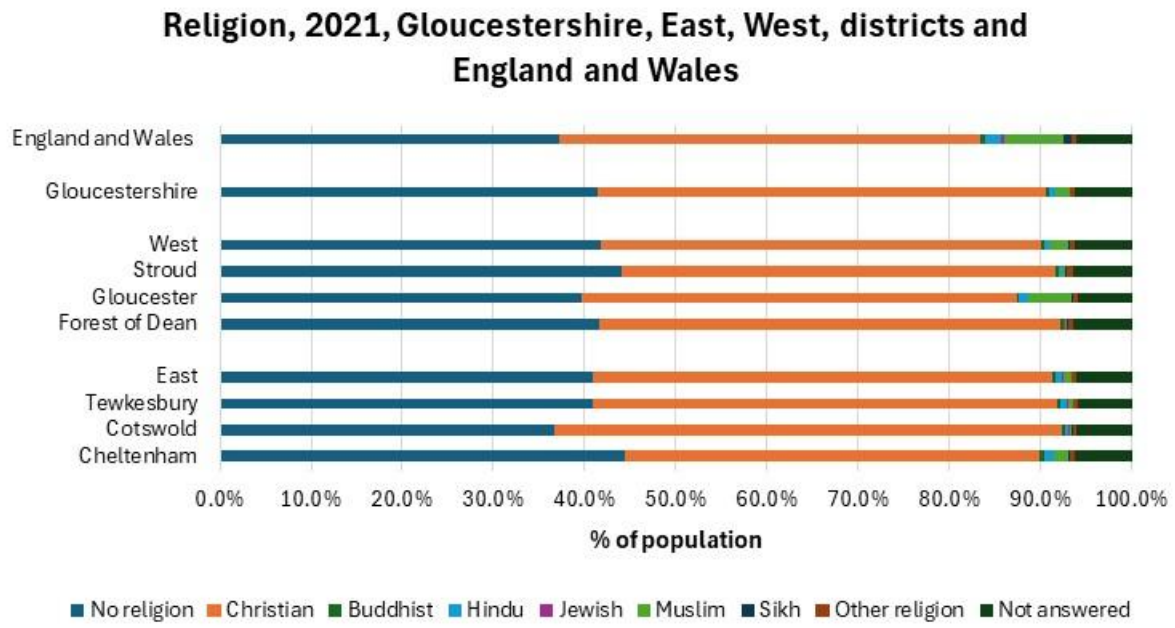
The limitation of crude birth rates is that it doesn't account for the age and sex structure of the population. General Fertility Rates account for this by expressing live births per 1,000 females aged 15-64, this adjusts for women of childbearing age in an area. A higher general fertility rate (GFR) means that, on average, more children are being born to women of reproductive age. The General Fertility Rate in Gloucestershire stands at

[68] Live births in England and Wales, ONS

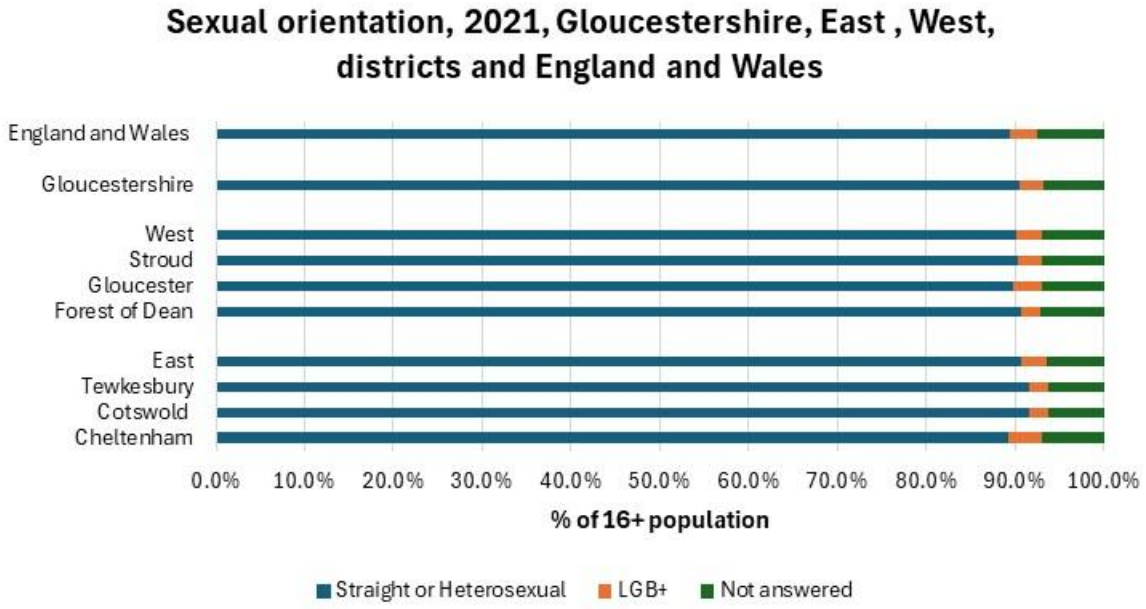
<table>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.4 live births per 1,000 females aged 15-44, which is slightly higher than the national average. Looking at the East and West areas, the highest general fertility rate was in the West (51.9), which exceeded the county average but was lower than the national average. The East had a general fertility rate of 48.8 live births per 1,000 females aged 15-44, this was lower than the county and national average.
Table 10: General Fertility Rates, 2023[69]
<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Live births</th><th>15-44 year old female population</th><th>General Fertility Rate per 1,000 population</th></tr>
<tr><td>Cheltenham</td><td>1,009</td><td>23,432</td><td>43.1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cotswold</td><td>657</td><td>13,724</td><td>47.9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tewkesbury</td><td>1,001</td><td>17,525</td><td>57.1</td></tr>
<tr><td>East</td><td>2,667</td><td>54,681</td><td>48.8</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Forest of Dean</td><td>709</td><td>14,206</td><td>49.9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Gloucester</td><td>1,448</td><td>26,915</td><td>53.8</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stroud</td><td>1,015</td><td>19,969</td><td>50.8</td></tr>
<tr><td>West</td><td>3,172</td><td>61,090</td><td>51.9</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Gloucestershire</td><td>5,839</td><td>115,771</td><td>50.4</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>England and Wales</td><td>591,072</td><td>11,879,690</td><td>49.8</td></tr>
</table>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion and/or belief</td>
<td>The 2021 Census asked about religion, but this question was voluntary and ‘no religion’ was a common answer, a proportion of people also chose not to answer the question.</td>
</tr>
</table>

[69] Live births in England and Wales, ONS

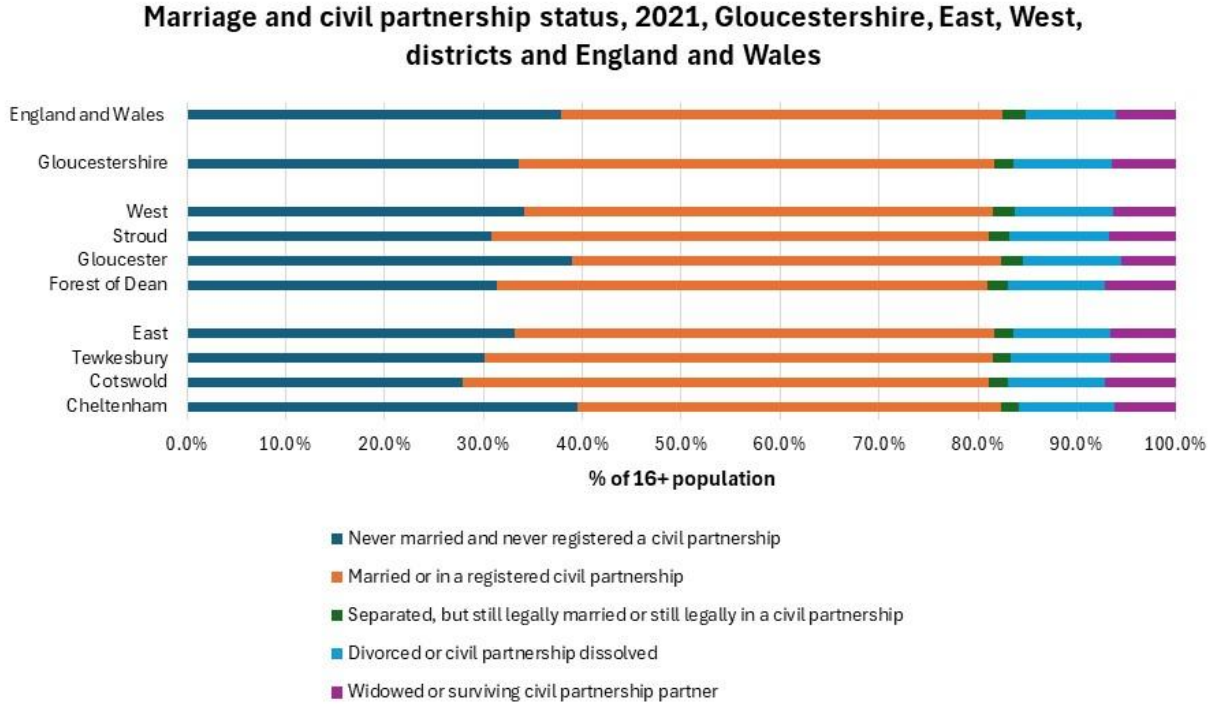
	According to the 2021 Census, 49.2% of residents in Gloucestershire were Christian, making it the most common religion, the proportion of residents selecting this religion was higher than the national average (46.2%). The East and West have a broadly similar proportion of residents who identified as Christian to Gloucestershire with figures of 50.2% and 48.3% respectively. No religion accounts for the second largest proportion of residents in Gloucestershire, East and West. In Gloucestershire 41.4% of residents fall into this category, higher than the national average of 37.2%. In the East area 41.0% of residents are classified as having no religion, slightly lower than the Gloucestershire figure but higher than the national figure, while in the West area 41.7% of residents fall into this category, higher than the Gloucestershire and national figure. Islam was the second most common religion in Gloucestershire, East and West Areas, Muslims represented 1.4% of Gloucestershire residents considerably below the national average of 6.5%. In the East area 0.8% of residents are classified as Muslim, slightly lower than the Gloucestershire figure and considerably lower than the national figure, while in the West area 2.0% of residents fall into this category, higher than the Gloucestershire figure but lower than the national figure.

	 *Figure 8: Religion, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales*[70]
Sexual orientation	As with gender identity, the Census 2021 has provided the first set of official data on sexual orientation in England and Wales. In the 2021 Census there was a new question around sexual orientation, asking 'which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?', and providing a list of options. It was directed only at people aged 16 and over, and answers were voluntary. Overall, 93.2% of residents in Gloucestershire aged 16 and over answered the question. The majority of people who answered described their sexual orientation as 'straight or heterosexual', at 90.4% of the population. This is slightly higher than the national average of 89.4%. In

[70] *Ibid.*

	the East area 90.6% of residents described their sexual orientation as 'straight or heterosexual', marginally higher than the county average and the figure for the West (90.2%).  *Figure 9: Sexual orientation, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales*[71]
Marriage & civil partnership	There minimal differences between Gloucestershire, the East and West areas. The East area has a slightly lower proportion of people who have never married and never registered a civil partnership (33.1%) than the West (34.1%) with the county sitting in the middle of the two areas (33.6%). Conversely the West area has a slightly

[71] *Ibid.*

	lower proportion of people who have married or are in a registered civil partnership (47.5%) than the East (48.6%) with the county again sitting in the middle (48.0%).  *Figure 10: Marriage and civil partnership status, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales*[72]
Armed Forces community	Local authorities, national government, businesses, local authorities, charities and the public have committed to support the Armed Forces community through the Armed Forces Covenant. It was adopted in 2011 and

[72] *Ibid.*

articulated the principles of no disadvantage and special consideration; that no current or former member of the armed forces, or their families, should be at a disadvantage compared to other residents in the provision of public and commercial services. This was followed by the Armed Forces Act 2021 introduced a new requirement for some public bodies, including the NHS and local authorities, to pay due regard to the principles of the Covenant when carrying out specific public functions in the areas of housing, healthcare and education.

The information captured relates to armed forces veterans rather than current personnel and was captured by the 2021 Census. In 2021 there were there 27,418 people who had previously served in the UK armed forces resident in Gloucestershire. This equates to 5.2% of the 16+ population. The proportion of armed forces veterans was higher in Gloucestershire than it was across England and Wales (3.8%). The East has a slightly higher proportion of armed forces veterans (5.4%) than the West (4.9%) and the county as a whole, but the difference is minimal.

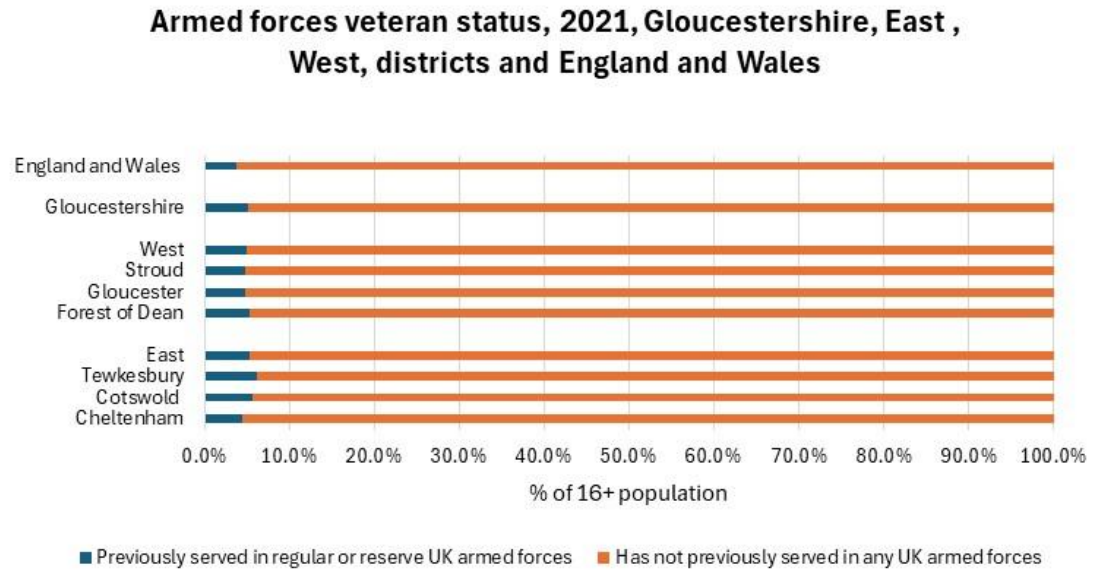


Figure 11: Armed Forces Veteran Status, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales[73]

Carers

This information is based on self-reported caring status according to the 2021 Census, this means figures will be different from sources which look at registered carers.

In 2021, there were 51,862 people aged 5+ providing unpaid care in Gloucestershire, this is equivalent to 8.5% of the population. In comparison, a slightly higher proportion of the population in England and Wales (8.9%) said they provided unpaid care. In the East area 8.0% of residents aged 5+ provided unpaid care higher slightly higher than the county average and the figure of 8.9% seen when looking at the West area. There are minimal differences observed in the levels of care provided by the East, West and Gloucestershire total.

Table 11: Residents aged 5+ by caring status, 2021, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales[74]

	Percentage of 5 + Population				
	Provides no unpaid care	**Proved some unpaid care**	**Provides 19 hours or less unpaid care a week**	**Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week**	**Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week**
Cheltenham	92.6%	7.4%	4.2%	1.3%	1.9%
Cotswold	91.9%	8.1%	4.7%	1.2%	2.2%
Tewkesbury	91.5%	8.5%	4.7%	1.4%	2.4%
East	**92.0%**	**8.0%**	**4.5%**	**1.3%**	**2.1%**
Forest of Dean	90.3%	9.7%	5.1%	1.7%	2.9%
Gloucester	91.6%	8.4%	4.2%	1.8%	2.4%
Stroud	91.1%	8.9%	5.3%	1.4%	2.2%

[73] 2021 Census, ONS
[74] *Ibid.*

West	**91.1%**	**8.9%**	**4.8%**	**1.7%**	**2.4%**
Gloucestershire	**91.5%**	**8.5%**	**4.7%**	**1.5%**	**2.3%**
England and Wales	**91.1%**	**8.9%**	**4.3%**	**1.8%**	**2.7%**

Care leavers / care experienced adults

This information is based on self-reported caring status according to the 2021 Census, this means figures will be different from sources which look at registered carers.

In 2021, there were 51,862 people aged 5+ providing unpaid care in Gloucestershire, this is equivalent to 8.5% of the population. In comparison, a slightly higher proportion of the population in England and Wales (8.9%) said they provided unpaid care. In the East area 8.0% of residents aged 5+ provided

unpaid care higher slightly higher than the county average and the figure of 8.9% seen when looking at the West area. There are minimal differences observed in the levels of care provided by the East, West and Gloucestershire total.

Percentage of 5 + Population Provides no unpaid care Proved some unpaid care Provides 19 hours or less unpaid care a week Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week

	Percentage of 5 + Population				
	Provides no unpaid care	**Proved some unpaid care**	**Provides 19 hours or less unpaid care a week**	**Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week**	**Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week**
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Tewkesbury	91.5%	8.5%	4.7%	1.4%	2.4%
East	**92.0%**	**8.0%**	**4.5%**	**1.3%**	**2.1%**

	Forest of Dean	90.3%	9.7%	5.1%	1.7%	2.9%
	Gloucester	91.6%	8.4%	4.2%	1.8%	2.4%
	Stroud	91.1%	8.9%	5.3%	1.4%	2.2%
	West	**91.1%**	**8.9%**	**4.8%**	**1.7%**	**2.4%**
	Gloucestershire	**91.5%**	**8.5%**	**4.7%**	**1.5%**	**2.3%**
	England and Wales	**91.1%**	**8.9%**	**4.3%**	**1.8%**	**2.7%**

Digital exclusion

Very little information is collected about this group. The latest information taken from the Participation Survey is at district level and covers the period from May 2023 to March 2024. The results show that in Gloucestershire an estimated 95.6% of respondents have used the internet either at home or elsewhere which is higher than England average of 92.7%. The West area (94.4%) has a lower rate than the East (96.8%) and the county average but still exceeds the national average.

Table 12: Percentage of respondents aged 16 and over who have used the internet either at home or anywhere else, Gloucestershire, East and West, districts and England, 2023-2024[75]

	Percentage of 16+ Population
Cheltenham	96.9%
Cotswold	94.4%
Tewkesbury	95.8%
East	**96.8%**
Forest of Dean	91.3%

[75] Participation Survey, DCMS

<table>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<table>
<tr><td>Gloucester</td><td>92.3%</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stroud</td><td>95.9%</td></tr>
<tr><td>West</td><td>94.4%</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Gloucestershire</td><td>95.6%</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>England</td><td>92.7%</td></tr>
</table>
</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography, for example, urban and rural areas</td>
<td>
This includes specific areas and rural/urban geographies and how this can make it difficult for some people to access the services they need.
The 2021 Rural-Urban Classification (RUC) is a statistical classification system used to categorise geographies based on the form and characteristics of the settlements present within them. It aims to provide a consistent and standardised method for classifying areas as Rural or Urban, based on address density, physical settlement form, population size, and relative accessibility.
Gloucestershire has a significantly higher proportion of its population living in rural areas than the national average (17.5%). The East area has a higher proportion of its residents living in rural areas (32.6%) than the West (26.2%) and the county average.
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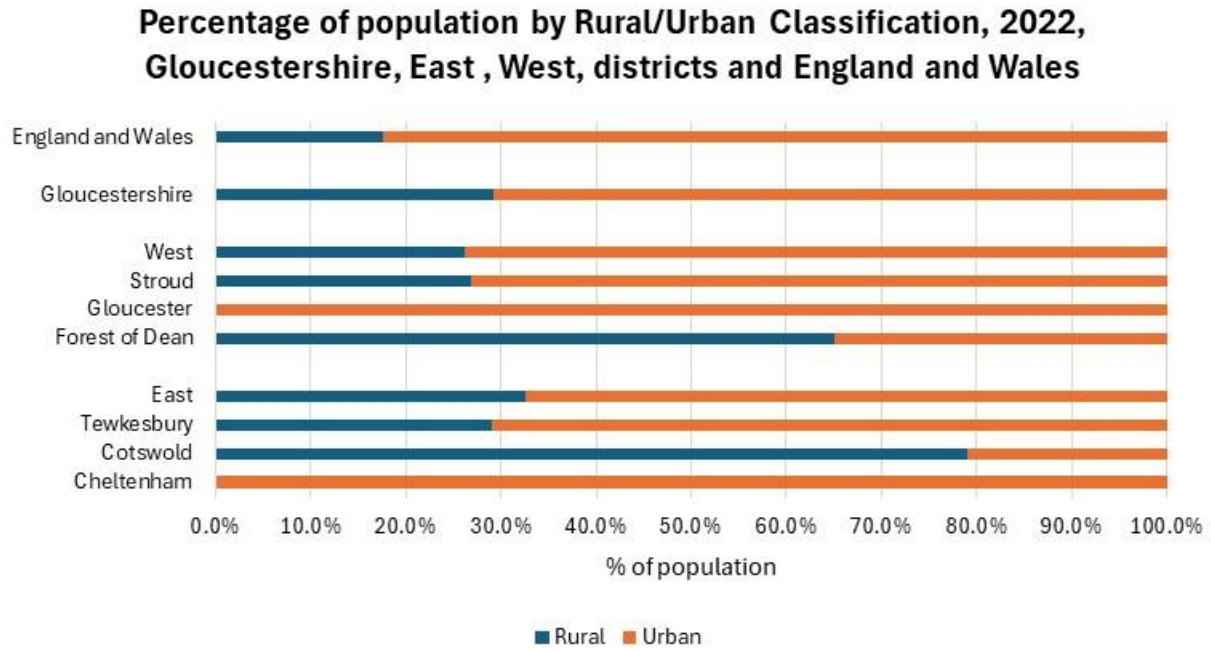
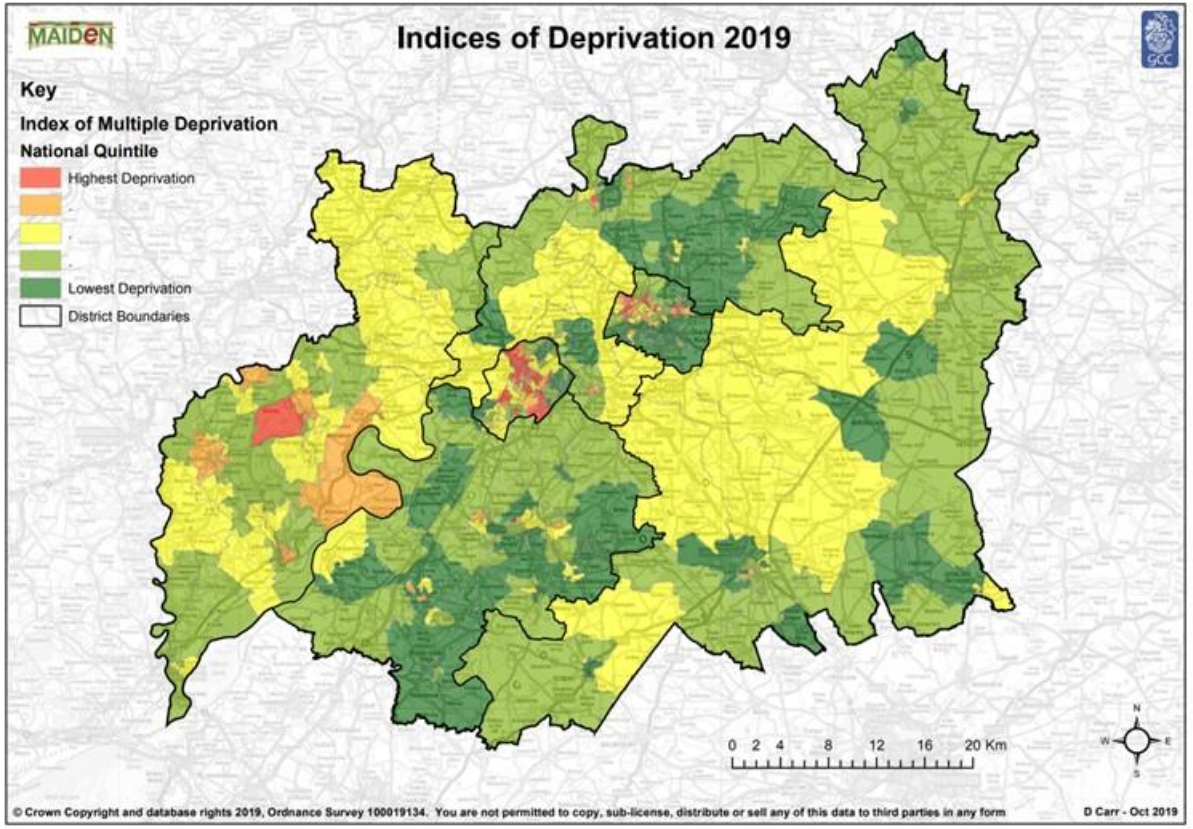


Figure 12: Percentage of population by Rural/Urban Classification, 2022, Gloucestershire, East, West, districts and England and Wales[76]

Socio-economic disadvantage	The main measure for this is the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. In general, Gloucestershire is not a very deprived county, ranking 126 out of 151 (where 1 is the most deprived) county and unitary authorities, putting it in the least deprived 20% of authorities across England. At district level, even the most deprived districts in the county (Gloucester City, and Forest of Dean) are amongst the middle 20% of districts for deprivation out of 317 English authorities. Tewkesbury, Cotswold, and Stroud

[76] Rural Urban Classification, 2021 and 2022 Mid Year Estimates, ONS

districts are in the least deprived 20% of districts nationally. Cheltenham is in the second least deprived 20% of districts nationally. However, there are pockets of deprivation, 31 out of 373 small areas in Gloucestershire are amongst the 20% most deprived in England with 7.9% residents of Gloucestershire living in these areas[77].



[77] Indices of Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG

Figure 13: Indices of Deprivation, 2019[78]

The West area has a higher proportion of residents living in the most deprived 20% nationally (10.9%) than the East (4.5%) and the county as a whole (7.9%)

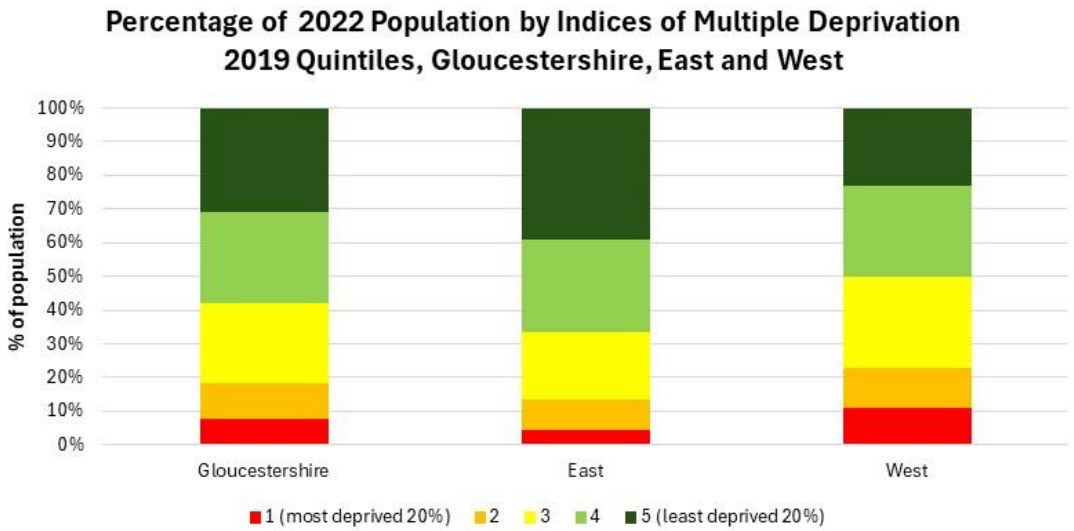


Figure 14: Percentage of 2022 population by Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019 Quintiles, Gloucestershire, East and West[79]

Table 13: Percentage of 2022 population by the domains of Indices of Deprivation 2019 Quintiles, Gloucestershire, East and West[80]

	Gloucestershire	East	West

[78] *Ibid.*
[79] Indices of Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG and Mid 2022 Population Estimates, ONS
[80] Indices of Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG and Mid 2022 Population Estimates, ONS

	1 (most deprived 20%)	2	3	4	5 (least deprived 20%)	1 (most deprived 20%)	2	3	4	5 (least deprived 20%)	1 (most deprived 20%)	2	3	4	5 (least deprived 20%)
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)	8%	11%	24%	27%	31%	5%	9%	20%	27%	39%	11%	12%	27%	27%	23%
Income	9%	13%	22%	29%	26%	6%	12%	16%	31%	36%	12%	14%	28%	27%	18%
Employment	8%	14%	21%	28%	28%	4%	12%	14%	29%	41%	12%	16%	28%	27%	17%
Education, Skills and Training	13%	18%	19%	23%	26%	10%	14%	15%	21%	40%	16%	23%	23%	24%	13%
Health Deprivation and Disability	8%	14%	17%	29%	32%	4%	12%	11%	30%	43%	12%	15%	23%	29%	22%
Crime	6%	9%	10%	23%	52%	5%	9%	8%	29%	49%	6%	8%	13%	18%	55%
Barriers to Housing and Services	19%	19%	22%	28%	13%	22%	13%	23%	30%	11%	16%	23%	21%	25%	15%
Living Environment	14%	14%	17%	24%	31%	13%	10%	21%	25%	31%	14%	18%	15%	23%	31%

Vulnerable groups of society	No specific data held on this characteristic. Where vulnerable groups are addressed through other characteristics.

Appendix 2: Council Staff Data and Information

Details of staff affected by the proposed activity:

<table>
<tr><th>Groups</th><th>Workforce Data and Information</th></tr>
<tr><td>Age</td><td>The table below summarises the most recent publicly available workforce figures for the councils.
<table>
<tr><th>Organisation</th><th>Snapshot date</th><th>Headcount / FTE</th><th>Age profile</th><th>Source</th></tr>
<tr><td>Gloucestershire County Council</td><td>1 Jul 2024</td><td>4,369 (excl. schools)</td><td>45–54 largest (32.4%)</td><td>GCC-EDI-2024</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stroud District Council</td><td>Apr 2022</td><td>379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual</td><td>50–59 largest group</td><td>SDC-Workforce-2022</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cheltenham Borough Council</td><td>Mar 2023</td><td>238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual</td><td>50–59 largest group</td><td>CBC-Workforce-2023</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tewkesbury Borough Council</td><td>31 Mar 2022</td><td>216</td><td>—</td><td>TBC-GPG-2022</td></tr>
<tr><td>Cotswold District Council</td><td>2024</td><td>Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica. Data provided represents 127 individuals</td><td>50–59 largest group (36.2%)</td><td>CDC-Publica-2024</td></tr>
<tr><td>Forest of Dean District Council</td><td>2024</td><td>Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return. Data provided represents 112 individuals</td><td>50+ largest group (43.8%)</td><td>FODDC-Publica-2024</td></tr>
<tr><td>Gloucester City Council</td><td>2022</td><td>261</td><td>56+ largest group (26.1%)</td><td>GC-EDI-2022</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Disability</td><td>The table below summarises the most recent publicly available workforce figures for the councils.
<table>
<tr><th>Organisation</th><th>Snapshot date</th><th>Headcount / FTE</th><th>Disability</th><th>Source</th></tr>
<tr><td>Gloucestershire County Council</td><td>1 Jul 2024</td><td>4,369 (excl. schools)</td><td>4.80%</td><td>GCC-EDI-2024</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

	Stroud District Council	Apr 2022	379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual	5.0%	SDC-Workforce-2022
	Cheltenham Borough Council	Mar 2023	238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual	10.1%	CBC-Workforce-2023
	Tewkesbury Borough Council	31 Mar 2022	216	—	TBC-GPG-2022
	Cotswold District Council	2024	Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica	1.57%	CDC-Publica-2024
	Forest of Dean District Council	2024	Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return	2.36%	FODDC-Publica-2024
	Gloucester City Council	2022	261	6.1%	GC-EDI-2022

	Organisation	**Snapshot date**	**Headcount / FTE**	**Gender split**	**Source**
Sex	Gloucestershire County Council	1 Jul 2024	4,369 (excl. schools)	70.1% F / 29.9% M	GCC-EDI-2024
	Stroud District Council	Apr 2022	379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual	58.6% F / 41.4% M	SDC-Workforce-2022
	Cheltenham Borough Council	Mar 2023	238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual	52.9% F / 47.1% M	CBC-Workforce-2023
	Tewkesbury Borough Council	31 Mar 2022	216	70.4% F / 29.6% M	TBC-GPG-2022
	Cotswold District Council	2024	Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica	70.87% F/ 29.13% M	CDC-Publica-2024
	Forest of Dean District Council	2024	Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return	65.18% F/ 34.82% M	FODDC-Publica-2024
	Gloucester City Council	2022	261	60.9% F / 39.1% M	GC-EDI-2022
Race	The table below summarises the most recent publicly available workforce figures for the councils.				

	Organisation	**Snapshot date**	**Headcount / FTE**	**Ethnicity**	**Source**
	Gloucestershire County Council	1 Jul 2024	4,369 (excl. schools)	White British 86.6%; DEC 7.5%	GCC-EDI-2024
	Stroud District Council	Apr 2022	379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual	89.7% White British	SDC-Workforce-2022
	Cheltenham Borough Council	Mar 2023	238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual	210 White British; 11 Other; 17 Unknown	CBC-Workforce-2023
	Tewkesbury Borough Council	31 Mar 2022	216	—	TBC-GPG-2022
	Cotswold District Council	2024	Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica	White - British: 29.92%	CDC-Publica-2024
	Forest of Dean District Council	2024	Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return	White – British: 36.61%	FODDC-Publica-2024
	Gloucester City Council	2022	261	White 70.5%; Unstated 21.5%; BME 8.0%	GC-EDI-2022
Gender reassignment	No data is publicly available regarding gender reassignment for any of the councils.				
Marriage & civil partnership	The table below summarises the most recent publicly available workforce figures for the councils.				

Organisation	**Snapshot date**	**Headcount / FTE**	**Marriage & Civil Partnership**	**Source**
Gloucestershire County Council	1 Jul 2024	4,369 (excl. schools)	Divorced/Dissolved Civil Partnership 5.8%; Married/Civil 48.2%; Separated 2.4%; Single/Never Married 35.3%; Widowed 0.6%; Prefer not to say 7.7%	GCC-EDI-2024

	Stroud District Council	Apr 2022	379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual	—	SDC-Workforce-2022
	Cheltenham Borough Council	Mar 2023	238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual	—	CBC-Workforce-2023
	Tewkesbury Borough Council	31 Mar 2022	216	—	TBC-GPG-2022
	Cotswold District Council	2024	Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica	Married: (7.56% Single: 14.17% Divorced: 3.94% Living with Partner: 0.79% Widowed: 0.79%	CDC-Publica-2024
	Forest of Dean District Council	2024	Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return	Married: 16.07% Single: 6.25% Divorced: 0.89%	FODDC-Publica-2024
	Gloucester City Council	2022	261	-	GC-EDI-2022
Pregnancy & maternity	No data is publicly available regarding Pregnancy & Maternity for any of the councils.				
Religion and/or belief	The table below summarises the most recent publicly available workforce figures for the councils.				

Organisation	Snapshot date	Headcount / FTE	Religion	Source
Gloucestershire County Council	1 Jul 2024	4,369 (excl. schools)	Buddhist 2.1%; Christian 32.2%; Hindu 0.0%; Jewish 0.0%; Muslim 3.4%; None	GCC-EDI-2024

				52.1%; Other 4.1%; Sikh 0.7%; Prefer not to say 5.5%	
	Stroud District Council	Apr 2022	379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual	—	SDC-Workforce-2022
	Cheltenham Borough Council	Mar 2023	238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual	—	CBC-Workforce-2023
	Tewkesbury Borough Council	31 Mar 2022	216	—	TBC-GPG-2022
	Cotswold District Council	2024	Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica	No religious belief: 20.47% Christian: 3.94% Some other religion or belief: 0.79% Prefer not to say: 74.80%	CDC-Publica-2024
	Forest of Dean District Council	2024	Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return	Christian: 2.68% No religious belief: 1.79% Prefer not to say: 0.89% Protestant: 0.89% Blank / Not Provided: 93.75%	FODDC-Publica-2024
	Gloucester City Council	2022	261	-	GC-EDI-2022

Sexual orientation

The table below summarises the most recent publicly available workforce figures for the councils.

Organisation	Snapshot date	Headcount / FTE	Sexual orientation	Source

	Gloucestershire County Council	1 Jul 2024	4,369 (excl. schools)	Bi-sexual 2.6%; Gay/Lesbian 2.1%; Heterosexual/Straight 86.0%; Prefer not to say 9.4%	GCC-EDI-2024
	Stroud District Council	Apr 2022	379 (344.3 FTE) + 50 casual	—	SDC-Workforce-2022
	Cheltenham Borough Council	Mar 2023	238 (220 FTE) + 12 casual	—	CBC-Workforce-2023
	Tewkesbury Borough Council	31 Mar 2022	216	—	TBC-GPG-2022
	Cotswold District Council	2024	Small direct workforce; most staff via Publica	Heterosexual: 32.28% Not stated: 2.36% Bisexual: 0.79% Blank / Not Provided: 66.93%	CDC-Publica-2024
	Forest of Dean District Council	2024	Part of Publica; 270+ staff proposed to return	Heterosexual: 41.07% Blank / Not Provided: 58.93%	FODDC-Publica-2024
	Gloucester City Council	2022	261	-	GC-EDI-2022
Armed Forces community	No data is publicly available regarding the Armed Forces Community for any of the councils.				
Carers	No data is publicly available regarding Carers for any of the councils.				
Care leavers / care experienced adults	No data is publicly available regarding Care leavers / care experienced adults for any of the councils.				

Digital exclusion	No data is publicly available regarding Digital exclusion for any of the councils.
Geography, for example, urban and rural areas	No data is publicly available regarding Geography of the workforce for any of the councils.
Socio-economic disadvantage	No data is publicly available regarding Socio-economic disadvantage of the workforce for any of the councils.
Vulnerable groups of society	No data is publicly available regarding Vulnerable groups of society disadvantage of the workforce for any of the councils
References used for Staffing Data	GCC-EDI-2024: Gloucestershire County Council – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Report 2024/25 https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/2126661/edi-report2024_workforce_final_.pdf SDC-Workforce-2022: Stroud District Council – Workforce Statistics (April 2022) https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/2103085/workforce-statistics-2022.pdf CBC-Workforce-2023: Cheltenham Borough Council – Workforce Statistics (March 2023) https://www.cheltenham.gov.uk/downloads/file/6208/workforce-statistics-march-2023 TBC-GPG-2022: Tewkesbury Borough Council – Gender Pay Gap Report 2022 https://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk/media/fzxhofgv/gender-pay-gap-report-2022-final.docx.pdf CDC-Publica-2024: Cotswold District Council – Council spending / staffing details (Publica model) https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/about-the-council/transparency-and-open-data/council/spending/ FODDC-Publica-2024: Forest of Dean District Council – News release (July 2024) https://news.fdean.gov.uk/news/local-authorities-to-consider-moving-forward-with-plans-to-take-greater-control-of-council-services

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