



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY 1 JUNE 2026 CABINET 4 JUNE 2026
Subject	LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION – GLOUCESTERSHIRE STRUCTURAL CHANGES ORDER
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Mike Evely, Leader of the Council Email: mike.evely@cotswold.gov.uk
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Summary/Purpose	<p>To outline the governance, legal framework, and key arrangements for the Gloucestershire Structural Changes Order, and to seek Cabinet's agreement to submit representations to Government on behalf of Cotswold District Council.</p> <p>The Government has invited Gloucestershire councils to make representations, which the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government will consider when deciding the final content of the Order.</p>
Annexes	Annex A – Letter from MHCLG dated 19 May 2026 Annex B – Examples of previous Structural Changes Orders Annex C – Indicative timetable from MHCLG Annex D – Implementation Guidance from MHCLG
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Consider representations to the questions set out by the ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) regarding Gloucestershire's Structural Changes Order2. Delegate authority to the Leader of the Council to submit



	formal representations to MHCLG by their deadline of 16 June 2026
Reasons for Recommendations	<p>The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has invited representations from each of Gloucestershire's seven councils on the content of the Structural Change(s) Order (SCO).</p> <p>In particular, councils have been asked for their views on key transitional arrangements. The Council's response, alongside those of the other Gloucestershire councils, may influence the final content of the Order.</p> <p>By responding clearly and promptly, the Council can help ensure the Order supports effective governance and protects the interests of residents, service users and the district as a whole.</p>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparing for the future
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Corporate Leadership Team Overview and Scrutiny Committee Cabinet



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** This report outlines the key milestones, timelines, and governance requirements relating to the development of the Gloucestershire Structural Changes Order (SCO), following the consultation on Local Government Reorganisation proposals.
- 1.2** The SCO will establish the legal framework for the new authority or authorities, including governance arrangements, electoral structures, transition planning, and transfer of functions.
- 1.3** The Structural Changes Order will include the following:
- Legally establish the new Authority(ies) and define their boundaries
 - Specify the name of the new Authority(ies)
 - Set out the election arrangements for the new Authority(ies)
 - Designation of the Returning Officer(s)
 - Warding arrangements including number and names
 - Possible alignment of Town and Parish Council elections
 - Creation and composition of Joint Committees or an Implementation Executive depending on whether the decision is for 1 unitary authority (Implementation Executive) or 2 unitary authorities (Joint Committees). This will include direction on the number of elected members from each current council. (Previous composition from other councils is set out in the Table at Annex B)
 - Creation, leadership and (if required) those officers who must be included within the composition of the Implementation Team. This will include details of Interim Statutory Officers and may include specific officers from current councils (Previous composition from other councils is set out in the Table at Annex B).
 - Designation of transition function on the preparing/new authority(ies)/current councils.
 - Transfer of functions to new authority(ies) on Vesting Day
 - Creation of charter trustees for any areas where civic/ceremonial functions are to be preserved, and definition of those areas (if required).
- 1.4** The report seeks Cabinet's agreement to make formal representations to Government on behalf of Cotswold District Council in relation to the Gloucestershire Structural Changes Order.



2. BACKGROUND

2.1 In March 2025, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government invited Gloucestershire's seven local authorities to put forward proposals for the reorganisation of Local Government in Gloucestershire. Three proposals were submitted:

- A proposal for one unitary council for the whole of Gloucestershire – proposed by Gloucestershire County Council and supported by Tewkesbury Borough Council, Stroud District Council and Cotswold District Council. This is referred to below as the 1UA proposal.
- A proposal for two unitary councils: one for the west (Gloucester, Forest of Dean, Stroud) and one for the east (Cheltenham, Cotswold, Tewkesbury) – proposed by Cheltenham Borough Council. This is referred to below as the 2UA East/West proposal.
- A proposal for two unitary councils: one would be an expanded Gloucester City, called Greater Gloucester, which includes several nearby parishes; the other would cover the rest of the county, called Gloucestershire Unitary – proposed by Gloucester City Council. This is referred to below as the 2UA Greater Gloucester proposal.

2.2 Since then, the Secretary of State has consulted on those proposals and is expected to decide in July 2026 which one will be implemented. In the meantime, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is preparing a Structural Changes Order to be laid before Parliament in winter 2026, with a view to it being made in March 2027.

2.3 A Structural Changes Order (SCO) is a statutory instrument made by the Secretary of State under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. It is the legal mechanism used to implement local government reorganisation. The Order sets out the legal framework for transition, including the abolition of existing councils, the creation of new councils where needed, and the transfer of functions, staff, assets, rights and liabilities. It typically includes provisions on:

- The constitution of new authorities;
- Electoral arrangements;
- Transfer and exercise of functions;
- Transfer of property, rights and liabilities (including contracts);



- Transitional and implementation arrangements, including shadow authorities and implementation executives.

2.4 Although the SCO is made by the Secretary of State, its content can be shaped by proposals developed locally. Officials from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have invited Gloucestershire councils to make representations on a number of transitional issues.

2.5 Based on the Government’s indicative timetable, we had expected Gloucestershire to have until September 2026 to submit these representations. That would have allowed more time to seek a shared view across the seven councils and to complete each council’s internal decision-making process. However, in a letter received on 19 May 2026, MHCLG officials have asked for representations to be made by 16 June 2026. This has two main implications:

- It severely limits the amount of time for deliberation and discussion of the complex issues involved, by Gloucestershire Councils.
- We will be making these representations in advance of knowing which of the three proposals for reorganisation the Secretary of State will be supporting. As a result, we will need to consider all three options when making our representations.

2.6 Although the Secretary of State will decide the final content of the SCO, it is important that the Council seeks to influence it.

3. GLOUCESTERSHIRE STRUCTURAL CHANGES ORDER

3.1 Matters to be determined/considered:

Topic	Decisions needed under 1UA	Decisions needed under 2UA – East/West	Decisions needed under 2UA - Greater Gloucester/ Gloucestershire
Preparing Authority or New Shadow Authority	Proposal set out that the County Council would be the preparing authority with an implementation Executive. Decision needed as to whether this is still the agreed approach or	Required to be 2 new Shadow Authorities with Joint Committees	Required to be 2 new Shadow Authorities with Joint Committees



Topic	Decisions needed under 1UA	Decisions needed under 2UA – East/West	Decisions needed under 2UA - Greater Gloucester/ Gloucestershire
	seek a new Shadow Authority with a Joint Committee		
Membership of Implementation Executive / Joint Committee (See examples of previous SCO decisions at Annex B)	Implementation Executive: Decision needed on how many seats will be occupied for each of the predecessor councils	Joint Committee: Decision needed on how many seats will be occupied for each of the predecessor councils	Joint Committee: Decision needed on how many seats will be occupied for each of the predecessor councils
Appointment of chair of Implementation Executive / Joint Committee	In the case of a preparing authority this will be the Leader of Gloucestershire Council Executive	This will be a decision of each Joint Committee	This will be a decision of each Joint Committee
Political balance of Implementation Executive / Joint Committee	To be determined	To be determined	To be determined
Implementation Team: NB: While under all proposals there will be a single implementation team, the composition of that team may differ from proposal to proposal (NB: These roles are at senior officer level)	Decision needed, to be included in response on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who will be leader of the Implementation Team - Who will be deputy leader(s) - Any other officers to be included 	Decisions needed, to be included in response on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who will be leader of the Implementation Team - Who will be deputy leader(s) - Any other officers to be included 	Decisions needed, to be included in response on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who will be leader of the Implementation Team - Who will be deputy leader(s) - Any other officers to be included
Designation of Returning Officers (RO)	In the case of a preparing authority, this will be the existing (RO) for Gloucestershire County Council	To be decided: Usual practice is that an existing RO is nominated for each of the new Councils from amongst those councils within its footprint	To be decided: Usual practice is that an existing RO is nominated for each of the new Councils from amongst those councils within its footprint



Topic	Decisions needed under 1UA	Decisions needed under 2UA – East/West	Decisions needed under 2UA - Greater Gloucester/ Gloucestershire
Alignment of Town and Parish Council Elections	To be determined: Working assumption is that we would want to align all parish elections to the new electoral cycle		
Name of new authorities	Included in proposal: Gloucestershire Council	To be determined	Included in proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Gloucester Council • Gloucestershire Council
Number of new councillors for each new council – if different from proposals	110 in the proposal	52 for East in the proposal 58 for West in the proposal	52 for GG in the proposal 81 for GU in the proposal
Warding arrangements including number and names (Deadline: 17 August 2026)	Included in proposal: Existing County Council divisions to be used	Included in proposal: Existing County Council divisions to be used	To be determined
Arrangements for transition of civic / ceremonial functions			

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1** Cabinet could choose not to submit a representation to Government, or representations to only some of the questions. However, this would mean the Council does not formally influence the content of the Structural Changes Order
- 4.2** Cabinet could choose to delay submitting a representation pending further information or clarity from Government, although this would risk reduced influence on the final Order.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1** The Gloucestershire Structural Changes Order is a critical step in establishing the future structure of local government in the county. It will provide the necessary legal and governance framework to enable a smooth and effective transition to the new authority or authorities.



5.2 Cabinet is therefore invited to note the contents of this report and agree the Council's representations to Government, ensuring that the interests of Cotswold District Council are fully reflected in the final Structural Changes Order.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from making these representations to the SoS (other than the member and officer time involved).

6.2 Under the single unitary authority proposal, there is a significant difference in the cost of the Preparing Authority model and the Shadow Authority model, the latter being estimated to cost Gloucestershire an additional £500k. If Cabinet is minded to request that the Secretary of State implements a Shadow Authority model, additional funding will need to be set aside by Cotswold District Council in the LGR Transition reserve to cover the Council's share of the additional cost for that eventuality.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Local government reorganisation is led by the Secretary of State (MHCLG) under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The Secretary of State retains broad discretion over whether and how reorganisation proceeds. The consultation seeks a response to the following aspects of any Structural Changes Order (SCO) that may be made - interim implementation structures, elections, Council names, councillor numbers and warding arrangements for the first election, ceremonial matters and the timetable.

7.2 While councils may submit representations, the Secretary of State retains full discretion over the contents of the Order as a result there are no legal implications to this report.

7.3 Decision makers should note, the brief consultation period limits the amount of time for engagement, review and discussion of the issues involved. This makes group working of the authorities unlikely which may result in an incohesive response from the authorities that are vested in the outcome. In addition, the response will be made before the model of reorganisation is determined therefore each of the three options put forward should be considered when making representations.

7.4 Although the Secretary of State will decide the final content of the Order, it is important that the Council should represent the views of its members and electorate.



8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1** There is a risk that Gloucestershire councils may be unable to reach a consistent, collective position. This could reduce the overall influence of representations submitted to Government and lead to less favourable outcomes for the district council.
- 8.2** The programme presents a high level of strategic and operational risk, driven by uncertainty, timescales, and complexity. However, with early planning, strong governance, and effective partnership working, these risks can be managed to support a smooth and successful transition.
- 8.3** The main risks associated with this decision are set out below.

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
Cotswold District Council's representations are viewed as unworkable by the Secretary of State (SoS)	The SCO would not take account of those representations	Any proposed representations should be based on previous Structural Changes Orders used in other areas. This makes it more likely that they will be considered workable by the Secretary of State.
CDC's views do not accord with those of the County Council and other Gloucestershire District Councils.	Those representations may carry less weight with the SoS, meaning the SCO doesn't reflect our preferences	Despite the short timescale, discussions are underway with the County Council and District Councils to reach a shared position wherever possible.
Disputes between local councils as to the content of the SCO	Damage to the positive working relationship and consensual approach that has characterised our approach to date	Although councils may not agree on every issue, there is likely to be scope for agreement or compromise on many of the questions. Where views differ, CDC recognises the right of the County Council and District councils to take a different view in good faith.
Insufficient time to make decisions	CDC will miss the deadline and not be able to influence the content of the SCO	Although more time would have been preferable, the MHCLG deadline means it is unlikely that all councils will reach a shared position. It is therefore expected that each council will submit its own representations. Leaders have prioritised these discussions in order to meet the deadline.



Risk	Impact	Mitigation
Disputes between authorities	Delay to programme	Agreed principles and escalation routes

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 A full equalities impact assessment was undertaken for each of the three proposals and can be found at: [Future Gloucestershire : Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation in Gloucestershire.](#)

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

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

10.2 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.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None

(END)