



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

Members present:

Nikki Ind	Mark Harris	
Gina Blomefield	Paul Hodgkinson	Tony Slater
Claire Bloomer	Angus Jenkinson	Lisa Spivey
Ray Brassington	Julia Judd	Tom Stowe
Patrick Coleman	Juliet Layton	Jeremy Theyer
Daryl Corps	Mike McKeown	Clare Turner
David Cunningham	Dilys Neill	Michael Vann
Mike Evemy	Andrea Pellegram	Jon Wareing
David Fowles	Nigel Robbins	Ian Watson
Joe Harris	Gary Selwyn	Len Wilkins

Officers present:

Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services	Cheryl Sloan, Business Manager - Business Continuity, Governance and Risk
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer)	David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer
Julia Gibson, Democratic Services Officer	Robert Weaver, Chief Executive
John Llewellyn, Head of Human Resources	Matt Abbott, Head of Communications
Nickie Mackenzie-Daste, Senior Democratic Services Officer	Ciaran Okane, Senior Procurement Business Partner

Observers:

86 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Tristan Wilkinson, Councillor Helen Mansilla, Councillor Tony Dale and Councillor Andrew Maclean.

It was noted that the Chief Executive had received Councillor Chris Twells' resignation on 19 March 2025.

87 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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In relation to Agenda item 9 The Pay Policy Statement it was noted that if a Member wished to raise pay for specific officer posts, proceedings would be paused for the officer(s) concerned to leave the room if necessary.

88 Minutes

Council considered the minutes of the previous Council meeting held on 24 February 2025.

Councillor Blomefield reminded Councillor Joe Harris that she was waiting for a written answer to her question from a previous meeting. An answer was promised.

There were no amendments.

Councillor Every proposed the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting, the proposal was seconded by Councillor Fowles, put to a vote and agreed by Council.

RESOLVED that the minutes are accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting of 24 February 2025.

Voting Record:

For 26, Against 0, Abstain 3

Approval of the minutes of Full Council held on 24 February 2025. (Resolution)		
RESOLVED that the minutes are accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting of 24 February 2025.		
For	Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Patrick Coleman, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, Mike Every, David Fowles, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Nigel Robbins, Gary Selwyn, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson and Len Wilkins	26
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	Gina Blomefield, Angus Jenkinson and Tony Slater	3
Carried		

89 Announcements from the Chair, Leader or Chief Executive

Chair's Announcements

The Chair noted the sad passing of Officer Daisy Catterall, expressing condolences to her family and friends.

The Unsung Heroes Awards were then announced, with three awards being noted for March.

- Jerry Watkins: Winner, recognised for his selfless work with the *Food for Thought* van, supporting the homeless with food, clothing, and shelter.
- Michael Smedley & Repair Café Volunteers: Recognised for their work at *St James' Church Repair Café*, helping the community repair items, reduce waste, and foster connections.
- Joanne Moore & Feed the Community: Recognised for providing free meals and organising community events to support struggling families.

The Chair encouraged more community nominations and thanked all award recipients.

As this was Councillor Ind's final meeting as Chair, she reflected on representing Tetbury East and Rural as an Independent District Councillor and thanked residents and officers for putting their trust in her as well as fellow Councillors for supporting her in the role of Councillor and Chair. The importance of local voices in devolution discussions was emphasised, and councillors' role in ensuring those voices were heard was highlighted.

The Chair shared a personal story of early political engagement and thanked Councillor Joe Harris for his leadership and encouragement.

Tewkesbury Borough Mayor's Charity Concert, the Annual Legal Service for the High Sheriff of Gloucestershire and the Royal Society of Saint George and Cotswold Homes and Interiors Festival were mentioned as being the last official engagements that Councillor Ind would have the honour of attending in her capacity as Chair of the Council.

Gratitude was also expressed to family and colleagues for their support over two years as Chair. And finally, the Chair encouraged young people to believe that anything is possible, to pursue their ambitions and really make a difference.

Leader's announcements

The Leader began by thanking the Chair on behalf of the Council for her service, praising her fairness and dedication to both Tetbury and the wider Cotswolds. He also congratulated the three Unsung Heroes award recipients, recognising their vital contributions to the community and highlighting the importance of the voluntary sector in supporting local services.

Attention was drawn to the recently adopted LIFT Scheme, helping residents access benefits and welfare entitlements. It was noted that nearly £1.3 million had been distributed to older people struggling with costs. He thanked Councillor Bloomer and the Revenues and Benefits team for their efforts in implementing the scheme.

The Leader then spoke about the tragic passing of Daisy Catterall at just 25. He reflected on her positive attitude, dedication to her role, and the impact of her loss on colleagues and the community. He shared a personal memory of their last conversation and a minute's silence was held in her honour.

Chief Executive's announcements

The Chief Executive echoed condolences to Daisy Catterall's family and colleagues, highlighting her dedication and positive impact.

The well-attended memorial service at Bingham Hall and the daisy pin badges worn in her honour were mentioned.

The Chief Executive thanked the Chair for her leadership and also acknowledged Councillor Harris's contributions as Leader, appreciating his guidance on the Council's direction and corporate plan.

A by-election for the Tetbury and Upton seat would be held on 1 May 2025, following the resignation of former Councillor Chris Twells.

Matt Abbott was welcomed as the new Head of Communications.

The Council's upcoming Red Nose Day celebrations, including a cake sale and themed attire, was noted, and all those involved were thanked for their efforts.

90 Public Questions

No public questions were received.

91 Member Questions

Member questions, supplementary questions and responses can be found in Annex A attached.

92 Publica Transition Plan - Phase 2

Purpose

The purpose of the report was to consider the document 'Publica Transition: A Plan for Phase 2 of Council Services', known as Phase 2 Transition Plan, to note its contents and to approve the recommendations therein.

Councillor Harris, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, summarised its key points, and explained the purpose of the transition: to create leaner, more efficient services and improve staff management for better services to residents. He acknowledged the challenges of Phase 1 but stated that the transition had been well managed by the senior management team. Phase 2 was noted as being another step on the journey.

The Chief Executive then spoke to the detailed Phase 2 transition plan. Key lessons from Phase 1 had helped refine the approach, including insights from a staff engagement survey. Feedback from the 75 transferred staff was largely positive.

Phase 2 was expected to be more complex due to fragmented roles requiring careful restructuring. It was noted that HR would lead the transition process, ensuring smooth staff engagement.

The Phase 2 transition prioritised high-spend and politically significant service areas, including:

- property and estates
- waste and recycling
- leisure contract management, and
- project management.

The report presented outline costs and processes, mirroring the approach taken in Phase 1, with Phase 2 focused on improving service delivery and securing council autonomy.

The resolution was formally moved and opened for questions.

Straight Through Processing (STP) was clarified as referring to a streamlined approach to enabling decisions and actions to be executed directly without requiring multiple levels of approval or intervention from external entities. In the context of Phase 2, STP would allow direct execution of decisions, removing external approvals, reducing delays, and ensuring Council autonomy.

The notion of a 'local employee' was also clarified. It was noted that this terminology referred to staff who lived within or near the Council's jurisdiction. This approach aligned with Council priorities, strengthened community ties, and supported sustainability by reducing commutes.

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

The Chair then moved to the debate on the resolution.

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Members of the Conservative Group raised concerns about the transition process, predicting that both costs and risks would escalate. They acknowledged the potential benefits of bringing some services back in-house but urged that these benefits be weighed against the financial impact and the risks of the process, which would ultimately fall on taxpayers.

They urged a pause in the process for risk assessment and cost estimation. They noted that the Phase 1 transition cost had significantly exceeded estimates, with the additional costs for delivering services outside of Publica projected to be £750,000 per year, five times the original estimate in the Human Engine report. The additional costs of Phase 2 were deemed unjustifiable, due to ongoing Phase 1 issues.

It was noted that there was a sense that Phase 1 had been rushed and had lacked a detailed business case and proper due diligence.

It was mooted that the main goals of the Phase 1 transition had not been fully achieved, with recruitment and staff retention issues remaining unresolved.

Members of the Liberal Democrat Group noted the importance of having a skilled team, especially for planning and compliance and it was noted that the transition had allowed for better recruitment and better focus on building competent teams.

It was noted that some key positions, which had stayed vacant for months, were now filled. Staff turnover remained largely unchanged. It was noted that the impending local government reorganisation and devolution would also have an effect on recruitment and retention.

Members of the Conservative Group stated that they saw the transition as the single biggest threat to the Council's ability to deliver a balanced budget over the coming years.

Councillor Every rose to second the resolutions and noted that the decision was an important one. Members were reminded that the administration had been in place for six years and had initially worked with Publica for four years to make the structure function, although failures were acknowledged.

The Publica model, intended as a cost-saving measure, had not succeeded.

At this point a significant disparity in pension contributions was noted, with employer contributions of 20% under the LGPS versus 5% in Publica's scheme.

Phase 1 had yielded positive outcomes, particularly in planning, where officer recruitment improved efficiency and reduced reliance on costly agency staff. Councillor Every emphasised that reintegrating staff aligned with the corporate plan and addressed financial constraints. The transition, including redundancy and associated costs, amounted to £1.1 million, already budgeted.

Councillor Every rejected claims that the Publica transition posed the greatest financial threat, instead pointing to the potential loss of millions in government grants, which had been factored into the February budget.

Acknowledging the difficulty of the Phase 2 decision, members deemed it necessary to bring services like property, estates, waste, and leisure back in-house for better asset management and service delivery. The waste service alone cost nearly £9 million annually, and direct management was expected to improve control and savings. The transition had been carefully considered, and appreciation was expressed to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their contributions.

Councillor Every urged colleagues to support Publica transition Phase 2.

Councillor Stowe responded and challenged the Phase 2 figures stated, citing budget papers proposed in February. It was suggested that the transition costs had already exceeded £2 million, with transition costs having reached £1.1 million, and a further £750,000 in annual recurring costs. An explanation of the costs was requested.

The Chair invited Councillor Joe Harris to sum up. Councillor Harris dismissed opposition criticism as unconstructive. It was emphasised that Publica had failed to deliver savings or provide transparency, making budget planning difficult. With partner councils already moving forward, reversing course was no longer an option. Bringing services in-house was deemed to be essential for financial control, better service delivery, and value for taxpayers. Councillor Harris urged support for the transition and cautioned that abandoning the transition would be a costly mistake.

The Chair then moved to the vote on the Phase 2 transition report recommendations, proposed by Councillor Joe Harris and seconded by Councillor Mike Every.

Voting Record:

For 20 , Against 9 , Abstention 0.

To consider the Phase 2 Transition Plan , to note its content and to approve the recommendations therein. (Resolution)

Council RESOLVED to

1. Approve the implementation of Phase 2 of the Publica Transition on the basis of the Phase 2 Transition Plan;
2. Delegate to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council the decision to deal with any final detail matters arising from the Phase 2 Transition Plan;
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance in liaison with the Leader to update the constitution by making any consequential changes required as a result of Phase 2 of the Publica Transition.
4. Carry out a budget re-basing for the 2026/7 financial year so that the funding provided to Publica would be proportionate to the services received.

For	Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Patrick Coleman, Mike Every, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Nigel Robbins, Gary Selwyn, Lisa Spivey, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing and Ian Watson	20
Against	Gina Blomefield, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, David Fowles, Julia Judd, Tony Slater, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer and Len Wilkins	9
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

93 Community Governance Review - Upper Rissington

Purpose

To approve the final recommendation of the Community Governance Review for Upper Rissington.

Councillor Joe Harris introduced the report, which proposed the transfer of land from Great Rissington Parish to Upper Rissington Parish through a change in parish boundaries.

The Council reviewed a proposal to amend parish boundaries between Upper and Great Rissington. Upper Rissington Parish Council had built and maintained a skate park located in Great Rissington which was primarily used by Upper Rissington residents. Following a consultation with no objections, members supported transferring the land to Upper Rissington.

The Chair then moved to the vote on the final recommendations of the Community Governance Review for Upper Rissington. The resolution was proposed by Councillor Joe Harris and seconded by Councillor Clare Turner.

Voting record:

For 28, Against 0, Abstain 0.

To approve the final recommendations of the Community Governance Review for Upper Rissington. (Resolution)

Council RESOLVED to:

1. Approve the final recommendations in relation to the Upper Rissington and Great Rissington parish boundaires
2. Authorise the Head of Legal Services to make a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order to implement the changes agreed by Council.

For	Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Patrick Coleman, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, Mike Every, David Fowles, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Nigel Robbins, Gary Selwyn, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Jeremy Theyer, Clare Turner, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson and Len Wilkins	28
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

94 Pay Policy Statement 2025 (as 9)

Before commencing item number 9 the Chair asked if any members present wished to discuss individual officer terms, which would require the officers concerned to leave the room. No such requests were made, and the discussion proceeded.

The purpose of the report was to consider the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2025/6. Councillor Joe Harris introduced the report and asked John Llewellyn, Business Manager for Human Resources, to summarise the content and outline any changes.

The Council reviewed the amended pay policy statement, which included officer pay bandings and a commitment to the living wage. It was noted that if approved, the statement would be published on the Council website.

A question was raised about pensions, and officers confirmed that pension details could be included in future statements.

The Chair then moved to the vote on the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2025/6 .The resolution was proposed by Councillor Joe Harris and seconded by Councillor Mike Every.

Voting record:

For 28, Against 0, Abstain1.

To consider the Councils Pay Policy for 2025/26 (Resolution)		
Council RESOLVED to approve the Council's Pay Policy for 2025/26.		
For	Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Patrick Coleman, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, Mike Every, David Fowles, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram,	28

	Nigel Robbins, Gary Selwyn, Tony Slater, Lisa Spivey, Tom Stowe, Clare Turner, Michael Vann, Jon Wareing, Ian Watson and Len Wilkins	
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	Jeremy Theyer	1
Carried		

95 Amendments to the Constitution - Report of the Constitution Working Group (March 2025)

The Chair requested that Council consider proposed amendments to the Council's Constitution from the Constitution Working Group. Given the complexity of the five topics, each item would be introduced separately before a decision was taken about whether the items would be voted on individually or en-bloc.

The item was introduced by Councillor Mike Every, who stated that the proposed changes had been discussed thoroughly at the Constitution Working Group, and thanked group members for their work and consideration.

The first amendment discussed was the removal of some words from paragraph 4.18 of Part D6: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules. The words were to be removed as they were no longer applicable.

The second amendment suggested was around the inclusion of a Webcasting Protocol. The protocol was introduced as a guide to good practice in order to ensure a good experience for people following meetings remotely. Support for the protocol was encouraged.

The third item amendment was around questions at Cabinet and in Committees and was aimed at tidying up and clarifying the process.

The fourth amendment considered was Contract Rules. The Council's contract rules had been updated to align with new procurement legislation. VAT was now included in contract values. And a new category had been introduced for goods and services between £30,000 and £60,000. It was noted that procedure rules changes primarily affected mid-range contracts.

Finally the Probity and Licensing Protocol was discussed. It was reported that the probability and licensing protocol had been reviewed, with changes aimed at improving readability and clarity. The updates reflected the responsibilities of the Planning and Licensing Committee and its subcommittee while eliminating duplication.

Questions from members were invited.

Councillor Fowles seconded the proposal and chose to speak.
Appreciation was expressed for the working group and its chair for well-run meetings.
It was confirmed that a lengthy discussion had taken place on webcast meetings, with members agreeing that, despite potential future government changes, maintaining physical meetings remained preferable for transparency and engagement.

The Chair then moved to the debate on the resolution. There was no debate.
Members confirmed that they agreed to vote for the recommendations en-bloc rather than individually.

The Chair then moved to the vote on the proposed amendments to the Council's Constitution. The resolution was proposed by Councillor Mike Every and seconded by Councillor David Fowles.

Voting record:

For 29, Against 0, Abstain 0.

To consider proposals from the Constitution Working Group for amendments to the Constitution. (Resolution)

Council RESOLVED to

1. Agree to remove the words "The Chief Executive will act as the Cost Centre Manager for that budget" from paragraph 4.18 of Part D6: Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules.
2. Approve the Protocol for Webcasting Meetings for inclusion in the Constitution.
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance and Development to update the Protocol for Webcasting Meetings in the event that the government changes the law to enable remote attendance and/or proxy voting at local authority meetings.
4. Approve the changes to Part D1 11.3 to clarify how questions on notice will be dealt with at Cabinet and Committee meetings.
5. Approve the updated Probity in Licensing Protocol.
6. Approve the updated Contract rules.

For	Gina Blomefield, Claire Bloomer, Ray Brassington, Patrick Coleman, Daryl Corps, David Cunningham, Mike Every, David Fowles, Mark Harris, Joe Harris, Paul Hodgkinson, Nikki Ind, Angus Jenkinson, Julia Judd, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Dilys Neill, Andrea Pellegram, Nigel Robbins, Gary Selwyn, 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
Carried		

96 Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

The purpose of this report was to note the work underway across Gloucestershire in response to the formal invitation received from the Government to develop proposals for local government reorganisation (LGR).

Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council, introduced this item, which was for noting. It was reported that significant time and resources had been dedicated to finding a solution for local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire, though no consensus had been reached. A letter, agreed upon by district and county council leaders, had been sent to the government outlining three potential proposals:

- a. a single unitary authority,
- b. a two-unitary structure, and
- c. An alternative expanded city model from Gloucester City Council.

The letter signalled ongoing work without endorsing a preference. With upcoming elections, it was acknowledged that differing views might lead to multiple submissions, and while government ministers were monitoring the situation, no concrete plans had yet been finalised.

There were no questions for clarity.

Councillor Mike Evely reserved his right to speak.
The Chair moved to the debate.

The future of local government in Gloucestershire was seen as uncertain but full of potential.

There was agreement that efforts should focus on delivering the best outcomes for the district and county.

Three options for reorganisation were acknowledged, but no single one was officially endorsed.

- There was some support for the continuation of the two-tier system, but it was acknowledged that reorganisation was inevitable.
- It was argued that a unitary system was the simplest and most effective, while some of the alternative proposals were criticised as being politically motivated.
- Past unitary government transitions were discussed, and it was noted that some, such as Wiltshire, had demonstrated increased efficiency and accountability.

- Concern was expressed over the high costs of unitary reform and the potential loss of local representation, particularly for parish councils.
- Views were divided on whether more politicians were needed; some argued against this, pointing out that proposed changes would actually decrease the number of councillors by 63%.
- Concerns were raised that town and parish councils might feel ignored by larger unitary authorities, with calls for stronger devolution and power-sharing structures.
- There was some support for financial compensation for parish councillors to encourage greater engagement, as well as discussion around alternative methods of providing support.
- It was agreed that the main priority should be delivering good public services rather than politicising the decision.
- There was general recognition that local knowledge could be lost during the transition, and mechanisms should be put in place to retain it.
- Public consultation was considered essential to ensure residents understood the implications of any changes.
- There was consensus that rural communities needed to be supported to prevent their voices from being overshadowed by urban areas.
- There was widespread agreement on the need to support staff through the transition to maintain morale and ensure continuity in statutory services.
- The approach of town and parish councils being given more devolved powers, particularly for managing services such as roads and highways, was generally supported.
- It was acknowledged that, regardless of the outcome, business as usual should be maintained to ensure a smooth handover of responsibilities.

Councillor Harris concluded by thanking everyone for the debate. The growing role of town and parish councillors in the new structure was emphasised. A Town and Parish summit was confirmed for June to enhance communication and collaboration.

Council NOTED

- a. the work taking place across Gloucestershire in response to the formal invitation from Government to develop proposals for Local Government Reorganisation
- b. the joint Gloucestershire letter to Government on interim proposals.

A Break of 10 minutes took place.

97 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.

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- 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.

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Voting record:

For 19, Against 9, Abstain 1.

Motion A Farmers motion - to be referred to Overview and Scrutiny (Resolution)

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 Evely, 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

Carried

98 Next meeting

It was noted that the 21 May 2025 Annual Council meeting would start at 6pm.

Chair: Councillor Nikki Ind