



## **AGENDA**

### **Motion A: Farmers Motion**

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12, the following Motion has been received:

#### Farmers Motion

Proposer: Councillor Julia Judd

Seconder: Councillor Joe Harris

This Council notes that we currently only produce 60% of the food that we need here in the UK. Food imports already outnumber exports by £33.2 billion. A reduction in the food that we produce will only increase our vulnerability to international factors outside our control - we have already felt this impact in the energy market.

This Council also notes that:

- According to the NFU: 7,419 people are directly employed in agriculture in Gloucestershire, that's 12.1% of the South West's farm workers
- Gross Output = £318 million, GVA = £128 million
- Of the 85,397.1 Hectares of arable farmland, 63.2% (53,965.1Ha) is cereal crops, that's 24.1% of Gloucestershire's farmed area and 18% of all the South West's cereal production.
- The National Farmers Union calculates that 75% of commercial family farms will fall above the £1 million threshold across the UK.
- Over the past 60 years the proportion of household income spent on food in the UK has halved, from 33% in 1957, 11.8% in 2022. Food prices have come down, farmers' income from food production has come down and supermarket profits have ballooned.
- neither DEFRA, the Government's own department, nor industry experts in the farming sector were consulted before the chancellor made her announcement. DEFRA did not even know about the decision until after the chancellor's announcement.

This Council believes that

- proper consultation with farmers and industry experts could have led to fairer and more appropriate solutions that are not detrimental to family farms or the wider industry. The changes were rushed out and have not been subject to due diligence or proper consideration.
- If hard-pressed farmers are forced to sell their farms because they can't afford to carry on due to a huge tax burden, the land is less likely to stay in food production.
- Large farms are being bought by businesses so that they can take advantage of the 20% tax advantage, and small pockets of land which farmers sell off to cover tax burdens are often re-purposed for example dog walking fields, equestrian or amenity land such as re-wilding, but not put back into food production
- Tax discount to businesses or individuals buying agricultural land to avoid tax should be abolished

This Council resolves to :

1. Agree to support Cotswold farmers by campaigning against IHT reforms for farms.
2. Request that the Leader writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer urging her to scrap the IHT reform imposed on farmers.

## **Minutes of a meeting of Council held on Wednesday, 19 March 2025**

### **Motion A: Farmers Motion**

The Chair invited Councillor Julia Judd to speak as the proposer of the motion. Councillor Judd made the following points:

- The issue of Inheritance Tax (IHT) on farmers was highlighted as catastrophic and misunderstood.
- Farming was not comparable to other businesses due to its complexity and the passion involved.
- The imposition of IHT could lead to farmland being sold to industrial landowners, changing the countryside forever.
- Farming in the UK was already vulnerable, as only 60% of food was produced domestically. This created risks with potential tariffs and global crises.
- Strong political support for farming was lacking, and there weren't enough MPs or local politicians who understand farming issues.
- The IHT policy lacked consultation with DEFRA and the NFU and had been rushed with misleading information about land measurements.
- The policy was expected to affect 75% of commercial family farms, forcing many farmers to sell land and potentially leaving it out of food production.
- Farming was an expensive business, with high costs for machinery and unpredictable factors like diseases and natural disasters.

The recommendation of the motion was that

1. the Council agree to support Cotswold farmers by campaigning against IHT reforms for farms.
2. that the Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer urging her to scrap the IHT reform imposed on farmers.

Councillor Theyer then spoke as seconder of the motion and made the following points, emphasising that the Inheritance Tax (IHT) on farmers was unworkable and financially unsustainable.

- Previous governments had never implemented such a tax due to its inherent issues.
- The cost of machinery and other farming expenses, such as feed bills, were astronomical, making it hard to manage financially.
- The speaker shared their own experience of buying a 95-horsepower tractor for £55,000, which was financed due to affordability issues.
- Farmers were struggling with high costs, like feed and veterinary expenses, and managing livestock, as the speaker described the stress of caring for animals while balancing other responsibilities.
- The proposed Inheritance Tax changes had caused significant distress within the farming community.

- Farmers were committed to producing quality products for the marketplace but were burdened by stringent regulations and unforeseen challenges, such as disease outbreaks.
- The speaker highlighted the high cost of vaccinations to protect livestock from diseases like blue tongue, further draining resources.
- The speaker warned that without fair treatment, small farms would disappear, affecting food production and leaving the industry in crisis.
- They urged the Council to send a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to reconsider the IHT policy and provide a fair solution for farmers.

Councillor Harris spoke to the proposed IHT changes and agreed that they could threaten the existence of family farms and rural communities. In response, the speaker moved a motion to:

- Refer the issue to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the impact of the changes on farmers in the Cotswold district and report back to Council with recommendations on how to make a strong representation to the government by July.

This approach aimed to ensure the Council's representation was well-informed and effective.

Councillor Every seconded the proposal to refer the motion to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair moved to the debate on referring the motion to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Clarity was sought as to whether the choice to support the proposed referral to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee precluded an initial letter being sent. It was confirmed that this was the case.

Concerns were raised about the urgency of sending a letter to the Chancellor before 1 April, with calls for consultation with DEFRA, the NFU, and local farmers. The government's lack of understanding of the local farming economy was criticised, with confusion over land measurements cited. Some Councillors doubted the letter's impact on policy and advocated for a thorough review via Overview and Scrutiny to ensure a well-evidenced response. It was suggested that the Committee could establish a task and finish group to gather evidence on the local impacts of IHT changes.

The argument that large farms were exploiting tax benefits was debated, with some seeing it as a valid justification for reform, while others dismissed it as lacking evidence.

The importance of supporting farmers in their role of food production was highlighted, with calls for clear action from the Council.

The option of the Leader sending a letter to the Chancellor requesting a pause in implementation, followed by further scrutiny and a more detailed report was discounted.

The Chair opened the vote on the proposal to refer the motion to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Voting record:

For 19, Against 9, Abstain 1.

<b>Motion A Farmers motion - to be referred to Overview and Scrutiny (Resolution)</b>		
That a revised and strong letter to be sent to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, be considered by Overview and Scrutiny.		
For	Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Patrick Coleman, Mike Evemy, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Angus Jenkinson, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Nigel Robbins, Gary Selwyn, Lisa Spivey, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing and Ian Watson	19
Against	Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, David Fowles, Nikki Ind, Julia Judd, Tony Slater, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer and Len Wilkins	9
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	Clare Turner	1
<b>Carried</b>		

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