



**Minutes of a meeting of Council held on Wednesday, 26 November 2025**

Members present:

Mark Harris	Ray Brassington
Gina Blomefield	Joe Harris
Claire Bloomer	Paul Hodgkinson
Nick Bridges	Nikki Ind
Patrick Coleman	Angus Jenkinson
Daryl Corps	Julia Judd
David Cunningham	Andrew Maclean
Tony Dale	Mike McKeown
Mike Eevemy	Dilys Neill
David Fowles	Andrea Pellegram
Laura Hall-Wilson	Tony Slater

Officers present:

Jane Portman, Interim Chief Executive Officer	Kira Thompson, Election and Democratic Services Support Assistant
Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services	Matt Abbott, Head of Communications
Helen Martin, Director of Communities and Place	Mandy Fathers, Business Manager for Environmental, Welfare and Revenue Service
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer)	Sarah Dalby, Elections Manager
Julia Gibson, Democratic Services Officer	Cheryl Sloan, Assistant Director of Workforce, Strategy and Transformation
Nickie Mackenzie-Daste, Senior Democratic Services Officer	Kirsty Winters, Communications Officer
Tyler Jardine, Trainee Democratic Services Officer	Paul James, Economic Development Lead
David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer	

Observers:

Independent Remuneration Panel Members: Nikki Clark, Nick Craxton and David Hindle

**46 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Juliet Layton, Councillor Helene Mansilla, Councillor Nigel Robbins and Councillor Tristan Wilkinson.

**47 Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded members that in respect of item 9 on the agenda, that Council had agreed at its meeting on 18 January 2023 to approve, under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011, a number of general dispensations. This included a dispensation as regards determining allowances paid to members. This dispensation enabled all members to participate in the discussion and vote on matters relating to members' allowances, despite the direct financial interest.

It was also noted that in relation to item 13 on the agenda; Local Government Reorganisation, councillors who were also elected to Gloucestershire County Council or any Town or Parish Council could participate in the debate on the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposals, provided that they approached the discussion with an open mind. The Monitoring Officer advised that prior expression of a view on LGR proposals did not automatically preclude participation, subject to the member remaining open to persuasion during the meeting.

Furthermore, councillors who had previously declared their membership of another local authority in their Register of Interests were not required to repeat this declaration at the Full Council meeting.

It was noted that the Interim Chief Executive, who was the subject of agenda item 8 would leave the room for the duration of that item.

There were no other declarations of interest.

**48 Minutes**

Council considered the minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 September 2025. Councillor Judd requested that an amendment be made at item 40 Public Questions, on question 2 from Valerie Dyson so that it better aligned with the wording used at the meeting.

Councillor Evemy 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 24 September 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

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Voting record:

27 For, 0 Against, 3 Abstentions.

**To APPROVE the minutes of Full Council 24 September 2025 (Resolution)**

RESOLVED that the minutes of Full Council 24 September 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record.

For	Gina Blomefield, Ray Brassington, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, David Fowles, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson and Len Wilkins	27
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	Claire Bloomer, Laura Hall-Wilson and Andrew Maclean	3
<b>Carried</b>		

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**49 Announcements from the Chair, Leader or Chief Executive**

Chair's announcements

The Chair advised councillors that a Cabinet meeting would follow shortly after the conclusion of Full Council.

The Chair reported attending several Remembrance events, including the ceremony in Cirencester and, alongside the Chief Executive, the delivery of a wreath to the Poppy Train travelling to Paddington. The Chair thanked councillors who had represented the Council at events across the District.

Condolences were expressed to former Councillor Maggie Heaven following the death of her husband, Frank, on 19 October. Councillor Fowles provided funeral details and conveyed Maggie's thanks for the support she had received.

The Chair then invited Councillor Andrew Maclean to make an announcement. Councillor Andrew Maclean announced his resignation as a District Councillor due to a serious health condition. Councillor Maclean stated that it had been a privilege to represent the four villages of the Rissingtons over the past six years, highlighting the unique character and community spirit of Upper Rissington, Great Rissington, Little Rissington, and Wick Rissington. Councillor Maclean thanked colleagues and residents for their support, reflected on his commitment to sustainability, green issues, and the local community, and indicated that he wished to focus on his family and faith in light of his prognosis.

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The Chair and councillors thanked Councillor Maclean for sharing his announcement and expressed their appreciation for his wisdom, passion, and humour during his time on the Council. They offered their support to him in the coming months and extended their best wishes.

Councillor Maclean left the Chamber.

#### Leaders announcements

The Leader acknowledged that Councillor Maclean had left the room but noted he could watch the proceedings later if he wished. The Leader paid tribute to Councillor Maclean's six years of service, highlighting his achievement as the first Green Councillor elected to the Council. Councillors recognised him as approachable, collaborative, and constructive, particularly on climate change issues during both previous and current council terms. The Leader expressed that he would be greatly missed.

The Leader reflected on recent Remembrance events, attending the service in Fairford with the Mayor, Richard Harrison, and Councillor Vann, and parading through the town centre. Thanks were extended to those who attended the Council's event, chaired by Councillor Mark Harris, which included representatives from 29th Regiment and the Royal British Legion. The Leader emphasised the importance of remembering both those who had lost their lives in conflicts and those who had sacrificed to secure freedoms.

An update was provided on the local plan consultation, which had been underway for just over a week. Over 100 comments had been submitted, with hundreds of additional visits via social media and the Council website. Two forums for Town and Parish Councils had been held, attended by over 150 councillors and clerks, and more than seventy questions had been addressed and circulated to district councillors and clerks.

The Leader and Councillor Layton, together with the Director of Communities and Place, and other officers, had attended public meetings organised by ward councillors and Town or Parish Councils, including in Ampney Crucis, Driffield, Kemble, and Willersley. Stakeholder meetings had been held in Moreton-in-Marsh, including a joint session with neighbouring parish councils. Further meetings were planned in Tetbury, Siddington, and Moreton-in-Marsh, with exhibitions commencing in Mickleton and continuing weekly in Moreton-in-Marsh and Fairford.

Social media engagement had reached approximately 20,000 residents, and emails had been sent to the Council's 8,000-strong subscriber list. Technical issues for mobile users had been addressed, and hard copies were available in libraries, the Council offices, and the Moreton Area Centre. The Leader urged councillors to encourage their communities to participate in the consultation and noted that supporting materials had been circulated to all town and parish councils on 14 November.

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Regarding housing targets, the Leader reported that a joint letter from Councillors Stowe, Turner, Ind, and himself had been sent to the Secretary of State requesting a meeting. A response offered discussions with civil servants but no direct ministerial meeting. It was confirmed that the offer of a meeting with civil servants would be taken up. The Leader expressed ongoing concern about preventing unsuitable piecemeal development during the Local Plan update and reassured councillors that all applications were being rigorously assessed.

It was noted that even the Council's preferred option, delivering approximately 813 homes per year, 200 fewer than the government's standard method target, would not meet the government's expectation. The Leader stressed the importance of following the statutory process to demonstrate the limitations of the figures and confirmed continued lobbying of the government, working with local MPs, other councils in similar situations, and exploring potential legal challenges.

The Leader thanked councillors for supporting community engagement and reaffirmed the Council's commitment to robust consultation and transparent decision-making. Councillor Layton was thanked for supporting engagement activities within local communities.

#### Chief Executive Officer's announcements

There were no announcements from the Interim Chief Executive Officer.

The Chair invited Councillor Tom Stowe, Leader of the Conservative Group to speak. Councillor Stowe thanked the Chair and reflected on the news shared by Councillor Maclean and the extraordinary courage shown in delivering such devastating news. Councillor Stowe stated that Councillor Maclean's insights and knowledge had always been greatly valued and that he commanded great respect within the Conservative group. He added that Councillor Maclean was a true gentleman who would be sorely missed in the chamber. The Conservative group sent their best wishes and strength to him and to his family.

#### **50      Unsung Heroes Awards**

The Chair announced the Young Unsung Heroes, under 25 category, with two awards being noted for November:

- Liam Radford was recognised as an exemplary community member and dedicated Police Cadet volunteer, completing over 105 hours of volunteering last year and more than 68 hours this year, including leading the children's sports day at the Chesterton Summer Family Day.
- Heidi, Otis, and Heath Forbes were also honoured for their determination in climbing the Three Peaks to raise £1,835 for two local causes, demonstrating

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remarkable teamwork and endurance over a combined distance of 23 miles with a total ascent of 10,052 feet.

The Chair then announced the Unsung Heroes - over 25 category. There were three awards in this category:

- Micael Svensson was nominated for stepping in to lead the village Scout group during a period without leaders, covering multiple sections until replacements were found. He volunteered extensively at community events, assisted elderly neighbours, maintained the Scout hut grounds, and supported the local church. His dedication and care were widely recognised as having a lasting impact on the community.
- Amy Curtis a volunteer and holistic therapist at Charlie's Cancer Support Group in Cirencester, providing free reflexology and reiki sessions twice a month was also recognised. She consistently demonstrated compassion and selflessness, offering warmth and support to those affected by cancer despite facing personal challenges.
- Allen Howe who had served as Chair of the Cirencester Branch of the Royal British Legion for 30 years and had been a member for 36 years was also named as an Unsung Hero. He organised the Poppy Appeal, Remembrance Day services, and fundraising concerts, supporting veterans and promoting community engagement. With 22 years of Army service and 20 years with the MOD, he continued to demonstrate tireless dedication to public service.

All the winners present were applauded as they received their certificates and medals.

## **51      Public Questions**

One public question had been received in advance from Mr David Redgewell. The question concerned Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and was directed at the Leader of the Council Councillor Mike Eemy.

The questioner referred to the 1974 local government reorganisation. They expressed concern that the proposed Cheltenham and Cotswold Borough Council two unitary option appeared Cheltenham-centric and asked how essential services—fire, police, NHS provision, bus services, social services, planning, and highways—would be maintained under such a split. They highlighted potential duplication of key roles and noted that the police were planned to align with Avon and Somerset.

Mr Redgewell asked whether the Council wished to become part of a smaller body, or to remain part of a unitary Gloucestershire structure.

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Councillor Evemy responded that the matter was under consideration as part of agenda item 13 on the Full Council agenda. Two proposals were being reviewed: a single unitary council for Gloucestershire and an East–West split. It was noted that Council would form a collective view during the forthcoming debate and that Cabinet would subsequently make formal representations to the government. It was clarified that the ultimate decision rested with a government minister once the government had considered and consulted on the options proposed to it. The points raised by the questioner were acknowledged as being reflected in the papers and would be considered during the government's review and public consultation of all supported options.

Mr Redgewell then asked a supplementary question, seeking clarification as to whether, if the Council supported a single unitary Gloucestershire, it would ensure that the views of Cotswolds residents were clearly communicated to the government. He emphasised the importance of local input into the decision-making process to ensure that any government decision reflected the wishes of the community.

Councillor Evemy confirmed that, once Cabinet had made its decision, he intended to write to the government explaining the Council's preferred option and encouraging its adoption. He noted that the government would conduct a public consultation, likely on at least two of the three options, and confirmed that the Council would encourage Cotswolds residents to participate. It was confirmed that the Council would communicate its decision publicly, including through the media, to explain which option it considered best for the district.

Mr Redgewell then proceeded to ask his second question regarding the potential benefits of a unitary authority, noting that a combined mayoral authority could provide funding to improve public transport highlighting recent NHS integration with Bristol, South Gloucestershire, and North Somerset. Assurances were asked for that, as police and potentially fire services joined combined authorities, the Cotswolds would be represented in a Gloucestershire-focused authority rather than one oriented towards Worcester or Birmingham. It was requested that the Council work with Gloucestershire County Council and the Mayor of the West of England to explore joining a mayoral combined authority before 2032 to secure benefits for public transport, housing, and regional planning in the Cotswolds.

Councillor Evemy responded that the matter of mayoral and strategic combined authorities had been discussed at leader level. The Council had considered how each proposed option might work with a mayoral combined authority as part of its review, but had not made any determination. It was acknowledged that combined authorities currently operated above unitary or county councils, and that the arguments raised regarding Gloucestershire-wide representation and local links were recognised as strong points for future discussion.

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Mr Redgewell then asked a final supplementary question seeking clarification as to whether consideration would be given to the geography of the public transport network when reviewing mayoral combined authorities.

Councillor Mike Evemy responded that the geography of the public transport network would be considered, along with the economic footprint and historic links between Gloucestershire and potential partner areas, in assessing mayoral combined authority options.

The Chair invited the second public speaker to put their question.

Mr Robert Miller, a retired civil engineer, addressed the Council regarding the safety of residents using private hire vehicles and taxis. He noted that Uber vehicles operating in the Cotswolds did not hold a Cotswolds District Council (CDC) licence and were therefore operating outside of local regulations. He emphasised that local authorities were responsible for safeguarding passengers through statutory licensing standards, with the primary objective of protecting the public. Mr Miller cited the Department for Transport guidance from 2006 and past enforcement actions, including a 2018 Gloucestershire Police sting operation at Cheltenham races, to illustrate the importance of regulation. He reported that, during the summer, an estimated 10 to 15 out-of-area private hire vehicles from locations such as South Gloucestershire, Wolverhampton, Swindon, and Dudley had been operating in the North Cotswolds without licences. He asked how the Council was fulfilling its duty of care under these circumstances and requested that the Council consider directing licensing to implement a geo-fence to prevent unlicensed app-based services, such as Uber, from operating in the district.

Councillor Andrea Pellegram, Cabinet Member for Environment and Regulatory Services, confirmed that a consultation would be undertaken and outlined that the Council carried out regular licensing checks, including monthly checks of licensed drivers. While noting the concerns raised regarding out-of-area app-based services such as Uber, the Cabinet Member indicated that the Council may not have the ability to block such apps. They offered to meet with Mr Miller and colleagues to discuss the issues, explore possible actions, and explain any limitations in what the Council could do.

Mr Miller thanked the portfolio holder and further noted that a report was being prepared by the Mayor of Greater Manchester addressing the issue of out-of-area vehicles operating locally. They confirmed that a copy of the report and relevant links would be provided to the Cabinet Member.

A further public question was received from Peggy Tout and Bob Irving, who could not attend due to ill health. They asked:

"We understand that bus transport is the responsibility of Gloucestershire County Council. But as Cotswold District Council considers future government reorganisation,

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can you share how CDC intends to ensure that passengers' experiences and accessibility needs — particularly of young people, older residents and those without cars — are clearly represented within any discussions about transport governance or structures? (Whatever form the governmental organisation may take, given that a mayoral authority has greater commissioning powers for bus services.)

Would CDC consider ways of strengthening communication between district-level services (planning, local information, health, community groups) and the transport authority so that local passenger impacts can be fed in more effectively at an earlier stage?

"We're not asking CDC to run transport — but there are many local impacts (access to care, education, employment) and people feel there isn't currently a clear way to feed those into the transport authority before decisions are made."

It was agreed that a written response would be published with the minutes of the meeting.

The response reads:

Local Government Reorganisation is a valuable opportunity to join up services currently split between District and County Authorities, and that is already starting through the collaborative work to define shared ambitions. Cotswold District Council, and the other Gloucestershire Authorities, are concerned about rural isolation and transport related social exclusion, and this is reflected in each of the proposals being submitted to Government. For example reference is made to "giving residents a stronger role in shaping services, with tools and partnerships that make delivery more responsive to local needs" and to "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".

As Local Government Reorganisation progresses we can expect there to be more coordination towards delivering on the ambitions and opportunities arising through this transformational change. CDC's input on this topic of effective participation on public transport issues is being taken up by our Sustainable Transport Lead. In the meantime, we will highlight the concerns you raise and continue publicising any opportunities for engagement that we are made aware of by the County Council.

The County Council is already working closely with us on the supporting evidence for the Local Plan update, in which accessibility by public transport and by walking, wheeling and cycling are important topics. As highlighted, special attention is needed to understand and plan for the needs of different public transport users, and this is focus for both CDC and the County Council.

The Chair thanked members of the public present for attending and engaging with the Council.

**52 Member Questions**

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

**53 Appointment of a Permanent Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service), Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer**

The purpose of this report was 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 be appointed on a permanent basis from 1 January 2026.

To avoid any potential perceptions of bias, the Interim Chief Executive Officer, Jane Portman withdrew from the meeting for the duration of the item.

The Leader, Councillor Mike Evemy, introduced the item and clarified that recommendation three should have included the words 'and electoral registration officer' after 'returning officer'. Councillors noted the amended recommendation.

Councillors noted that Jane Portman, appointed as Interim Chief Executive Officer in June 2025, had brought valuable experience from previous local government reorganisations. A probation review in September, informed by feedback from the Leader and opposition members, confirmed her effective leadership and positive impact. Subsequent discussions considered her permanent appointment, including terms, salary benchmarking, and a one-off relocation allowance. The Performance and Appointments Committee met in November and unanimously recommended her appointment as permanent Chief Executive, and Councillors were invited to support the recommendation.

There were no questions for clarity.

Councillor Tom Stowe seconded the recommendation, and his involvement in the Performance and Appointments Committee and performance appraisals was noted. Members acknowledged that Jane Portman had provided stability and clarity during a period of organisational change, including the departure of the previous Chief Executive, changes in Cabinet leadership, the completion of phase two of the Publica transition, and uncertainty around forthcoming Local Government Reorganisation. The Committee had considered alternative options, including external recruitment, and undertaken salary benchmarking in line with Cotswold District Council policy. It concluded that her permanent appointment offered proven leadership, stability, and continuity, while also being cost-effective. Positive feedback had been received from staff and members, and Councillors were encouraged to support the recommendation.

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The Chair moved to the debate – there were no requests to speak in debate.

The Chair then moved to the vote on the amended resolution which was proposed by Councillor Mike Evemy and seconded by Councillor Tom Stowe.

Voting Record:

29 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions.

Did not vote: Councillor Andrew MacClean having left the meeting.

**To approve the Recommendation of the Performance and Appointments Committee (Resolution)**

Council RESOLVED 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 and Electoral Registration 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).

For	Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, David Fowles, Laura Hall-Wilson, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson and Len Wilkins	29
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

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**54 Mid-Term Review of Members' Allowances Scheme**

The purpose of the report was to present to Council the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel which had undertaken a mid-term review of the Council's members' allowances scheme.

Nick Craxton, Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel, introduced the report and stated that the Panel comprised a broad and well-balanced range of experience across the private and public sectors, subject matter experts, reward and HR specialists, and individuals familiar with the Council's operations. He emphasised that the Panel's recommendations had followed extensive discussion, with several matters revisited in light of further evidence.

The Panel Chair highlighted the challenges the Panel had faced in proposing councillor and leadership remuneration, noting that the requirement to reflect a "public service" element — implying lower pay — might be seen as conflicting with the Council's aim to make these roles accessible to a wider range of people.

It was noted that the panel had considered written representations from the former Leader and heard evidence from the current Leader. The former Leader spoke about the possibility of the role of Leader being considered a full-time role, Mr Craxton advised that the Panel could not give this weight, as full-time arrangements were neither legislated nor prescribed. He added that making the role full-time would require substantially higher pay, noting that a locally advertised trade counter supervisor post offered a higher salary than the Council Leader both before and after the proposed increase.

The Panel Chair concluded by noting that consideration of economic context and affordability lay outside the Panel's remit and was a matter for the Council. He indicated that he was happy to answer questions.

The Chair indicated that Councillor Evemy would be invited to propose the recommendations and that there would be the opportunity to ask any questions for clarity. The Chair advised that the report should be taken at face value and that it was not necessary to examine the Panel's detailed methodology.

Councillor Evemy thanked Mr Craxton for attending and acknowledged the significant work undertaken by the Panel over several meetings. He noted that he had attended one meeting and valued the opportunity to contribute.

Councillors were reminded that this was a mid-term review. It was noted that no changes had been made to Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) during the previous review, as it had been unclear whether increased workloads were temporary or would persist. It was further noted that the Panel had drawn on the councillor workload survey and on representations from the former Leader, himself, and other councillors.

Councillor Evemy acknowledged the difficulty for councillors in determining their own allowances, which underlined the value of the Independent Remuneration Panel. It was reported that the Panel had recommended increased SRAs for Cabinet roles and for the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee. These recommendations were in recognition of the workload associated with these roles.

Councillors were also asked to note recommendations to update provisions on co-opted member allowances, clarify approved duties, and provide a framework for town and parish council allowances, including specific reference to Cirencester Town Council. Further work would be undertaken by officers in early 2026 on a tiered allowances scheme for town and parish councils.

Councillor Evemy moved all ten recommendations set out on pages 27 and 28 of the agenda, noting that the implementation of the increases would be backdated to 1 April 2025.

The Chair then requested any questions for clarity.

Councillor Fowles referred to section 5.1 of the report, and noted that councils were required to have regard to the Panel's recommendations but were not obliged to accept them. The councillor asked whether other councils had accepted or waived similar recommendations in light of current financial pressures, and whether this Council was the exception or the norm.

Councillor Evemy responded that each authority determined its own allowances. He confirmed the Panel had considered other authorities' schemes, but it was for the Council to decide whether to accept the recommendations.

Councillor Fowles then asked for clarity regarding Cirencester Town Council and queried why the report specifically referenced Cirencester, given that other large settlements, such as Moreton, faced significant pressures.

Councillor Evemy explained that Cirencester Town Council already had a members' allowance scheme in place, and the Town Council's Chief Executive had met the Panel to discuss it. The recommendation was intended to formalise a benchmark of 20% of the basic allowance. He added that Recommendation 9 provided for officers to engage with other town and parish councils about establishing tiered allowance schemes, should they wish to do so.

The Chair sought a seconder for the recommendations.

Councillor Patrick Coleman thanked the Panel Chair and Panel Members for their professional approach. He noted the additional budget implications and that allowances could be renounced. Acknowledging the significant workload and complexity of Cabinet roles, Councillor Coleman confirmed his support for the proposed allowances and seconded the motion.

The Chair moved to the debate.

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Supporters of the proposed increases argued that adequate remuneration was necessary to encourage broader participation in local government, particularly from younger people and those from diverse backgrounds. It was noted that councillor roles carried significant responsibilities affecting residents' lives, and allowances should reflect this to ensure high-quality democratic representation. Several speakers highlighted that financial support could help remove barriers for those who might otherwise be unable to participate due to personal circumstances. In addition, the increased workloads of Cabinet members and Committee Chairs, particularly in the context of local government reorganisation, were cited as justification for the proposed increases in Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA's). Provision for town and parish councils to consider allowances for volunteers undertaking significant responsibilities was welcomed, and the recommendations were described as a fair recognition of the work undertaken.

Opponents of the proposed increases focused on financial constraints and broader economic pressures. Concerns were raised that the cumulative cost, while modest per individual, represented a significant expense for the Council and that any savings should benefit taxpayers or be invested in services rather than councillor allowances. Some argued that councillors served their communities as a matter of public service, and additional remuneration could risk undermining motivation and the quality of elected members. The timing of the increases was questioned in light of cost-of-living pressures, inflation, and forthcoming local government changes, with caution that it might send the wrong signal to residents and parish councils.

A number of points were raised for clarification, including the modest level of the basic allowance, the total additional cost of the proposals, and the rationale for distinctions between roles based on workload and responsibilities.

In summing up, Councillor Mike Evemy noted that this was the third debate on members' allowances since 2019 and addressed points raised during the discussion. He refuted suggestions that the Council had "pledged poverty" or slashed services, and emphasised that the proposed increase of £3,144 per annum for ten members was modest and reflected the significant workloads of Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs.

The distinctions between roles were highlighted, noting increased responsibilities for Cabinet Members and some Committee Chairs, and emphasised that some remuneration was necessary to enable participation by those for whom financial constraints might otherwise be a barrier. Councillor Evemy supported the Panel's recommendations as a fair recognition of work undertaken, reinforced the importance of diversity and inclusion, and councillors were encouraged to approve the proposals.

The Chair then moved to the vote on the resolution proposed by Councillor Mike Evemy and seconded by Councillor Patrick Coleman.

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Voting Record:

18 For, 7 Against, 3 Abstentions.

Did not vote: Councillors Andrew Maclean having left the meeting and Ray Brassington.

**To Approve the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Resolution)**

Resolved that Council APPROVED the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel with regards to Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA's):

1. The SRA for Leader is increased from 3.0x the basic allowance to 3.5x the basic allowance.
2. The SRA for Deputy Leader be increased from 2.0x basic to 2.5x basic.
3. The SRA for Cabinet Member be increased from 1.5x basic to 2.0x basic.
4. The SRA for Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee be increased from 1.0x basic to 1.5x basic.
5. The SRA for Chair of Audit and Governance Committee be increased from 0.5x basic to 1.0x basic.
6. That any agreed increases to SRAs be backdated to 1 April 2025.

Council also APPROVED

7. That the existing allowance for Co-opted Members of £1,000 per annum be included in the Scheme.
8. That additional clarification be 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. That 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.

Council also NOTED

10. 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.		
For	Claire Bloomer, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Lisa Spivey, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing and Ian Watson	18
Against	Daryl Corps, David Fowles, Laura Hall-Wilson, Julia Judd, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer and Len Wilkins	7
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	Gina Blomefield, David Cunningham and Tony Slater	3
<b>Carried</b>		

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## **55      Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/2027**

The purpose of this report was to consider the revised Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2026/27.

The item was introduced by Councillor Patrick Coleman, Cabinet Member for Finance who explained that the Council had discretion over the design of its Council Tax Support Scheme, which provided reductions for working-age residents on low incomes or in receipt of benefits. The proposal was to continue the existing scheme with an uprating in line with welfare benefits, reflecting a 3.8% increase as set out in the report.

It was noted that the approach aimed to move towards harmonisation with other districts in anticipation of the future unitary authority. The Council's scheme was considered one of the most generous in the county. The impact of the Government's abolition of the two-child limit was highlighted, noting that affected households would receive increased government support, with a small adjustment applied through the Council Tax Support Scheme.

Thanks were expressed to all those involved, for their work in developing and maintaining the scheme since its inception.

There were no questions for clarity

Councillor Clare Bloomer, Cabinet Member for Communities seconded the resolution and welcomed the proposals, noting that many families, including working households, were facing cost-of-living pressures. Officers were commended for their work, highlighting the support provided through hardship funding and the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) programme, which proactively identified residents who might not be claiming benefits they were entitled to. It was noted that annual Council Tax bills

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were accompanied by benefit information and guidance to ensure residents could access available support.

The Chair then moved to the debate. The Council's leadership on cost-of-living support over recent years was commended. It was highlighted that the Council's approach was regarded locally and nationally as a model for supporting vulnerable residents.

The Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) programme was praised as being transformative for residents, ensuring that people were aware of and able to access the support available. Special recognition was given to the work of officers, in particular the benefits team, for effectively delivering complex policies and making information accessible to both councillors and the public.

The government's abolition of the two-child benefit cap was welcomed as a significant step towards reducing child poverty, particularly in rural areas of the district. Councillors concluded that the combination of the Council Tax Support Scheme, the LIFT programme, and the removal of the two-child cap represented a substantial achievement in addressing financial hardship and improving outcomes for local families.

The Chair moved to the vote on the resolution proposed by Councillor Coleman and seconded by Councillor Bloomer.

Voting record:

29 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstention

Did not vote: Councillor Andrew Maclean having left the meeting

**To approve the revised Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2026/27. (Resolution)**

Council resolved 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.

For	Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Mike Eevemy, David Fowles, Laura Hall-Wilson, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson and Len Wilkins	29
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Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

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## **56      Community Governance Review**

The purpose of this report was to approve and adopt the Terms of Reference for a Community Governance Review, along with draft proposals

The item was introduced by Councillor Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council. It was noted that the papers before the Council represented responses from the consultations with Town and Parish Councils regarding potential changes to their democratic arrangements or boundaries. Councillors were asked to agree to consult on all proposed changes, without making judgments at this stage, acknowledging that some proposals might be controversial.

Attention was drawn to an omission in Annex B, where certain roads in Watermoor Ward and Siddington had not been included. The correction would result in a total of 253 properties being affected by the proposed boundary changes, reducing the number of properties in Siddington from 731 to 478, and increasing the number in Cirencester, Watermoor, and surrounding areas from 1,580 to 1,833. An updated annex B would be included with the minutes of the meeting.

It was also noted that the proposals included requests from town and parish councils to increase their number of members and to create wards for Tetbury Town Council.

Questions for clarity included requests for clarification on which roads and businesses were included. The Electoral Services Manager confirmed that all details would be thoroughly checked before going out to public consultation.

Councillor David Fowles seconded the resolution and thanked the Electoral Services team for their continued work in ensuring proper representation and managing elections effectively. The proposals from several parishes to increase the number of councillors were welcomed, this was highlighted as a positive response to local pressures and community engagement. The report and the consultation timetable were commended and the forthcoming public consultations were welcomed. Fellow Councillors were encouraged to endorse the proposals.

There was no further debate.

The Chair moved to the vote on the resolution proposed by Councillor Evemy seconded by Councillor Fowles.

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Voting record:  
29 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions.

Did not vote: Councillor Andrew Maclean having left the meeting

**To approve and adopt the Terms of Reference for a Community Governance Review, along with draft proposals (Resolution)**

Council resolved to:

APPROVE and ADOPT the Terms of Reference and Draft Proposals for consultation for the Community Governance Review (CGR).

For	Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, David Fowles, Laura Hall-Wilson, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson and Len Wilkins	29
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

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**57      Programme of Meetings for 2026/2027**

The purpose of this report was to set a programme of Council and Committee meetings for 2026/27.

The item was introduced by Councillor Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council who stated that the current meeting schedule had been rolled forward into 2026–27. He reminded Councillors that Cabinet now met nine times a year, with Overview and Scrutiny aligned to those core meetings to support effective pre-decision scrutiny, and confirmed that this approach would continue. No changes to meeting start times were proposed.

It was noted that Democratic Services had attempted to avoid the key party conference dates when scheduling meeting dates.

It was highlighted that the report recommendations delegated authority to the Director of Governance and Development, in consultation with Group Leaders, to amend the schedule if the committee structure changed, and to the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services to set dates for the Performance and Appointments Committee, member briefings, training sessions and working groups. Councillor Evemy asked that

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recommendation 4 be amended to retain only the agreement to roll meeting start times forward from 2025–26 as no alternatives were being proposed.

There were no questions for clarity.

Councillor Claire Bloomer, Cabinet Member for Communities seconded the resolution and reserved the right to speak.

The Chair then moved to the debate, and there was no further debate.

The Chair moved to the vote on the resolution proposed by Councillor Evemy and seconded by Councillor Bloomer.

Voting record:

29 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Did not vote: Councillor Andrew Maclean having left the meeting

**To set a programme of Council and Committee meetings for 2026/27.  
(Resolution)**

Council RESOLVED 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 the meeting start times will be rolled forwards from 2025/26.

For	Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, David Fowles, Laura Hall-Wilson, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson and Len Wilkins	29
Against	None	0
Conflict Of	None	0

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Interests		
Abstain	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

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**58 Local Government Reorganisation Proposal - Full Proposal for Local Government reorganisation (LGR) in Gloucestershire**

The purpose of this report was to note the two proposals for local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire that had 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 proposed were:

- 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 comprised Tewksbury Borough Council, Cheltenham Borough Council and Cotswold District Council and the associated proportion of Gloucestershire County Council. The proposal for West Gloucestershire Council comprised 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 and Scrutiny Committee and Council, Cabinet would determine which, if any, proposal should be formally submitted to the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government in response to his invitation of 5 February 2025.

The item was introduced by the Leader, Councillor Mike Evemy, who gave some background and explained that the process had been lengthy, beginning with a ministerial letter sent to the former Leader in February 2025. Work had continued since then, leading to that afternoon's meeting, where Cotswold District Council's Cabinet—last among the seven principal authorities—would formally make its decision. It was emphasised that the ultimate choice rested with the government, which intended to replace existing county, district, and borough councils with unitary authorities and would select from the submitted proposals. It was further noted that the extensive documents reviewed by members, including the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, would be sent to the government. Of the six councils that had already decided, three preferred a single Gloucestershire unitary, one supported a two-unitary east–west model, one backed the Greater Gloucestershire proposal, and one expressed no preference and opposed reorganisation.

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The Leader then spoke to the proposed resolution to Council around Local Government Reorganisation, which had been made available to Councillors as a printed document. (Item 13 - Annex A).

Councillor Evemy noted that the process had been a long journey. Some had initially feared that a single Gloucestershire unitary would be too large and might weaken local representation, but the Council had avoided pre-judgment and worked through the evidence. He explained that many involved had gradually concluded that a single unitary would offer stronger, less disruptive service delivery and greater financial resilience than an east-west split, while acknowledging that both proposals were viable and that the government could choose either option. The Council was asked to support recommending the single unitary in a joint letter from six of the seven councils confirming which of the options were preferred. The letter would be submitted before Friday's deadline, alongside an explanatory letter from the Leader. It was noted that work would continue after submission, with leaders and chief executives preparing for the next stage while the government assessed options, planned consultation would take place in the period January to April, and the government aimed to communicate its decision by summer 2026.

The Chair welcomed any questions for clarity.

Councillor Fowles queried whether, if support for the resolution was unanimous would it be reflected in the letter to the Minister? Councillor Evemy confirmed that if all members supported the proposal, it would be stated in the letter, as it would demonstrate careful consideration and a shared view that the option best served the Cotswolds.

It was further clarified that the same report had already been considered by Overview and Scrutiny and the proposed resolution effectively replaced Recommendation 1 for Cabinet to act upon. Overview & Scrutiny had already met, and any comments from Councillors would be considered before voting.

Councillor Gina Blomefield, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee explained that the tight timetable; moving from Overview & Scrutiny to Full Council to Cabinet before submission to government, left no practical time for call-in of the Cabinet decision. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee believed a call-in was highly unlikely and had therefore recommended to Cabinet that it be disapplied.

Councillor Tom Stowe, Leader of the Conservative Group, seconded the resolution, noting that it superseded the recommendations in the original report. Members acknowledged the challenge of reviewing over 600 pages of material, condensed into a 30-page options appraisal, and agreed the resolution effectively focused attention on the task, its context, and next steps. The significant effort by councillors and officers across Gloucestershire councils in evaluating all options to secure the best future for local government and residents was recognised. It was emphasised that the reorganisation decision was initiated by government and required constructive

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engagement. While both the single unitary and East–West proposals were credible, the evaluation identified the single unitary council as the stronger option for long-term resilience, financial viability, sustainability, and service delivery. Councillors noted that the ultimate decision rested with government and that further effort, careful planning, and support for staff would be required. Councillor Stowe confirmed that supporting the resolution would send a clear and reasoned message to government about what was believed to best serve Cotswolds residents.

The Chair then moved to the debate first enquiring if anyone held a contrary view to the proposed resolution.

During the extensive debate the following points were made:

1. Services and Scrutiny:

- Splitting essential county services (public health, trading standards, coroner, fire and rescue) would be difficult, supporting a single unitary council.
- Scrutiny of county-wide services, including health, would be more effective under a single unitary.
- Maintaining high-quality, safe social care services was a priority.

2. Local Engagement and Devolution

- The need to decentralise powers to town and parish councils to maintain local engagement was stressed.
- Councillors highlighted the importance of town and parish councils stepping up to fill gaps caused by a reduction in the overall number of elected members.
- Clear information should be provided to support effective neighbourhood governance.
- Neighbourhood models and inter-council collaboration were emphasised as critical.

3. Financial Considerations

- Concern was raised that the cost of reorganisation would be borne by councils, potentially reducing funds for essential services.
- It was noted that financial analyses were estimates and actual outcomes could vary.
- Once implemented, a single unitary council was expected to generate financial savings and collaborative benefits.
- Advantages for digital services and networks were also recognised.
- Speakers warned that funding crises for key services would not be resolved by reorganisation alone.

4. Governance, Oversight, and Support

- The role of Overview & Scrutiny in monitoring the transition to a unitary authority was highlighted.

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- The importance of ensuring that staff and town/parish councils were adequately supported during the transition was emphasised.
- Regular reporting to Overview and Scrutiny was noted as a mechanism to keep the Council informed.

## 5. Representation and Resident Focus

- Concerns were raised about reduced councillor numbers limiting local representation.
- Clarity and simplicity for residents were seen as important benefits of a single unitary.
- The importance of neighbourhood partnerships and addressing democratic deficits was emphasised.
- The need to focus on both residents and businesses was highlighted.

Overall, the single unitary authority option was preferred for prioritising service continuity, financial efficiency, and ensuring local voices were heard across the county.

Speakers consistently stressed supporting parish and town councils, learning from other regions, maintaining financial sustainability, protecting essential services, and ensuring continued local engagement under a single unitary council.

Councillor Evemy summed up, thanking members for their contributions and acknowledging the wide-ranging debate. It was noted that, while some councils, such as the Forest of Dean, had already made their own decisions, the role of Council was to express a preference. It appeared that, on balance members had concluded that a single unitary authority would be preferable to an East–West split, particularly to maintain continuity of essential services, including social care, public health, and other county-wide functions. It was recognised that reorganisation would not resolve broader funding challenges, though it offered some financial savings. The importance of establishing effective neighbourhood partnerships to address potential democratic deficits and support large rural areas was acknowledged, alongside the need to engage and inform town and parish councils. Councillor Evemy highlighted the value of lessons from other councils, the role of Overview & Scrutiny in monitoring the transition, and the need to keep MPs informed of the Council's decision. Councillors were encouraged to support the resolution proposed by Councillor Evemy and seconded by Councillor Stowe to express the Council's preference for a single unitary authority.

The resolution read as follows:

This Council recognises:

1. That the decision to move towards unitary council(s) in Gloucestershire was made by the Government rather than by the councils in the county.
2. The work done by councillors and officers across Gloucestershire to prepare the two proposals for Local Government Re-organisation (LGR) in the county.

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3. That the final decision on the future shape of local government in Gloucestershire will be made by a government minister.

This Council believes:

1. That the single-unitary option and the east/west unitary option are both viable proposals that could be implemented.
2. That there are strengths to each of the two options being considered by the Council.
3. That on balance, the single unitary council for Gloucestershire would provide a stronger and less disruptive basis for the delivery of services and a more robust and resilient financial position than new unitary councils for the east and west of the county.

The Chair moved to the vote on the resolution proposed by Councillor Evemy seconded by Councillor Stowe.

Voting record:

29 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

Did not vote: Councillor Andrew Maclean having left the meeting

**To approve the resolution put before Council (Resolution)**

Council RESOLVED to:

1. Request that the Cabinet proposes the single unitary council for Gloucestershire in response to the minister's invitation on 5 February 2025
2. Request that the Leader sends an accompanying letter to the minister indicating the reasons for this decision based upon the debate at this meeting and at Cabinet
3. Request that the Cabinet and Officers continue their work to prepare for LGR in advance of a decision by the government that is expected in June or July 2026.

For	Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Nick Bridges, Patrick Coleman, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, David Fowles, Laura Hall-Wilson, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson and Len Wilkins	29
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
<b>Carried</b>		

**59      Next meeting**

The next meeting of Full Council was confirmed as being on 21 January at 2:00 pm.

The Meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and closed at 5.47 pm

(END)