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Proposals for Joint Scrutiny of the LGR Portfolio

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PURPOSE / CONTENT

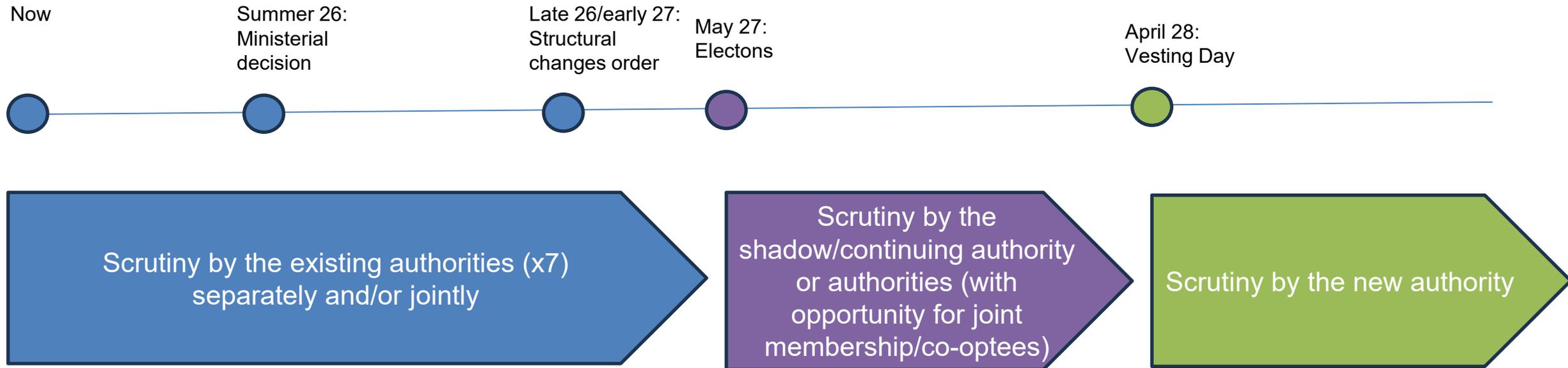To consider options for providing scrutiny of the LGR Portfolio

What do we want to achieve:

- Providing accountability for the programme and those charged with delivering it
- A sounding board to work through issues and choices
- Widening political ownership and buy   - in to the future governance
- Building cross   - council relationships and trust

Other factors to consider:

- Political balance: different models will have different implications for political balance
- Ease and speed of implementation
- Cost
- Flexibility of the model to adapt at each stage of the programme
- Whether the committee should have formal powers of call   - in
- Frequency   – assumed that meetings should take place every 2 months as a minimum

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Scrutiny of LGR at each stage of the Process

Now

Summer 26: Ministerial decision

Late 26/early 27: Structural changes order

May 27: Electons

April 28: Vesting Day

Scrutiny by the existing authorities (x7) separately and/or jointly

Scrutiny by the shadow/continuing authority or authorities (with opportunity for joint membership/co-optees)

Scrutiny by the new authority

Whatever we do now will need to evolve, and will only be in place in its initial form until the May 27 elections.

The arrangements must enhance and dovetail with existing arrangements, so will not replace each Council's own existing scrutiny function

There is limited time at each stage for scrutiny meetings to take place – so time is of the essence

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Headline options

1. Formal Joint Scrutiny Committee

2. Scrutiny committee or sub-committee "hosted" by one Council

3. Separate scrutiny by each Council

4. Scrutiny panel

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Option 1: Formal Joint Scrutiny Committee

Establish a new Joint Scrutiny Committee of the 7 councils

- This option would require each Council to take a formal decision to establish a new joint scrutiny committee
- Would need to agree terms of reference, including support arrangements
- As a result, will be slower to set up (est 3 - 4 months)
- The terms of reference and ways of working will be determined jointly **before** the committee is set up
- Political balance would reflect the membership of all 7 councils (see table)
- All meetings will be held in public
- Depending on the Terms of Reference, the committee could have formal powers of 'call in'
- Consideration would need to be given to chair's allowance

	% of seats	e.g. no of seats (/15)
Liberal Democrat	41	6
Green	19	3
Conservative	16	2
Labour	10	1
Reform	5	1
Independent / Other	9	1

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Option 2: A scrutiny committee "hosted" by one of the councils

One of the Councils establishes a new scrutiny committee or sub - committee, or repurposes an existing one, then co - opts members from the other councils.

- The committee would follow the scrutiny rules of the host authority
- If re - purposing an existing committee, the membership is already determined, and existing cultural/style issues or tensions are likely to be carried forward
- Councils may not perceive themselves as having an equal stake
- Quicker to set up than Option 1, but will still require formal decision making by the host authority (est 2 - 3 months)
- The terms of reference and ways of working will be determined by the host authority **before** the committee is set up (but in consultation with the others)
- Political balance would reflect the membership of the host council, but could be adjusted through co - options (see table of what this would mean, based on GCC or CDC as the host authority – purely for illustration)
- All meetings will be held in public
- Depending on host authority's scheme of allowances, chair would attract an allowance
- Host authority would be responsible for support arrangements, but may look to other councils for a contribution

Examples of political balance under different options	If hosted by GCC		If hosted by CDC	
	% of seats	e.g. no of seats (/15)	% of seats	e.g. no of seats (/15)
Liberal Democrat	49	7	58	9
Green	16	2	3	1
Conservative	11	2	26	4
Labour / Independent / Other	2	1	3	1
Reform	20	3		

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Option 3: Separate scrutiny by each Council

Each council scrutinises its own contribution to the LGR programme

- Requires no changes to existing arrangements, so could begin with immediate effect
- Would not incur additional cost, but
- Likely to place a greater burden on Programme staff
- Unlikely to secure shared ownership or build relationships across existing councils
- From May 2027 to March 2028, (depending on which LGR option is taken forward) could result in 9 separate committees scrutinising LGR, increasing potential for divergence of views / tension
- Call - in would remain a function of each separate council

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Option 4: Scrutiny Panel (recommended option)

Establish a scrutiny panel under one of the existing scrutiny committees

- Would require a decision of one of the existing scrutiny committees, so is relatively quick to establish
- Would follow the arrangements set out in 'host' authority's constitution
- Would best reflects current collaborative approach to cross - Council working
- Would not be bound by rules on political proportionality, so more scope to widen ownership
- Members could be drawn from each council's existing scrutiny committee(s) where those exist, in order to provide a link back to individual council scrutiny committees
- Terms of reference could be changed with little effort
- Would not automatically incur a chair's allowance
- Consideration would need to be given to how it is supported/resourced – but this would not have to fall to the host authority, and could be shared
- Could meet in public, but would also have the option of private meetings
- Offers more flexibility in terms of culture/ways of working and frequency of meeting
- Could make recommendations back to the Leaders / Programme Board
- BUT, would not have formal powers, including call - in

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Proposed membership and frequency of Scrutiny Panel

- Total of 14 members
- Two members to be nominated by each authority
- Each Council is encouraged to choose a member from each of their 2 largest groups (see table for resulting membership
- Each Council is encouraged to nominate from the membership of the relevant scrutiny committee
- Nominees must not be a member of any Council's Executive or Executive Committee

	Resulting seats (/14)
Liberal Democrat	5
Green	3
Conservative	4 or 3*
Labour	1
Reform	1
Independent / Other	0 or 1*

* Conservatives and Independents are the joint 2nd largest groups on Forest of Dean District Council

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Next steps

1. Chief Executives to sound proposals out with Leaders to test whether option 4 is supported
2. Engagement with each Council's scrutiny committee to secure ownership/agreement

If option 4 were agreed…

3. Agree which authority will host - the host authority would need to have at least one existing scrutiny committee, and provision in its constitution for scrutiny panels.
4. Agree how the committee will be supported – this need not be solely by the host authority
5. Agree membership, appointment of chair and nomination process
6. Host authority decision to establish panel

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