



Wednesday, 8 November 2023

TO EACH MEMBER OF GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL

Dear Councillor

You are hereby summoned to attend a **MEETING OF THE COUNCIL** of the **CITY OF GLOUCESTER** to be held at the Civic Suite, North Warehouse, The Docks, Gloucester, GL1 2EP on **Thursday, 16th November 2023** at **6.30 pm** for the purpose of transacting the following business:

AGENDA

1. **APOLOGIES**

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. **MINUTES (Pages 13 - 54)**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Ordinary Council Meeting held on 21 September 2023.

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting held on 19 October 2023.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive from Members, declarations of the existence of any disclosable pecuniary, or non-pecuniary, interests and the nature of those interests in relation to any agenda item. Please see Agenda Notes.

4. **CALL OVER**

(a) Call over (items 9-11) will be read out at the meeting and Members invited to reserve the items for discussion.

(b) To approve the recommendations of those reports which have not been reserved for discussion.

5. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)**

The opportunity is given to members of the public to put questions to Cabinet Members or Committee Chairs. Questions may be provided that questions do not contravene the provisions set out in Council Procedure Rules 10(2).

To ask a question at this meeting, please submit it to democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk by 12 noon on Friday 10 November 2023 or telephone 01452 396203 for support.

6. **PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)**

A period not exceeding three minutes is allowed for the presentation of a petition or deputation provided that no such petition or deputation is in relation to:

- Matters relating to individual Council Officers, or
- Matters relating to current or pending legal proceedings

7. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

To receive announcements from:

- a) The Mayor
- b) Leader of the Council
- c) Members of the Cabinet
- d) Chairs of Committees
- e) Head of Paid Service

8. **MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME**

- a) Leader and Cabinet Members' Question Time (45 minutes)

Any member of the Council may ask the Leader of the Council or any Cabinet Member any question upon:

- Any matter relating to the Council's administration
- Any matter relating to any report of the Cabinet appearing on the Council's summons
- A matter coming within their portfolio of responsibilities

- b) Questions to Chairs of Meetings (15 Minutes)

Questions and responses will be published at least 24 hours before the meeting. Supplementary questions will be put and answered during the meeting, subject to the relevant time limit.

ISSUES FOR DECISION BY COUNCIL

9. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION ACQUISITION PROGRAMME (Pages 55 - 78)

To consider the report of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy and the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources setting out a programme of capital investment to increase the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio to reduce the costs associated with providing temporary accommodation.

10. CHELTENHAM, GLOUCESTER AND TEWKESBURY STRATEGIC AND LOCAL PLAN - PUBLIC CONSULTATION (REGULATION 18) (Pages 79 - 126)

To consider the report the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy seeking approval for public and stakeholder consultation in relation to the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan Consultation Document.

11. COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP - DISPENSATION (Pages 127 - 130)

To consider the report of the Monitoring Officer seeking approval to grant a dispensation, pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, to Councillor Pullen whose current leave of absence will exceed six months on 4 December 2023.

MOTIONS FROM MEMBERS

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

1. PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR TRIMNELL

"This council notes the two conifer trees over 50+ years on the corner of St Mary's Street and the controversy over imminent felling of one of them.

This council notes the boundary wall to Kings School nearby is unstable due to the tree, but that most of the wall came down in February last year.

The council notes that to rebuild the wall in the same place would invalidate the council's insurance, but to relocate and erect an alternative boundary structure may not.

This council believes a compromise needs to be found with Kings School for the said tree to remain in situ and for an alternative measure of boundary security to be found."

2. PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR A. CHAMBERS

"This council notes that bulk item waste disposal for families and individuals on low income is disproportionate to their household revenue.

Matson, Podsmead and Coney Hill have a large proportion of families on low

income and many without vehicles. Therefore the use of the city council landfill is not possible.

This council requests that families and individuals on Universal Credit are included in the reduced fee for bulky item waste collection.

At present not all benefit users are able to use the discounted rate.

I therefore request that all members support this motion to ensure that families and individuals on universal credit have the opportunity to use this discounted collection rate.

Discounted rates for universal credit will help reduce those struggling to dispose of waste legally due to no funds available in a cost of living crisis and will undoubtedly reduce illegal fly tipping.”

3. PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR A. CHAMBERS

“The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us clearly that the Internet is no longer a luxury, a convenient enhancement for lifestyles for those who can afford it. Rather, Internet access has become a basic necessity.

During the lockdown, it has become vital for everyday activities. It often is the only way we can contact and care for close friends and family. In some instances, it even has become the only way to [say goodbye to loved ones quarantined in hospital](#). Yet, online access is also necessary during non-emergencies for fair opportunities to work, study, to engage with government, and to exercise our political freedoms. We thus have weighty reasons to accept a right to Internet access. If we doubted this before, few will doubt this now.

This council notes that WiFi internet access is a basic need and not a luxury. Therefore this motion is to provide FREE fast access WiFi for all Gloucester city residents on every City Council ward.

Free WiFi will be provided to all areas of the Gloucester city by 2026.”

4. PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR A. CHAMBERS

Pump Tracks offer a fun, safe space for all ages and abilities to enjoy a range of wheel based activities including BMX bikes, scooters, skateboards and rollerblades.

The proposed Coney Hill Pump Track will be a much-used and valued asset by its community and we're keen to work with partners to help more areas such as Saintbridge/ Matson/ White City and Robinswood enjoy these same benefits.

What is a Pump Track?

So what is a pump track? A pump track is designed to create a safe, fun and inclusive playground for all wheels-based users regardless of age or gender.

They provide a playground for kids and adults from beginners to professionals, and a sustainable and fun-packed activity for everyone in the community.

Their design combines rolling jumps with turns that teach the basic skills of carrying momentum, balance and speed by using your arms and legs to pump your bike/ skateboard/ scooter around the track....

‘A Moment to Learn, a Lifetime to Master’.

Community benefits

Pump Tracks not only offer a space to exercise and improve skills, such as balance and coordination, they also provide a community focal point. Coney Hill Pump Track will become a key feature of the community, with regular meet-ups, litter picks and events.

A planned track at Coney Hill park next to the pond will create a Hub in the area for those walking and cycling, with rest stops and community events. A Coney Hill Community Pump Track group hopes to be situated alongside environmental and nature-based projects while a Track.

Support

This Council notes that children and adult well being, fitness and mental health is priority. Therefore this council will allocate an area of City Council land at Coney Hill park off Metz Way by Stanway Road and Boughton Way for the construction of a Pump track.

This location is far enough away from houses and homes to ensure no associated ASB will be generated.

It’s an ideal location for a pump track.

This Gloucester City council will work with City Council Planning department, Gloucestershire County Councillor for the ward as well as NHS and city Council Cil & S106 budgets to ensure that this pump track will be built and operational before April 2026

This is a great motion helping keep children off the streets, build community’s, support mental health and well being and promote health equalities to one of the County Councils most deprived areas and one the top 10 most deprived areas in England. Please support.”

5. PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR A. CHAMBERS

“Gloucester City Council created a set of rules and regulations on the 1st August 2014 for the Coney Hill Cemetery and Crematorium.

Following complaints from hundreds of families about their child’s, brothers, mothers fathers, & grandparents graves vases/ personal possessions and

borders being removed by the council as they don't fit into the councils ridged set of rules and regulations has caused much hurt and upset around the families who manage their beloved members final resting place.

Some personal possessions, gifts, pictures, lights and borders have been removed from the graves over night without the families being made aware. I am sure council letters in some cases may have been sent. However this does not help the situation when your beloved family's members picture/ gift or toy has been removed because it was an inch too big.

This council notes that the rigid cemetery and crematorium rules needs reviewing urgently as currently there are many families who have been given a deadline by the council which have threatened to remove personal items from their beloved ones final resting places.

Graves and resting areas of loved ones should be a place of peace for family members. A place to visit loved ones and feel close. A place of sanctuary where family members are able to make the resting places bespoke to their past family member, a resting place of a beloved family member should have the option to be able to use colours that they liked, as well as pictures and ornaments. The current rules and regulations are too specific and too rigid.

There are fixed rules for set edgings, many families can not afford to buy solid granite sets for edgings and they have used an alternative to mark out their family members resting place. As a result the Council have removed these edgings and the gravel infill leaving the resting place bare and empty. A further 12 letters have been sent by the City council to family members to advise they will have items removed from their loved ones graves if they do not follow the strict council rules.

The council cemetery and crematorium rules need to be reviewed and current family members/users consulted as well as a City wide consultation to reach a fair balance of new rules and regulations which will include a more modern, flexible approach to these final resting places. This council will also postpone any grave / resting place removal till these new rules and regulations have been consulted on, therefore protecting the 12 current graves which are set to be dismantled by Gloucester City Council.

I therefore ask City Council to support this motion to review the current rules and regulations, while working with family members that maintain the resting places to reach a fair & flexible outcome. The consultation must be conducted within a maximum 8 weeks from this council motion and the new cemetery and crematorium rules and regulations will be in action before the 1st May 2024. The graves under threat of dismantle/ removal of edgings and toys etc will be postponed till the new rules and regulations are created as some of these edgings and toys would fit in the new modern rules approach."

6. PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR O'DONNELL

“This council notes that there are 20 plus rough sleepers each night in and around our Gloucester City Streets.

After speaking to other organisations who want to remain confidential at this point they have advised that the current system is not fit for purpose.

Rough sleepers who do not own mobile phone devices are unable to receive help as they are missed off the system if they move at the point when the out reach team visit.

This city council owes the rough sleepers a duty of care and protection. Currently there have been numerous incidents of rough sleepers tents and bedding being set on fire.

Not only that there are many rough sleepers who have mental health conditions and also pose a risk to the general public and themselves with several incidents occurring recently.

There are also more worryingly British military veterans that have served our country sleeping rough with no help or assistance.

Temporary hotel places for rough sleepers and ex British military veterans are becoming increasing harder to obtain due to the fact over 2 large Hotels in our city are full to the brim of small boat economic illegal immigrants. These economic immigrants are predominately male of working age. This therefore has left British ex military veterans and nationals out in the cold.

Moreover, the city's missions night shelter has closed this year meaning many U.K. nationals will be left out in the frost and snow over our harsh winter.

This council notes that a solution is urgently required to safe guarding our cities rough sleepers and make our city overall a safer place.

This motion is for the City Council to find an empty building within the city and form a night shelter within 14 days of this motion with a capacity of 100 people.

This will then enable a safe space and shelter for the rough sleepers and any families that find themselves homeless this Christmas.

This night shelter must remain open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year.

The saving of housing people in the temporary night shelter will ensure that the City Council save enormous costs charged by hotels.”

7. PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR WILSON

“At the September meeting of Full Council the non availability of audited accounts for Gloucester City Council for the financial years of 2022/22 and 2022/23 was debated. During the course of the debate it was explained that this was partly due to a crisis in local government auditing that was also affecting other councils in the country.

Openness and transparency are nonetheless important, especially in these times of great financial uncertainty.

Council notes that Gloucestershire County Council, Cheltenham Borough Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council, Stroud District Council and The Forest of Dean District Council have all published draft (unaudited) accounts for 2022/23.

Council therefore requires Gloucester City Council to adopt this practice and ensure that fully audited accounts for 2021/22 and **draft (unaudited) accounts** for 2022/23 are published on the council’s website by January 2024.”

8. PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR PATEL

“This council strongly condemns the horrific atrocities by Hamas on the people of Israel on 7th October 2023.

We not only condemn those atrocities, but also the current campaign of bombings (over 10,000 bombs so far) by Israel on residential towers, schools, hospitals, ambulances and refugee camps killing and injuring thousands of innocent Palestinian people. Since 7th October, approximately 10,000 Palestinians have died (40% of those were children) and over 1,400 Israeli’s in this latest conflict.

We call on the council leader to write to the MP Richard Graham and PM Rishi Sunak urging Israel to immediately stop the bombings and collective punishment against 2 million Palestinian people, and also call on Hamas to free the innocent kidnapped Israeli citizens back to Israel. We also support a call for a ceasefire by both IDF and Hamas.

A blockade preventing access to the most basic human necessities such as food, water, electricity, medical supplies etc is also classed as a war crime under International Law.

This council agrees with the world that Hamas are terrorists and that they don’t represent the Palestinian people, and furthermore acknowledges that Israel’s fight is with Hamas, not the Palestinian people.

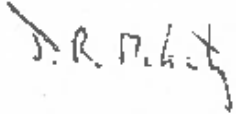
We therefore call on the British Government and all its allies to listen to us and the world, and request an immediate end to the siege and the constant bombardment of Gaza.

We also call on the Home Secretary to cease her unacceptable attempts to

suppress the democratic rights of the British people to peaceful protests.

This council prays for peace not only in Israel/Palestine, but all over the world and we condemn all forms of hate crimes such as Antisemitism, Islamophobia etc.”

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. R. McGinty". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Jon McGinty
Managing Director

NOTES

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

The duties to register, disclose and not to participate in respect of any matter in which a member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest are set out in Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011.

Disclosable pecuniary interests are defined in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 as follows –

<u>Interest</u>	<u>Prescribed description</u>
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council) made or provided within the previous 12 months (up to and including the date of notification of the interest) in respect of any expenses incurred by you carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
Contracts	Any contract which is made between you, your spouse or civil partner or person with whom you are living as a spouse or civil partner (or a body in which you or they have a beneficial interest) and the Council (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and (b) which has not been fully discharged
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the Council's area. For this purpose "land" includes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not carry with it a right for you, your spouse, civil partner or person with whom you are living as a spouse or civil partner (alone or jointly with another) to occupy the land or to receive income.
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the Council's area for a month or longer.
Corporate tenancies	Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) – (a) the landlord is the Council; and (b) the tenant is a body in which you, your spouse or civil partner or a person you are living with as a spouse or civil partner has a beneficial interest
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where – (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the Council's area and (b) either – i. The total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share

- capital of that body; or
- ii. If the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, your spouse or civil partner or person with whom you are living as a spouse or civil partner has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

For this purpose, “securities” means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

NOTE: the requirements in respect of the registration and disclosure of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and withdrawing from participating in respect of any matter where you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest apply to your interests and those of your spouse or civil partner or person with whom you are living as a spouse or civil partner where you are aware of their interest.

Access to Information

Agendas and reports can be viewed on the Gloucester City Council website: www.gloucester.gov.uk and are available to view five working days prior to the meeting date.

For enquiries about Gloucester City Council’s meetings please contact Democratic Services, 01452 396126, democratic.services@gloucester.gov.uk.

If you, or someone you know cannot understand English and need help with this information, or if you would like a large print, Braille, or audio version of this information please call 01452 396396.

Recording of meetings

Please be aware that meetings may be recorded. There is no requirement for those wishing to record proceedings to notify the Council in advance; however, as a courtesy, anyone wishing to do so is advised to make the Mayor aware before the meeting starts.

Any recording must take place in such a way as to ensure that the view of Councillors, Officers, the Public and Press is not obstructed. The use of flash photography and/or additional lighting will not be allowed unless this has been discussed and agreed in advance of the meeting.

FIRE / EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

If the fire alarm sounds continuously, or if you are instructed to do so, you must leave the building by the nearest available exit. You will be directed to the nearest exit by council staff. It is vital that you follow their instructions:

- You should proceed calmly; do not run and do not use the lifts;
- Do not stop to collect personal belongings;
- Once you are outside, please do not wait immediately next to the building; gather at the assembly point in the car park and await further instructions;
- Do not re-enter the building until told by a member of staff or the fire brigade that it is safe to do so.

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COUNCIL

MEETING : Thursday, 21st September 2023

PRESENT : Cllrs. Hudson (Sheriff & Deputy Mayor), Cook, Norman, S. Chambers, Lewis, Padilla, Hilton, Chambers-Dubus, Gravells MBE, Tracey, Morgan, Wilson, Bhaimia, D. Brown, Taylor, Field, Patel, Brooker, Finnegan, J. Brown, Hyman, Bowkett, Ackroyd, Castle, A. Chambers, Dee, Durdey, Evans, Kubaszczyk, O'Donnell, Zaman, Sawyer and Campbell

Others in Attendance

Managing Director
Corporate Director
Monitoring Officer
Head of Culture
Head of Finance and Resources
Head of Place
Head of Transformation and Commissioning
Policy and Governance Manager
Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Williams, Toleman, Pullen, Conder, Radley and Trimnell

27. MINUTES

The minutes of the Special Council Meeting and Ordinary Council Meeting held on 13 July 2023 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Brooker declared an interest in Notices of Motion due to her employment by the Member of Parliament for Gloucester.

29. CALL OVER

The Sheriff and Deputy Mayor invited Members to indicate whether they wishes to reserve agenda items 9, 10 and 11 for discussion. None of these items were reserved.

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30. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

30.1 A Gloucester resident submitted the following question:

How can local residents count on our council members individually in each ward to keep our beloved Booking Offices open as the cherished gateway to our precious Gloucestershire AONB, without losing our relationship with our active travel communities face to face whilst being lobbied by the online ticketing racketeers?

Councillor Cook responded that both the MP and Councillors were keen to see the Gloucester Train Station ticket office remain to some extent. He noted that Council would be debating this issue in a motion later and that he hoped that the questioner would remain to hear the debate.

31. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

There were no petitions nor deputations.

32. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members of the Cabinet

Councillor Norman paid tribute to the late former Gloucester City Councillor Philip Beer, on behalf of former City Councillors Paul James and Mark Hawthorne. She noted that Mr Beer had been elected as the City Councillor for Kingsholm back in 1999 and as the representative for Longlevens in 2002, and had been one of the youngest serving Councillors at the time. Councillor Norman stated that Mr Beer had enjoyed a career in insurance and was a proud family man. She noted that the thoughts of the Council were with Mr Beer's family and friends.

Following a suggestion from Councillor Gravells and unanimous agreement by Council, a period of silence was held to allow Members to reflect and pay their respects to Mr Beer.

33. MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME

33.1 In respect of question 1, Councillor Hilton asked for confirmation of whether or not any additional funds were due to be transferred to Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust in the current financial year to cover any deficit and whether any extra financial support had been provided in the previous financial year. Councillor Norman responded that no additional support had been provided to the Aspire Trust over the current financial year over the budgeted amount. She noted that negotiations regarding the contract and management fee for Aspire Leisure were ongoing and that it was her intention to bring forward a Cabinet report to update Members in due course.

33.2 In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Hilton in respect of question 2 and whether Councillor Norman was relieved that the council had

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not received a fine from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), Councillor Norman stated that she was pleased that no financial penalty had been issued and indicated that she had been quietly confident as the attack was outside the control of the Council, noting that the cyber-attack had been sophisticated in nature.

- 33.3 In response to a supplementary question from Councillor A. Chambers regarding question 5 and the tender process for City Council contracts, Councillor Norman asked Councillor A. Chambers to write to her with further information so that she could respond in further detail.
- 33.4 Councillor A. Chambers referred to question 6 and asked whether the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources would commit to investigating whether the Council's Contract Rules were followed during the procurement process for the Wellington Parade Garden tender. Councillor Norman confirmed that she would seek further information about the matter. She stated that she took claims of corruption seriously but would refute them to residents as she believed that both Members and Council staff sought to do the right thing.
- 33.5 In respect of a supplementary question from Councillor O'Donnell concerning question 7, Councillor Padilla confirmed that he directly worked with communities, organisations and stakeholders. He noted that the Community Engagement Team was a small one, and was responsible for covering a wide variety of areas including community safety, hate crime, young people and equalities. He noted that this was a demanding service area but reiterated assurances that he listened carefully to community organisations in the city.
- 33.6 Referring to question 8, Councillor Gravells asked whether the Managing Director would continue to monitor the postal service and any arising issues. Councillor Cook confirmed that the situation would be monitored should the Council receive complaints. He noted that the regulator of Royal Mail was OfCom rather than the City Council, however he paid tribute to Councillor Gravells for raising awareness which he believed had had an impact on recruitment issues at Royal Mail.
- 33.7 In respect of question 11, Councillor Hilton referred to the new Exacom software to manage s106 agreements and asked whether Members would receive regular reports on s106 agreements in their wards. Councillor Norman explained that the Exacom software would allow Officers to see the single source of spending, and that she was confident that the vast majority of s106 agreements had been spent within the timeframe. Councillor Norman stated that s106 agreements were discussed at Planning Committee meetings and that Members would be able to see s106 agreements in their ward within Planning Committee documents.
- 33.8 Councillor A. Chambers asked in relation to question 12, why roles such as Independent Investigators for Code of Conduct complaints were not advertised. Councillor Norman confirmed that she would find out further information to understand the process of appointing Independent

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Investigators and would respond in writing to Councillor A. Chambers. She further explained that it was standard practice to appoint Monitoring Officers through a shared service and that candidates for this role were still subject to an interview process and were required to appear before the Senior Appointments Committee, which had cross-party membership.

- 33.9 In response to a supplementary question from Councillor O'Donnell in respect of question 13 and funding for a local playground in Matson, Councillor Cook explained that s106 funding had to be spent in a designated manner, however it was his understanding that the area Councillor O'Donnell referred to was owned by Gloucester City Homes (GCH) and it would be up to GCH whether to install play equipment on their land.
- 33.10 In respect of question 14, Councillor Field noted his understanding that the Museum of Gloucester was in possession of JMW Turner paintings however they were too valuable to be put on display. He asked whether the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure was aware of any plans to display the paintings or sell them. Councillor Lewis confirmed that he would discuss the latest position with the Head of Culture and provide Councillor Field with a written response.
- 33.11 Councillor Hilton referred to question 15 and asked whether any funding to maintain City Protection Officer patrols in Kingsholm would be ongoing or time-limited. Councillor Padilla confirmed that he would ask the relevant Officer to write to Councillor Hilton with further information regarding the source of funding and proposed length of the funding period. He further stressed the importance of reminding residents to report incidences of anti-social behaviour to the police, as other areas of the city which had made reports had seen increased patrols.
- 33.12 In response to a supplementary question from Councillor A. Chambers in respect of question 16, Councillor Norman noted that she was aware of the case and that a review had been commissioned to look at the processes followed. She noted that this review found no evidence of wrongdoing and it was therefore her view that the matter was concluded.
- 33.13 In response to a supplementary question from Councillor O'Donnell regarding question 17, Councillor Padilla noted that he was open to working collaboratively with Councillor O'Donnell and that he was in the process of increasing his social media presence. He further noted that would be publishing regular updates on community work in Matson in due course.
- 33.14 Councillor S. Chambers responded to a supplementary question from Councillor Hilton in respect of question 19, confirming that she would speak with relevant Officers with a view of discussing active planning enforcement action with him confidentially. She also suggested putting the issue on the agenda for future Planning Policy Members Working Group meetings, noting that the preferred approach of the Planning Enforcement Team was to engage, inform and support ahead of taking enforcement action.

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- 33.15 In response to a supplementary question from Councillor A. Chambers regarding the structural engineer reports on RAAC concrete within council buildings, Councillor Norman confirmed that positive findings had been received from the structural engineer regarding the museum roof and that other investigations were ongoing. She confirmed that safety was a priority and that she would be happy to share the relevant information with Members on the outcome of the remaining investigations.
- 33.16 Referring to question 21, Councillor O'Donnell asked a supplementary question regarding Councillor Padilla's responsiveness to correspondence from residents and community organisations. Councillor Padilla stated that he completely disagreed with such comments and that he would welcome evidence so that he could respond accordingly. Councillor Padilla further advised that as Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods, he was responsible with working with community groups all over the city of Gloucester, as well as Matson.
- 33.17 In respect of question 22, Councillor Field asked whether the new street cleaning machine and reduced chemical costs was likely to transcend into a budget saving. Councillor Cook confirmed that he would provide Councillor Field with a written response however it was his expectation that the saving was likely to be offset by the capital cost of investing in the machine. This said, Councillor Cook noted that he was still supportive of the change.

34. STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

RESOLVED that:-

- (1) The Response Report (Appendix 1) be endorsed.
- (2) The Revised Statement of Community Involvement be adopted.
- (3) Authority be delegated for the correction of any errors such as spelling, grammar, referencing and formatting to the Planning Policy Manager, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy.

35. AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

RESOLVED that the Annual Report of the Audit and Governance Committee 2022-23 be approved.

36. APPOINTMENTS

RESOLVED that:- Council **NOTE** that Councillor Brooker and Councillor Kubaszczuk have replaced Councillor Finnegan and Councillor Williams as Chair and Vice-Chair of the Licensing and Enforcement Committee respectively.

37. NOTICES OF MOTION

- 37.1 Councillor Chambers-Dubus proposed and Councillor Bhaimia seconded the following motion:

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“Great Western Railway is consulting on the future of the ticket office at Gloucester Railway Station with a predicted closure date of June 2024.

In recent years there has been a huge investment in the Railway Station, Transport Hub and the Forum area of the City. This has included:

- Gloucester Rail Station – £6 million investment from Gfirst LEP and the Government.
- Gloucester transport hub - £7.5 million investment from Gfirst LEP and the Government.
- The Forum - £85 million investment from the Reef Group and Gloucester City Council.

Gloucester Railway Station, alongside the Transport Hub and the Forum development are the gateway to our proud City for anyone arriving by public transport. The ticket office at the station is an integral part of that for both visitors and residents and is frequently busy providing customers with far more than just tickets. Losing the ticket office would be detrimental to the visitor and resident experience when accessing or leaving the City by train and therefore detrimental to the wider scheme of improvements in that part of the City.

Whilst acknowledging the limitations of the Council regarding the retention of the ticket office at Gloucester Railway Station, this Council pledges to do all within its power to reverse any decision that may lead to the ticket office's closure.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Write to The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP, Secretary of State for Transport, to express concern about the possible closure of the ticket office at Gloucester Railway Station.
2. Write to Richard Graham MP for Gloucester to ask for their support to retain the ticket office at Gloucester Train Station.
3. Write to Laurence Robertson MP for Tewkesbury to ask for their support to retain the ticket office at Gloucester Train Station.
4. Liaise with Great Western Railway regarding the importance of the ticket office at Gloucester Railway Station and it's retention.

37.2 Councillor Cook moved and Councillor Gravells seconded the following amendment:

“Great Western Railway is consulting on the future of the ticket office at Gloucester Railway Station with a predicted closure date of June 2024.

In recent years **this administration, working with the MP for Gloucester, has won** ~~there has been a~~ huge investment in the Railway Station, Transport Hub and the Forum area of the City. This has included:

- Gloucester Rail Station – £6 million investment from Gfirst LEP and **£1.3m from** the Government.

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- Gloucester transport hub - £7.5 million investment from Gfirst LEP and the Government.
- The Forum - £85 million investment from the Reef Group and Gloucester City Council.

Gloucester Railway Station, alongside the Transport Hub and the Forum development are the gateway to our proud City for anyone arriving by public transport. The ticket office at the station is an integral part of that for both visitors and residents and is frequently busy providing customers with far more than just tickets. Losing the ticket office would be detrimental to the visitor and resident experience when accessing or leaving the City by train and therefore detrimental to the wider scheme of improvements in that part of the City.

Whilst acknowledging the limitations of the Council regarding the retention of the ticket office at Gloucester Railway Station, this Council pledges to do all within its power to reverse any decision that may lead to the ticket office's closure.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Write to The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP, Secretary of State for Transport, to express concern about the possible closure of the ticket office at Gloucester Railway Station.
 2. **Write to the Managing Director of GWR to support our MPs counter proposal from his letter of 26th July.**
 3. Write to Richard Graham MP for Gloucester **to express support for his counter proposal to keep a minimum of one fully staffed ticket window open** ~~to ask for their support to retain the ticket office at Gloucester Train Station.~~
 4. **Continue to work with the MP for Gloucester, GWR and others on regeneration of Gloucester Station including looking at changes to lay out to reflect modern passenger usage.**
-
- ~~3. Write to Laurence Robertson MP for Tewkesbury to ask for their support to retain the ticket office at Gloucester Train Station.~~
 - ~~4. Liaise with Great Western Railway regarding the importance of the ticket office at Gloucester Railway Station and it's retention."~~

37.3 The amendment was accepted by the proposer of the original motion and therefore became the substantive motion. The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

37.4 **RESOLVED that:-**

"Great Western Railway is consulting on the future of the ticket office at Gloucester Railway Station with a predicted closure date of June 2024.

In recent years this administration, working with the MP for Gloucester, has won huge investment in the Railway Station, Transport Hub and the Forum area of the City. This has included:

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- Gloucester Rail Station – £6 million investment from Gfirst LEP and £1.3m from the Government.
- Gloucester transport hub - £7.5 million investment from Gfirst LEP and the Government.
- The Forum - £85 million investment from the Reef Group and Gloucester City Council.

Gloucester Railway Station, alongside the Transport Hub and the Forum development are the gateway to our proud City for anyone arriving by public transport. The ticket office at the station is an integral part of that for both visitors and residents and is frequently busy providing customers with far more than just tickets. Losing the ticket office would be detrimental to the visitor and resident experience when accessing or leaving the City by train and therefore detrimental to the wider scheme of improvements in that part of the City.

Whilst acknowledging the limitations of the Council regarding the retention of the ticket office at Gloucester Railway Station, this Council pledges to do all within its power to reverse any decision that may lead to the ticket office's closure.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Write to The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP, Secretary of State for Transport, to express concern about the possible closure of the ticket office at Gloucester Railway Station.
2. Write to the Managing Director of GWR to support our MPs counter proposal from his letter of 26th July.
3. Write to Richard Graham MP for Gloucester to express support for his counter proposal to keep a minimum of one fully staffed ticket window open at Gloucester Train Station.
4. Continue to work with the MP for Gloucester, GWR and others on regeneration of Gloucester Station including looking at changes to lay out to reflect modern passenger usage.

37.5 Councillor Gravells proposed and Councillor Finnegan seconded the following motion:

“This Council:

1. Recognises the valuable work of the many voluntary, community and sporting groups right around the city;
2. Takes note that many such groups often have to rely on grant funding through competitive bidding processes to be able to deliver the services, facilities and projects which residents in the city enjoy and which enhance our neighbourhoods;
3. Agrees that more could be done to maximise the amount of external grant funding brought into the city through council-led and community-led applications;

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4. Agrees therefore to convene a meeting of the VCS Alliance, Gloucestershire University, Gloucestershire Funders Network, and the Growth Hub to discuss how, in a system to be devised, we could support the VCS and community groups in this area to be more successful in their applications and bids for external grant funding.”

37.6 The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

37.7 **RESOLVED that:-**

“This Council:

1. Recognises the valuable work of the many voluntary, community and sporting groups right around the city;
2. Takes note that many such groups often have to rely on grant funding through competitive bidding processes to be able to deliver the services, facilities and projects which residents in the city enjoy and which enhance our neighbourhoods;
3. Agrees that more could be done to maximise the amount of external grant funding brought into the city through council-led and community-led applications;
4. Agrees therefore to convene a meeting of the VCS Alliance, Gloucestershire University, Gloucestershire Funders Network, and the Growth Hub to discuss how, in a system to be devised, we could support the VCS and community groups in this area to be more successful in their applications and bids for external grant funding.”

37.8 Councillor Hilton moved and Councillor Wilson seconded the following motion:

“This council notes that the administration has failed to meet the deadline to produce audited accounts for the 2021/22 financial year.

Council notes that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) had extended the deadline for the publication of 2021/22 audited accounts to 30th November 2022. This makes our accounts more than 9 months late.

This Council agrees with the view of Alison Ring, the director for Public Sector and Taxation at the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales that “Delayed audit opinions lead to delayed accountability and issues being identified when it is too late, which is a real problem given the financial pressures facing local authorities.”

This council also notes that the deadline for publishing the 2022/23 accounts is fast approaching.

This council calls on the cabinet member for performance and resources to promise that fully audited accounts for both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years are published at least 3 months before the 2024 city council elections.”

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37.9 Councillor Norman moved and Councillor Morgan seconded the following amendment:

“This council notes that **only 12% of local government bodies received audit opinions on their finances in time to publish accounts for the 2021/22 financial year within the extended deadline (UK Parliament, Public Accounts Committee, June 2023). Gloucester was one of the authorities to not meet this deadline due to challenges faced following the cyber incident** ~~the administration has failed to meet the deadline to produce audited accounts for the 2021/22 financial year.~~

Council notes that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) had extended the deadline for the publication of 2021/22 audited accounts to 30th November 2022. ~~This makes our accounts more than 9 months late.~~

This Council agrees with the view of Alison Ring, the director for Public Sector and Taxation at the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales that “Delayed audit opinions lead to delayed accountability and issues being identified when it is too late, which is a real problem given the financial pressures facing local authorities.”

This council also notes that the deadline for publishing the 2022/23 accounts is fast approaching.

This council calls on the cabinet member for performance and resources to **work with the council’s finance team and the external auditors Deloitte to produce** ~~promise that fully audited accounts for both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years as soon as is practically possible are published at least 3 months before the 2024 city council elections.~~

37.10 The amendment was not accepted by the mover of the original motion. The amendment was put to the vote and was carried, thus becoming the substantive motion.

37.11 The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

37.12 **RESOLVED that:-**

“This council notes that only 12% of local government bodies received audit opinions on their finances in time to publish accounts for the 2021/22 financial year within the extended deadline (UK Parliament, Public Accounts Committee, June 2023). Gloucester was one of the authorities to not meet this deadline due to challenges faced following the cyber incident.

Council notes that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) had extended the deadline for the publication of 2021/22 audited accounts to 30th November 2022.

This Council agrees with the view of Alison Ring, the director for Public Sector and Taxation at the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and

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Wales that “Delayed audit opinions lead to delayed accountability and issues being identified when it is too late, which is a real problem given the financial pressures facing local authorities.”

This council also notes that the deadline for publishing the 2022/23 accounts is fast approaching.

This council calls on the cabinet member for performance and resources to work with the council’s finance team and the external auditors Deloitte to produce fully audited accounts for both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years as soon as is practically possible.”

37.13 Councillor A. Chambers moved and Councillor O’Donnell seconded the following urgent motion without notice:

“This council notes that keeping the public and City Council employees safe while in council owned buildings is fundamental to all aspects of business.

This council understand that buildings and structures owned by the council are not safe and there are significant issues around the safety and maintenance of council assets and buildings.

As a result the council will ensure that immediate investigations are conducted on all council owned buildings to ensure the safety of those that use the building.

The inspections will include:

- Fire inspection by Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue
- Asbestos inspections to ensure an up to date log of where asbestos is located and ensuring that the asbestos is marked up with stickers and users of the building are made aware of the risks associated with asbestos.
- Building control inspections with local authority LABC inspectors looking at all aspects of the building.
- Structural report by a qualified RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) engineer
- All fire doors to be surveyed and logged in a fire door register and all defects to be completed and carried out within 30 Days
- Electrical inspections and maintenance by professional NAPIT or EIRC Qualified inspectors
- All portable plug in Devices to be PAT tested
- All GAS pipes and boilers to be commercial GAS SAFE checked.
- Inspection by a qualified and accredited concrete surveyor

These inspections will be carried out within a minimum of 4 weeks of this motion being passed.

Any dangerous building concerns raised by the instructed professionals will mean that these buildings will be temporarily closed or parts of the building closed while the urgent works are carried out.

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The city council will refer themselves to any appropriate authorities, bodies and institutes where they have been in breach of any HSE, Fire, Asbestos, Electrical, GAS or any other legislation.

The city council will issue a report on each building that has been inspected of the defects and the resolution to the said defect. Within 3 months of the inspection taking place and present this to the public.

The city council will refer themselves to the following appropriate bodies for an immediate investigation of any building and structure within their ownership.

The Chief Fire Officer of Gloucestershire Fire Brigade
<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/glosfire/about-us/chief-fire-officer/>

The HSE inspector for the checking of the buildings including asbestos
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/index.htm>

LABC local building inspector
<https://www.gbcpartners.co.uk>

NAPIT electrical inspector
<https://www.napit.org.uk/schemes/inspection-testing-scheme.aspx>

Asbestos Trained Inspector

GAS SAFE Inspector
<https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk>

Accredited concrete inspection surveyor

<https://www.apaconcreterepairs.co.uk/service/concrete-inspection>

RICS inspector

https://www.localsurveyorsdirect.co.uk/building-surveyors-reports.aspx?gclid=EAlalQobChMI2I3cuf27gQMVGO3tCh2QYAaQEAAAYAiAAEgLQqPD_BwE

- 37.14 Councillor Norman moved and Councillor Cook seconded the following amendment:

“This council notes that keeping the public and City Council employees safe while in council owned buildings is fundamental to all aspects of business.

This council understand **notes concerns raised** that buildings and structures owned by the council are not safe and **notes concerns that there may be** ~~are~~ significant issues around the safety and maintenance of council assets and buildings.

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As a result ~~result~~, the council will ensure ~~the~~ that immediate **inspection investigations are conducted on** ~~of~~ all council owned **and managed** buildings **which have not been inspected over the last six months** to ensure the safety of those that use the building.

The inspections will include:

- Fire inspection **by a qualified Fire Inspector, including a review of fire doors** Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue
- **Review** asbestos inspections registers to ensure an up to date log of where asbestos is located **and take appropriate action** and ensuring that the asbestos is marked up with stickers and users of the building are made aware of the risks associated with asbestos.
- Building control inspections with local authority LABC inspectors looking at all aspects of the building.
- Structural surveys **by a suitably qualified professional** report by a qualified RICS (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) engineer
- All fire doors to be surveyed and logged in a fire door register and all defects to be completed and carried out within 30 Days
- **Review** electrical inspections and maintenance **records and take appropriate action** by professional NAPIT or EIRC Qualified inspectors
- **Review of PAT testing** for all portable plug in devices **owned by the Council and send a reminder to all lease holders of their obligation for PAT testing** to be PAT tested
- **Review of All GAS** pipes and boilers maintenance records and take appropriate action to be commercial GAS SAFE checked.
- Inspection by a qualified and accredited concrete surveyor
- These inspections will be carried out within a minimum of 4 weeks of this motion being passed.

Any dangerous building concerns raised by the instructed professionals will **be risk assessed to determine the appropriate course of action.** ~~mean~~ that these buildings will be temporarily closed or parts of the building closed while the urgent works are carried out.

~~The city council will refer themselves to any appropriate authorities, bodies and institutes where they have been in breach of any HSE, Fire, Asbestos, Electrical, GAS or any other legislation.~~

The city council **will create a record** ~~issue a report~~ on each building that has been inspected of the defects and the resolution to the said defect within 3 months of the inspection taking place and make this available for public inspection. ~~present this to the public.~~

~~The city council will refer themselves to the following appropriate bodies for an immediate investigation of any building and structure within their ownership.~~

~~The Chief Fire Officer of Gloucestershire Fire Brigade~~
<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/glosfire/about-us/chief-fire-officer/>

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~~The HSE inspector for the checking of the buildings including asbestos~~
~~<https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/index.htm>~~

~~LABC local building inspector~~
~~<https://www.gbcpartners.co.uk>~~

~~NAPIT electrical inspector~~
~~<https://www.napit.org.uk/schemes/inspection-testing-scheme.aspx>~~

~~Asbestos Trained Inspector~~

~~GAS SAFE Inspector~~
~~<https://www.gassaferegister.co.uk>~~

~~Accredited concrete inspection surveyor~~
~~<https://www.apaconcreterepairs.co.uk/service/concrete-inspection>~~

~~RICS inspector~~
~~https://www.localsurveyorsdirect.co.uk/building-surveyors-reports.aspx?gclid=EA1aIQobChMI2I3cuf27gQMVG03tCh2QYAaQEAAAYAiAAEgLQqPD_BwE~~

37.15 The amendment was accepted by the proposer of the original motion and therefore became the substantive motion. The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

37.16 **RESOLVED That:-**

“This council notes that keeping the public and City Council employees safe while in council owned buildings is fundamental to all aspects of business.

This council notes concerns raised that buildings and structures owned by the council are not safe and notes concerns that there may be issues around the safety and maintenance of council assets and buildings.

As a result, the council will ensure the immediate inspection of all council owned and managed buildings which have not been inspected over the last six months to ensure the safety of those that use the building.

The inspections will include

- Fire inspection by a qualified Fire Inspector, including a review of fire doors
- Review asbestos inspections registers to ensure an up to date log of where asbestos is located and take appropriate action
- Structural surveys by a suitably qualified professional
- Review electrical inspections and maintenance records and take appropriate action

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- Review of PAT testing for all portable plug in devices owned by the Council and send a reminder to all lease holders of their obligation for PAT testing
- Review of GAS pipes and boilers maintenance records and take appropriate action

These inspections will be carried out within a minimum of 4 weeks of this motion being passed.

Any building concerns raised by the instructed professionals will be risk assessed to determine the appropriate course of action.

The city council will create a record on each building that has been inspected of the defects and the resolution to the said defect. Within 3 months of the inspection taking place and make this available for public inspection.”

**Time of commencement: 6.37 pm hours
Time of conclusion: 9.33 pm hours**

Chair

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COUNCIL

MEETING : Thursday, 19th October 2023

PRESENT : Cllrs. Williams (Mayor), Hudson (Sheriff & Deputy Mayor), Cook, Norman, S. Chambers, Lewis, Padilla, Hilton, Chambers-Dubus, Gravells MBE, Tracey, Morgan, Wilson, Bhaimia, D. Brown, Taylor, Field, Patel, Brooker, Finnegan, J. Brown, Hyman, Ackroyd, A. Chambers, Conder, Dee, Evans, Kubaszczyk, Radley, Zaman, Sawyer, Campbell and Trimnell

Officers in Attendance

Managing Director
Monitoring Officer
Corporate Director
Head of Place
Head of Culture and Leisure Services
Head of Finance & Resources
Head of Transformation and Commissioning
Policy & Governance Manager
Democratic and Electoral Services Officer

Also in Attendance

Chair of Board of Trustees and other Trustees, Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust

APOLOGIES : Cllrs. Toleman, Pullen, Bowkett, Castle, Durdey and O'Donnell

38. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

38.1 There were no declarations of interest.

38.2 Councillor Gravells proposed to suspend standing orders in accordance with paragraph 26.01 of the City Council Constitution to allow the Chair of the Board of Trustees for Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust to address Council. The motion was put to the vote and was carried.

38.3 Mr Bown, Chair of the Board of Trustees for Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust addressed the Council and explained why the facilities had to close:

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- Two years prior to the closure, Aspire had accrued a debt of £500,000 owed to the City Council and, to ensure that the charity could survive the Covid-19 pandemic, was encouraged not to repay the debt at that time.
- In September 2021, Aspire was informed that any repayment of the debt would be in the context of the charity's recovery and its ability to accrue a surplus over time.
- In October 2021, Co-op bank informed Aspire that they would honour the arrangement agreed upon in regard to the pension bond but were considering whether they would take it beyond September 2023.
- On 4 January 2022, Aspire was informed of the cyber incident experienced by the City Council and the resulting impact on both the City Council and Aspire's IT systems. Aspire lost access to their key software and had to take bookings over the phone.
- In January 2022, the Board asked the Council to write off the £500k debt and received assurances that repayment would not be pursued at that time.
- In April 2022, there was a positive report to Cabinet on Aspire's operations and in that same month, the Council sought certainty on Aspire's position regarding a contract extension to provide the Council with additional time to go out to tender for a new leisure services provider.
- In July 2022, Aspire received correspondence from the Co-op bank, which highlighted concerns about the charity's status as a going concern and the Board asked the Council to write off the £500k debt to resolve the financial concerns. The Co-op bank stated again that they would be unlikely to offer a new or extended pension bond past September 2023.
- In March 2023, the Board confirmed that, if solutions were not achieved, the charity would go into insolvency.
- In April 2023, there was an email exchange between Aspire and the City Council disputing an £18,000 invoice, which was due to the loss of income owing to unsafe fire alarm systems.
- In July 2023, the Board verbally advised that they may agree to a 12-month contract extension. However, in August 2023, an updated performance plan containing extensive conditions that had not been discussed previously was received by the Board, making it difficult for the Trust to agree to the extension.
- On 26 September 2023, the Board received a letter of support from the Council, however, it failed to provide the assurances required as it did not confirm going concern status up to September 2024.
- At this stage, Aspire had three legal challenges: (1) First, there was no adequate going concern statement, which meant the accounts could not be audited; (2) there were no pension bond arrangements in place beyond September 2023, and (3) the £500k debt remained on the balance sheet, making it difficult to trade.
- The Council had agreed to pay the management fee as part of the delivery plan; however, this would have covered expenses only and resulted in no profit. While the Board was minded to agree to the arrangement in order to continue providing leisure services to the people of Gloucester, they had to make the difficult decision that, legally, they could not continue to operate for the duration of the extension.

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39. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME (15 MINUTES)

39.1 A local resident asked:

“The closure of the swimming pool will affect many people’s mental health. How will the city council support these people?”

39.2 Councillor Lewis, Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, responded:

“The Council is working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible following the surprising and disappointing decision of Aspire Trust to close them at the end of September. In Gloucestershire, adult mental health services are provided by Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust. There is a range of information for adults and children who feel they may need some advice or support here:

<https://www.nhsglos.nhs.uk/your-health-services/community-and-hospital-care/mental-health/>

39.3 A local resident asked:

“The lost direct debit payments of members for the gym and pool have been taken and not returned. How will the city council repay these people?”

39.4 Councillor Lewis responded:

“Any creditors with potential claims against the Aspire Trust should take this up with those legally responsible for that organisation, which is currently the Board of Trustees.”

39.5 A local resident asked:

“150 people lost their jobs and were not paid the last months wages. Will the City Council compensate these workers?”

39.6 Councillor Lewis responded:

“Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust were the employer of those who worked at GL1 and as such are responsible for salary and any redundancy payments due as a result of its closure. It is understood that those made redundant were paid up to the end of September and have been advised how to access redundancy pay. Any staff who have not received monies owed to them should raise this with the Aspire Trust, their board of Trustees or their representatives who are legally responsible for that organisation.

39.7 A local resident asked:

“When will the many freelancers who provided lessons at GL1 be paid and will the freelancers be offered hours/sessions by the new provider? They have been left high and dry and weren't even invited to the final meeting.

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They haven't been contacted by the trust or the city council since the closure of GL1.

39.8 Councillor Lewis responded:

“Any creditors with potential claims against the Aspire Trust should take this up with those legally responsible for that organisation, which is currently the Board of Trustees. The Council is working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible following the surprising and disappointing decision of Aspire Trust to close them at the end of September. As part of that work, the Council is seeking to procure a new interim leisure services operator to reopen and manage the facilities for the next 12-18 months. The new provider will have a wide range of jobs available and will definitely require skilled and knowledgeable staff (and, where appropriate, freelancers) to run the facilities in future.’

39.9 A local resident asked:

“Who had financial oversight of Aspire at the city council and, if they didn't realise that there were problems, who deemed them fit for the role? If they did realise that there were problems what did they do to mitigate the issues?”

39.10 Councillor Lewis responded:

“The Council has held regular management meetings with Aspire Trust throughout the duration of its management contract with the Council. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has occasionally undertaken oversight of the Aspire Trust and invited its managers to report on performance. As a registered Charity, the Trust was also required to submit audited accounts and other information to the Charity Commission, and these are available on the Charity Commission's website. The Council has provided significant financial and other support to the Aspire Trust, totalling over £1.5m since 2019, as it sought to help the Trust deal with challenges such as Covid and rising utility costs.

In early 2023 the Trust told the Council that it did not believe it could continue to trade for that contract extension period without further financial support, and shared business plans and forecasts setting out the additional amount of support it believed it needed to continue. Following an independent review of the Aspire Trust's request and business plans, the Council agreed in principle to provide this additional level of funding requested, and believed that it had reached an in-principle agreement with the Trust to continue on that basis. However, the Board of Trustees decided on September 26th not to continue to provide leisure services and to enter into liquidation.”

39.11 A Local resident submitted the following question:

“Why, after 15 years, hadn't the city council appointed a successor to Aspire in a timely fashion?”

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39.12 Councillor Lewis responded:

“Two years ago, the Council commenced a procurement process to secure a leisure services provider from the expiry date of the contract with the Aspire Trust. The Council obtained the support of an expert leisure consultancy SLC to advise on procurement options and strategy. The options appraisal was considered at a Cabinet meeting on 4 May 2022, and set out a number of recommendations as to how the Council should proceed, including:

- That the contract period with Aspire Leisure and Culture Trust be extended by a further 12 months on the condition that a Partnership Development Plan (PDP) is agreed for the duration of this extension, and
- To procure a new leisure contract from an external provider.

The Council began negotiating with the Aspire Trust over a contract extension in March 2022. In July 2022, the Council and the Trust agreed a Partnership Delivery Plan for that 12 month contract extension period, and an associated management fee for that period.”

39.13 A local resident asked:

“Who at the city council is being held responsible for this fiasco? The citizens of Gloucester have been badly let down. Don't let finger pointing or self aggrandisement after the event cloud the fact that these essential services are now closed.”

39.14 Councillor Lewis responded:

“The Council was surprised and disappointed by the decision of the Aspire Trust to cease to manage these facilities and to enter into liquidation. The decision to cease to manage these facilities and to terminate the contract was taken by the Aspire Trust alone.”

39.15 A local resident asked:

“Why was staff told suddenly on the Friday when GL1 Leisure Centre was to close that day no notice (when the council and Aspire would of known for at least several days before hand?”

39.16 Councillor Lewis responded:

“The Council understands that the Board of Trustees took a decision to terminate its contract to run these facilities at a Board meeting on September 26th. The Council was privately informed on September 27th and was asked to keep this information private and confidential until the Trust could inform its employees directly itself, which it did on Friday 29th September.”

39.17 A local resident asked:

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“Why was the users not told on the Friday when they used the Facilities at GL1 leisure centre that was there last time (again kept rather secret from them also when the council and aspire would of known in advance)?”

39.18 Councillor Lewis responded:

“Decisions about the timing of any announcements relating to the Aspire Trust’s decision to cease to manage these facilities were a matter for those legally responsible for that organisation, which is currently the Board of Trustees. The Council understands that the Board of Trustees took a decision to terminate its contract to run these facilities at a Board meeting on September 26th. The Council was privately informed of this decision on September 27th and was asked to keep this information private and confidential until the Trust could inform its employees, which it did on Friday 29th September.”

39.19 A local resident submitted the following question:

“Knowing that the council would of known that aspire was in financial difficulty why didn’t they step in to assist where possible all find another provider for GL1 leisure centre at that point not leave it to the last minute on the day they closed the doors?”

39.20 Councillor Lewis responded:

“The Council has provided significant financial and other support to the Aspire Trust, totalling over £1.5m since 2019, as it sought to help the Trust deal with challenges such as Covid and rising utility costs.

The Council began negotiating with the Aspire Trust over a contract extension in March 2022. In July 2022, the Council and the Trust agreed a Partnership Delivery Plan for that 12-month contract extension period, and an associated management fee for that period.

In early 2023 the Trust told the Council that it did not believe it could continue to trade for that contract extension period without further financial support, and shared business plans and forecasts setting out the additional amount of support it believed it needed to continue. Following an independent review of the Aspire Trust’s request and business plans, the Council agreed in principle to provide this additional level of funding requested and believed that it had reached an in-principal agreement with the Trust to continue on that basis. However, the Board of Trustees decided on September 26th not to continue to provide leisure services and to enter into liquidation. The Council was informed of this decision on Wednesday 27th September.

Since being informed of this decision, the Council has been working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible. As part of that work, the Council has begun the process of procuring a new interim leisure

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services operator to reopen and manage the facilities for the next 12-18 months.”

39.21 A local resident asked:

“When will the facilities be back open to the much needed public and this time will the council wake up and assist not de assist people this is a well loved public facility so why don't they let the public run it for its self (like for example a public interest Company)?”

39.22 Councillor Lewis responded:

“The Council is working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible following the surprising and disappointing decision of Aspire Trust to close them at the end of September.

As part of that work, the Council is seeking to procure a new interim leisure services operator to reopen and manage the facilities for the next 12-18 months. The Council hopes to appoint this interim service provider by the end of the month. It is looking for that operator to mobilise as soon as possible after appointment.

Two years ago, the Council commenced a procurement process to secure a leisure services provider from the expiry date of the contract with the Aspire Trust. The Council obtained the support of an expert leisure consultancy SLC to advise on procurement options and strategy. The options appraisal was considered at a Cabinet meeting on 4 May 2022, and recommended that the best sourcing option for the Council would be to procure a new leisure contract from an external provider. The appraisal identified that insourcing this service would be the most expensive option for the taxpayer, and would not deliver any service benefits.”

39.23 A local resident asked:

“Why did the council not jump in to help or try and rescue aspire trust; why instead, on the day of their closure, the council blame aspire trust failing and instead of pointing the finger like the council did, stand up and offer all their help? Clearly the council have some involvement in these failing and are trying to hide them.”

39.24 Councillor Lewis responded:

“The Council was surprised and disappointed by the decision of the Aspire Trust to cease to manage these facilities and to enter into liquidation. The Council has provided significant financial and other support to the Aspire Trust, totalling over £1.5m since 2019, as it sought to help the Trust deal with challenges such as Covid and rising utility costs.

The Council began negotiating with the Aspire Trust over a contract extension in March 2022. In July 2022, the Council and the Trust agreed a

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Partnership Delivery Plan for that 12-month contract extension period, and an associated management fee for that period.

In early 2023 the Trust told the Council that it did not believe it could continue to trade for that contract extension period without further financial support, and shared business plans and forecasts setting out the additional amount of support it believed it needed to continue. Following an independent review of the Aspire Trust's request and business plans, the Council agreed in principle to provide this additional level of funding requested and believed that it had reached an in-principal agreement with the Trust to continue on that basis. However, the Board of Trustees decided on September 26th not to continue to provide leisure services and to enter into liquidation. The Council was informed of this decision on Wednesday 27th September.

The decision to cease to manage these facilities and to terminate the contract was taken by the Aspire Trust alone. Since being informed of this decision on September 27th, the Council has been working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible."

39.25 A local resident asked:

"I would like to express my disappointment and anger at how the staff at GL1 Aspire have been treated in the closure process. Can I ask if the correct legal procedure for notification of redundancy has been followed and what provision has been made for staff who no longer have an income?"

39.26 Councillor Lewis responded:

"The Council shares your disappointment at the decision of Aspire Trust to cease to manage these facilities at the end of September. Matters relating to the redundancy procedures followed by the Trust are a matter for those legally responsible for the Trust, which is currently the Board of Trustees.

The Council is seeking to procure a new interim leisure services operator to reopen and manage the facilities for the next 12-18 months. The new provider will have a wide range of jobs available and will definitely require skilled and knowledgeable staff to run the facilities in future. The Council has told those companies interested in this contract that staff recently made redundant by Aspire should be guaranteed interviews.

So far, all of the shortlisted providers have indicated that they are committed to doing this. They recognise the skills and talents and commitment of former staff and they have warmly embraced the opportunity to interview staff."

39.27 A local resident asked:

"It is very difficult to understand how no alternative provision has been thought through or planned for all the users of GL1. What will happen to the hundreds of school children where it is a National Curriculum requirement for

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children to learn to swim? Does the Council not have a duty of provision or care to provide this?"

39.28 Councillor Lewis responded:

"There is no statutory duty on Councils to provide leisure services. The Council is working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible following the surprising and disappointing decision of Aspire Trust to close them at the end of September."

Note: A total of 29 public questions were received. To ensure the efficient transaction of the meeting's business, questions from those present at the meeting were answered and responses to the remaining questions are appended to these minutes.

40. PETITIONS AND DEPUTATIONS (15 MINUTES)

40.1 There were no petitions or deputations:

41. PROVISION OF LEISURE SERVICES

41.1 Councillor Norman, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, moved the recommendations set out in the report.

41.2 Councillor Norman noted that since 2020, the market had been challenging for leisure facilities from various reasons, including closures during the Covid-19 pandemic and inflationary pressures, exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which affected utilities costs and other services. She advised that local government also faced inflationary pressures and that for the 2023/24 financial year, the Council was currently estimating a £1.504m overspend.

Councillor Norman explained that since 2019, the Council had provided Aspire with £1.5m in financial support, including management fees, without seeking repayment. In the 2023/24 budget, the Council allocated £360k to Aspire and when the Board requested an additional £260k to fund their operations, the Council commissioned an independent report to obtain the assurances needed ensure that it would be a prudent use of taxpayers' money. The independent report outlined four key recommendations that Aspire needed to adhere to. They were:

1. Transparent financial reporting – to enable the Council to better understand Aspire's financial situation and identify areas where cost-saving measures could be implemented.
2. Collaborative Revenue Enhancement Plan – to set out mechanisms for enhancing revenue and strategies for implementing and achieving the proposals in collaboration with the Council.

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3. Independent energy audit - to assess current energy usage, identify potential energy-saving measures, and estimate the financial impact of implementing those measures.
4. Assessment of staff costs – as Aspire’s budget for 2023/2024 allocated an additional £500k on staff costs, this was necessary to understand where that money was being spent, any pay increases, and whether the expenditure was essential.

Councillor Norman stated that the report raised concerns about Aspire’s management of the city’s leisure services. Of particular concern was Aspire's decision to increase all staff salaries by 9.3% while facing financial difficulties. She acknowledged that the level of increase was understandable for those on lower incomes facing the impact of the cost of living crisis, but was questionable for those on higher salaries and noted that Council officers on comparable salaries received a pay award of between 2.2% and 2.5%. She advised, however, that the Council agreed to provide the additional funding, provided that Aspire adhered to the conditions outlined in the independent report.

Councillor Norman stated that the Administration had been shocked and saddened for the residents of Gloucester and the staff affected when they received notification that Aspire had decided to close the facilities. She emphasised that, within three weeks, the Council had already reopened some services, including swimming club sessions, and would continue to work tirelessly to reopen the rest of the leisure services for Gloucester’s residents. She expressed hope that the recommendations in the report would receive unanimous support.

41.3 Councillor Lewis seconded the motion.

41.4 Councillor Sawyer proposed the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Field, and proposed a replacement for recommendation (1) only:

“Council is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) ~~The background to Aspire Trust’s decision to seek to go into liquidation and the Council’s disappointment at this decision is noted.~~ **The report and appendices into the closure of the sports centres be noted with council recording its concern that more wasn’t done to keep the sports centres open.**

41.5 Councillor Sawyer stated that the Liberal Democrat Group would support the proposals aimed at moving forward to reopen the leisure services, but was moving an amendment to place on record an acknowledgement that the Administration could and should have done more to prevent the closure of services, given their knowledge of the financial issues Aspire was facing. She noted that the Administration had started the process of procuring a new leisure services provider too late, despite having 15 years to prepare, and that they were aware of the pension bond issues that would make it legally impossible for them to continue operating. She questioned why the Council

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had not thoroughly reviewed Aspire's accounts and asserted that the Administration could not claim to be surprised at the situation when the financial challenges were known to them.

- 41.6 Councillor Field, seconding the amendment, stated that the purpose of the amendment was to balance out a 'blame game' that had been occurring. He observed that Aspire had tried to continue operating, and while additional funding had been offered, the Administration had taken no action regarding the issue with the pension bond. He noted that the decision to outsource leisure service provisions to Aspire had been proposed by the Conservative Administration 15 years ago, with the claim that it would become self-funding and save taxpayers' money, but this had not materialised. He advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had repeatedly attempted to obtain an update on the Aspire situation, but this was not forthcoming. He stated that the Administration should have been fully aware of Aspire's financial challenges a long time ago and should take responsibility and offer an apology for the current situation because not enough had been done to prevent it.
- 41.7 Councillor Norman advised that the amendment was not accepted.
- 41.8 Councillor Wilson highlighted that the leisure services contract had a 15-year duration and the Administration had had plenty of time to procure a new provider yet tried to rush through a last-minute contract extension. He stated that, while the Liberal Democrat group agreed with recommendations 2-6, the report provided a one-sided narrative of the events and left out important facts that contributed to the closure of the services, such as the impact of the cyber incident and the lack of interest in the pension bond concerns. He questioned what was discussed in contract management meetings between the Administration and Aspire and stated that more should have been done to prevent the closure.
- 41.9 Councillor A. Chambers stated that he supported the amendment and agreed that the report omitted important information on what had led to the closure of services. He expressed regret that the closure had affected many residents, particularly the staff members who lost their jobs and were facing financial difficulty and could not accept that the Administration were surprised by the current situation. He remarked that the £1.5m given to Aspire since 2019 could have been better spent on roads, schools, and other vital infrastructure and that the Council should have had options for replacement service providers in place several years before the end of the contract.
- 41.10 Councillor Cook, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Environment, stated that the Council was procurement-ready, but had been advised by experienced independent consultants that, due to the impact of Covid-19, it was not the right time to commence the procurement and to pursue a contract extension instead, thus Aspire was offered the additional funding requested. He emphasised that it would not have been appropriate to write off Aspire's debt, as it was taxpayers' money. He advised that that regular meetings took place with Aspire noting that both the former and

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current Section 151 Officers had expressed concerns about the robustness and transparency of Aspire's accounts and the financial information provided.

- 41.11 Councillor Dr. Finnegan highlighted that it had previously been common practice for representatives from Aspire to attend the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to report on performance, but that she could not recall any attendance in recent years.
- 41.12 Councillor Chambers-Dubus noted that the Labour Group had raised concerns about Aspire several times, including in early 2023, and that the Administration had been aware of the financial concerns, but did not do enough to prevent them from escalating. She questioned why £1.5m had been provided to Aspire since 2019 instead of focusing on exploring alternative options and called on the Administration to take accountability for the closure of services.
- 41.13 Councillor Lewis stated that he did not accept the points made by opposition Councillors. He advised that he had attended meetings to discuss Aspire's financial situation and that the information provided lacked sufficient detail. He expressed, however, that he did not want to engage in a blame game and that he was instead focused on looking forward, restoring services and helping former Aspire staff, many of whom he'd spoken with, to find employment with the new provider. He noted that he, along with Council officers, the City's MP, Richard Graham, and others had worked tirelessly to begin the process of reopening the facilities.

Councillor Lewis agreed that the circumstances leading to the closure of leisure services should be investigated at the appropriate time, but that the purpose of the report was to obtain approval for the steps required to reopen the leisure services as quickly as possible and provide employment for former Aspire staff. He noted that both the Audit and Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could have looked into or raised concerns and that he would have been happy to attend if invited. He concluded by stating that the Administration could not be held responsible for Aspire's decision to cease operating.

- 41.14 Councillor Dr. Trimnell stated that she was unable to accept the Administration's position and that the need to take accountability could not be ignored. She questioned how long freelance workers could be expected to wait to get their jobs back.
- 41.15 Councillor Patel stated that it was not constructive to apportion blame at the current time and that he believed all Members worked hard to do their best for the residents of Gloucester. He noted that an investigation was needed in due course, but stressed the importance of looking forward in order to reopen the services. He expressed gratitude to the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Culture, the rest of the Cabinet, senior officers, and the City MP for their efforts towards reopening the services, which were of vital importance to both the physical and mental health of residents.

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- 41.16 Councillor Hyman stated that he believed the Council did have a duty to provide leisure services, even if it was not a statutory requirement, and that the Administration should be held accountable. He expressed his concern at the impact of the closure on the 150 staff who had lost their jobs and noted that it was unacceptable that some staff members had found out the news of their employment termination via social media.
- 41.17 Councillor Padilla, Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods, stated that it had been a very difficult time for the residents and staff members and that it was unfortunate that Aspire were unable to fulfil their commitments. He commended the efforts to reopen services and stated that it was necessary for all stakeholders to work together to achieve a full return for the good of residents' health and wellbeing.
- 41.18 Councillor Morgan stated that it was counterproductive to look backwards when 150 people had lost their jobs and residents of Gloucester had lost access to vital leisure services. He called for Members to be united in working towards opening all services as swiftly as possible. He expressed confidence in Cabinet Members and officers working on the solution and said he was hopeful that an improved leisure service could be provided.
- 41.19 The amendment was put to a vote and was lost. Members reverted to debating the recommendations set out in the report and moved by Councillor Norman.
- 41.20 Councillor Hilton, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, stated, while his Group would support the recommendations in order to progress the reopening of services, the Administration was at fault and should have considered alternative options for providing leisure services much earlier, instead of focusing entirely on outsourcing when there were a number of examples where the outsourcing of Council services had not been successful. He expressed concern at the condition of various aspects of the facilities, which he believed had not been properly maintained over time, and called for work to be carried out. He noted that the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure had committed to reopening the swimming pool to the public before 1 January 2024 and that it was essential that this commitment was met.
- 41.21 Councillor Patel noted that there were various routes for opposition Councillors to raise concerns about services, including through their chairmanship of both the Audit and Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He reiterated Councillor Norman's concern regarding the pay rise awarded to senior Aspire staff during a time of financial challenge.
- 41.22 Councillor Sawyer stated that it was the role of the Administration to ensure proper oversight of the all services and contracts, including Aspire.
- 41.23 Councillor Chambers-Dubus expressed concern that the Aspire situation was mirroring previous experiences with outsourced Council services that ended badly, and that simply finding a new provider without considering

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other options further risked taxpayers' money. She noted that the additional £260k that Aspire had requested could have been put towards bringing the services in-house.

- 41.24 Councillor A. Chambers stated that it would have been helpful if representatives from Aspire had been permitted to be more involved in the debate. He stated that everyone wanted the services to reopen and that he wanted staff to receive any lost pay and for those who had paid for services to be refunded. He stated that he believed Councillor Lewis was doing his best to resolve the situation, but that the Council was operating reactively instead of proactively because it did not have a replacement service provider in place in good time.
- 41.25 Councillor Dr Finnegan noted that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had not asked for representatives from Aspire to report to the Committee in recent years.
- 41.26 Councillor Lewis stated that he was focused on looking forward and getting former Aspire staff into roles with the new provider.
- 41.27 Councillor Norman reiterated that it was Aspire that took the decision to close the facilities and that the Administration could not be blamed when they had consistently offered support. She noted that Gloucester was not alone in experiencing issues with its leisure provision and cited several examples from around the country in local authorities run by different political parties. She noted that representatives from Aspire had not been asked to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee since January 2019 and that Members could have requested the opportunity to challenge the service provider. She questioned Aspire's reference to the management fee not resulting in profit, when the organisation claimed to be a not-for-profit operation. She concluded by emphasising that Aspire had not provided the Council with sufficient financial transparency and asked Members to support the motion to enable services to reopen as quickly as possible.
- 41.28 **RESOLVED** that:
- (1) The background to Aspire Trust's decision to seek to go into liquidation and the Council's disappointment at this decision is noted.
 - (2) Authority is delegated to the Managing Director, in consultation with the Head of Finance and Resources, to enter negotiations with Aspire Trust to work with their liquidators to secure the best outcome for all creditors of the Aspire Trust, including the Council.
 - (3) Authority is delegated to the Managing Director, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure and the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources, to procure a temporary provision and award a contract to an interim services provider to manage the facilities at GL1 and Oxstalls, with an aspiration that all those recently made redundant by Aspire Trust be given guaranteed priority interviews for relevant roles in the new provision.

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- (4) Authority is delegated to the Managing Director with the support of other appropriate officers to continue to procure a long-term partner to manage the leisure provision within the City in accordance with the Council's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy.
- (5) Officers are to provide regular updates to Party Group Leaders on the reestablishment of leisure services to the community, and to periodically report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (6) A leisure contingency reserve fund of £260k is established to support the development of this interim leisure service management. Funding to be drawn down by the Managing Director and the Head of Culture and Leisure after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure and the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources.

42. NOTICES OF MOTION

- 42.1 Councillor Hilton proposed and Councillor Wilson seconded the following motion:

“This council notes the closure of city council leisure and sports facilities following the collapse of Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust that operated GL1 Leisure Centre and the Oxstalls Tennis Centre on the council's behalf.

This council agrees that the public and users of these sports facilities should not have to wait 12 months before they are reopened.

This council calls on the administration to reopen these facilities as early as possible using staff directly employed by the city council if necessary.”

- 42.2 Councillor Cook moved, and Councillor Lewis seconded the following amendment:

“This council notes the closure of city council leisure and sports facilities following the collapse of Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust that operated GL1 Leisure Centre and the Oxstalls Tennis Centre on the council's behalf.

This council agrees that the public and users of these sports facilities should not have to wait 12 months before they are reopened.

This council calls on the administration to reopen these facilities as early as possible using **Aspire's former** staff ~~directly employed~~ **engaged** by the city council's **interim service provider** if necessary **where possible**.”

- 42.3 Councillor Hilton accepted the amendment, which became part of the substantive motion.

- 42.4 Councillor Field moved, and Councillor Hyman seconded the following amendment:

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“This council notes the closure of city council leisure and sports facilities following the collapse of Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust that operated GL1 Leisure Centre and the Oxstalls Tennis Centre on the council’s behalf.

This council calls on the cabinet member for culture and leisure to provide a written apology to the staff of Aspire, the users of the sports centres, to members of the council and city council taxpayers for his administration’s failure to negotiate a continuation of the contract with Aspire, which would have stopped the dramatic closure of the council’s sports facilities.

This council agrees that the public and users of these sports facilities should not have to wait 12 months before they are **fully** reopened.

This council calls on the administration to reopen these facilities as early as possible using Aspire’s former staff engaged by the city council’s interim service provider where possible.”

- 42.5 Councillor Hilton requested that the amendment be put to the vote and five Members of the Liberal Democrat Group requested that votes be recorded. The vote was lost.

Councillor	For	Against	Abstaining
Williams		Y	
Hudson		Y	
Cook		Y	
Norman		Y	
S. Chambers		Y	
Lewis		Y	
Padillia		Y	
Hilton	Y		
Chambers-Dubus	Y		
Gravells		Y	
Tracey		Y	
Morgan		Y	
Wilson	Y		
Bhaimia		Y	
D. Brown	Y		
Taylor		Y	
Field	Y		
Patel		Y	
Brooker		Y	
J. Brown	Y		

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Hyman	Y		
Finnegan		Y	
Ackroyd		Y	
A. Chambers		Y	
Dee		Y	
Evans		Y	
Kubaszczyk		Y	
Radley	Y		
Zaman		Y	
Sawyer	Y		
Campbell		Y	
Trimnell	Y		
Total:	10	22	0

42.6 **RESOLVED** that:

This council notes the closure of city council leisure and sports facilities following the collapse of Aspire Sports and Cultural Trust that operated GL1 Leisure Centre and the Oxstalls Tennis Centre on the council's behalf.

This council agrees that the public and users of these sports facilities should not have to wait 12 months before they are reopened.

This council calls on the administration to reopen these facilities as early as possible using Aspire's former staff engaged by the city council's interim service provider where possible.

Time of commencement: 6.30 pm hours

Time of conclusion: 8.20 pm hours

Chair

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Council 19 October 2023

Schedule of Public Questions

The following questions have received a written response as the questioner was not present at the meeting. Please see the minutes of the meeting for the public questions asked and answered at the meeting.

No.	Question from/to	Question
1.	From RW to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	On Friday 29th October at 2.30pm we former workers of Aspire were made redundant and we now have only been guaranteed an interview for any job. How would you on the council feel if you were told one day you are made redundant for no reason of your own then told to reapply for your job then be told you were not good enough for that job?
Response:		
<p>The Council is working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible following the surprising and disappointing decision of Aspire Trust to close them at the end of September.</p> <p>As part of that work, the Council is seeking to procure a new interim leisure services operator to reopen and manage the facilities for the next 12-18 months. The new provider will have a wide range of jobs available and will definitely require skilled and knowledgeable staff to run the facilities in future. The Council has told those companies interested in this contract that staff recently made redundant by Aspire should be guaranteed interviews.</p> <p>So far, all of the shortlisted providers have indicated that they are committed to doing this. They recognise the skills and talents and commitment of former staff and they have warmly embraced the opportunity to interview staff.</p>		
2.	From KW to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	I have read that the request by GCC to Aspire for a 1-year extension to continue running the facilities had been 'on the table' since early this year. From what I have read GCC put too much faith/trust that Aspire would continue and that belief then caused GCC to be caught out. Aspire had not signed any agreement to extend beyond 30/9/23 so surely this should have raised doubts even concerns that Aspire would continue - therefore why didn't GCC have a contingency plan for Aspire continuing not to sign the extension agreement?
Response:		
<p>The Council began negotiating with the Aspire Trust over a contract extension in March 2022. In July 2022, the Council and the Trust agreed a Partnership Delivery Plan for that 12-month contract extension period, and an associated management fee for that period.</p>		

	<p>In early 2023 the Trust then told the Council that it did not believe it could continue to trade for that period, and shared business plans and forecasts setting out the additional amount of support it believed it needed to continue. The Council agreed in principle to provide this additional level of funding requested, and believed that it had reached an in-principle agreement with the Trust to continue on that basis. However, the Board of Trustees decided on September 26th not to continue to provide leisure services and to enter into liquidation.</p>	
3.	<p>From KW to the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources</p>	<p>I was under the impression that some Councillors were still on the Aspire Directors Board? Obviously anyone sitting on the Board have a first duty of responsibility to Aspire and not to GCC however surely they must have had an opinion on whether Aspire were going to continue and could have indicated to GCC?</p>
	<p>Response:</p> <p>At the end of September, two current Councillors were on the Board of the Aspire Trust.</p> <p>Any Trustees have a legal duty of responsibility towards that Trust on which they serve, and this may include duties in relation to maintaining confidentiality of board discussions and decision making.</p> <p>The Council understands that the Board of Trustees took a decision to terminate its contract to run these facilities at a Board meeting on September 26th. The Council was privately informed of this decision on September 27th and was asked to keep this information private and confidential until the Trust could inform its employees, which it did on Friday 29th September.</p>	
4.	<p>From LS to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure</p>	<p>We must have a leisure centre in Gloucester in the city centre. So many different people used GL1 from all abilities and backgrounds. It must be reopened for all to use. When can this be expected? A year is much too long to be without this facility.</p>
	<p>Response:</p> <p>The Council is working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible following the surprising and disappointing decision of Aspire Trust to close them at the end of September. Currently a phased reopening of facilities at Oxstalls and GL1 has commenced, with usage of external grass, 2G, 3G and 4G pitches resuming, and Gloucester City Swimming Club restarting training sessions at GL1</p> <p>As part of that work, the Council is seeking to procure a new interim leisure services operator to fully reopen and manage the facilities for the next 12-18 months. The Council hopes to appoint this interim service provider by the end of the month. It is looking for that operator to mobilise as soon as possible after appointment.</p>	

5.	From RL to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	The council officers dealing with the new contract must have been aware of Aspire's concerns regarding funding and their reservations about the additional year contract. If they weren't aware why not?
Response:		
<p>The Council began negotiating with the Aspire Trust over a contract extension in March 2022. In July 2022, the Council and the Trust agreed a Partnership Delivery Plan for that 12-month contract extension period, and an associated management fee for that period.</p> <p>In early 2023 the Trust then told the Council that it did not believe it could continue to trade for that period, and shared business plans and forecasts setting out the additional amount of support it believed it needed to continue. Following an independent review of the Aspire Trust's request and business plans the Council agreed in principle to provide this additional level of funding requested, and believed that it had reached an in-principal agreement with the Trust to continue on that basis. However, the Board of Trustees decided on September 26th not to continue to provide leisure services and to enter into liquidation.</p>		
6.	From RL to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	Why couldn't the council have reassured Aspire that the funding was assured or have worked together with Aspire on finding any shortfall? This would presumably have averted Aspire from pulling out.
Response:		
<p>The Council has held regular management meetings with Aspire Trust throughout the duration of its management contract with the Council.</p> <p>The Council has provided significant financial and other support to the Aspire Trust, totalling over £1.5m since 2019, as it sought to help the Trust deal with challenges such as Covid and rising utility costs.</p> <p>The Council began negotiating with the Aspire Trust over a contract extension in March 2022. In July 2022, the Council and the Trust agreed a Partnership Delivery Plan for that 12-month contract extension period, and an associated management fee for that period.</p> <p>In early 2023 the Trust told the Council that it did not believe it could continue to trade for that contract extension period without further financial support, and shared business plans and forecasts setting out the additional amount of support it believed it needed to continue. Following an independent review of the Aspire Trust's request and business plan, the Council agreed in principle to provide this additional level of funding requested, and believed that it had reached an in-principle agreement with the Trust to continue on that basis. However, the Board of Trustees decided on September 26th not to continue to provide leisure services and to enter into liquidation.</p>		

7.	From GD to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	What will happen to the 150 brilliant members of staff who are out of a job without any explanation from Aspire and when will the city council mismanagement of this situation be resolved? GL1 cannot be allowed to remain closed as it offers so much for its schools and members.
Response:		
<p>The Council is working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible following the surprising and disappointing decision of Aspire Trust to close them at the end of September.</p> <p>As part of that work, the Council is seeking to procure a new interim leisure services operator to reopen and manage the facilities for the next 12-18 months. The new provider will have a wide range of jobs available and will definitely require skilled and knowledgeable staff to run the facilities in future. The Council has told those companies interested in this contract that staff recently made redundant by Aspire should be guaranteed interviews.</p> <p>So far, all of the shortlisted providers have indicated that they are committed to doing this. They recognise the skills and talents and commitment of former staff and they have warmly embraced the opportunity to interview staff.</p>		
8.	From TT to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	Why is the council subcontracting out such an important service? Where was the supplier oversight and where was the oversight the company's finances?
Response:		
<p>Two years ago, the Council commenced a procurement process to secure a leisure services provider from the expiry date of the contract with the Aspire Trust. The Council obtained the support of an expert leisure consultancy SLC to advise on procurement options and strategy. The options appraisal was considered at a Cabinet meeting on 4 May 2022, and recommended that the best sourcing option for the Council would be to procure a new leisure contract from an external provider. The appraisal identified that insourcing this service would be significantly the most expensive option for the taxpayer, and would not deliver any service benefits.</p> <p>The Council has held regular management meetings with Aspire Trust throughout the duration of its management contract with the Council. As a registered Charity, the Trust was also required to submit audited accounts and other information to the Charity Commission, and these are available on the Charity Commission's website.</p>		
9.	From TT to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	You knew the contract was coming to an end - what action was being taken to secure a replacement?
Response:		
The Council was surprised and disappointed by the decision of the Aspire Trust to cease to manage these facilities and to enter into liquidation.		

	<p>Two years ago, the Council commenced a procurement process to secure a leisure services provider from the expiry date of the contract with the Aspire Trust. The Council obtained the support of an expert leisure consultancy SLC to advise on procurement options and strategy. The options appraisal was considered at a Cabinet meeting on 4 May 2022, and recommended that the best sourcing option for the Council would be to procure a new leisure contract from an external provider.</p> <p>The Council began negotiating with the Aspire Trust over a contract extension in March 2022. In July 2022, the Council and the Trust agreed a Partnership Delivery Plan for that 12-month contract extension period, and an associated management fee for that period.</p> <p>In early 2023 the Trust told the Council that it did not believe it could continue to trade for that contract extension period without further financial support, and shared business plans and forecasts setting out the additional amount of support it believed it needed to continue. Following an independent review of the Aspire Trust's request and business plans, the Council agreed in principle to provide this additional level of funding requested and believed that it had reached an in-principle agreement with the Trust to continue on that basis. However, the Board of Trustees decided on September 26th not to continue to provide leisure services and to enter into liquidation. The Council was informed of this decision on Wednesday 27th September.</p>	
10.	From TT to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	What is being done to get this very important facility back open?
<p>Response:</p> <p>The Council is working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible following the surprising and disappointing decision of Aspire Trust to close them at the end of September.</p> <p>As part of that work, the Council is seeking to procure a new interim leisure services operator to reopen and manage the facilities for the next 12-18 months. The Council hopes to appoint this interim service provider by the end of the month. It is looking for that operator to mobilise as soon as possible after appointment.</p>		
11.	From LH to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	Why will it take till January to fully open the pools and GL1 when you have experienced staff who can run the building?
<p>Response:</p> <p>The Council is working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible following the surprising and disappointing decision of Aspire Trust to close them at the end of September.</p> <p>As part of that work, the Council is seeking to procure a new interim leisure services operator to reopen and manage the facilities for the next 12-18 months. The Council hopes to appoint this interim service provider by the end of the</p>		

	<p>month. It is looking for that operator to mobilise as soon as possible after appointment.</p> <p>In advance of that, the Council has reopened the pool for Gloucester City Swimming Club to resume training sessions from Monday 16th October.</p>	
12.	From LH to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	What measures will the council put in place to stop this from happening again?
Response:		
<p>The Council is working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible following the surprising and disappointing decision of Aspire Trust to close them at the end of September.</p> <p>As part of that work, the Council is seeking to procure a new interim leisure services operator to reopen and manage the facilities for the next 12-18 months.</p> <p>The Council is also progressing the procurement of a longer-term leisure services operator to manage these facilities.</p> <p>This has been a particularly challenging few years for the leisure sector, as people were slow to return after Covid to indoor leisure facilities. Increases to the minimum wage thresholds has pushed up staffing costs. And the impact of the rise in energy costs has been huge, as the consumption of energy to run facilities – particularly swimming pools - is very high. Several other leisure operators have also ceased trading in recent years around the country after facing similar challenges.</p> <p>Two years ago, the Council commenced a procurement process to secure a leisure services provider from the expiry date of the contract with the Aspire Trust. The Council obtained the support of an expert leisure consultancy SLC to advise on procurement options and strategy. The options appraisal was considered at a Cabinet meeting on 4 May 2022, and recommended that the best sourcing option for the Council would be to procure a new leisure contract from an external provider.</p>		
13.	From LH to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	Why didn't the council step in on the 27th when they were first made aware of the issues with Aspire and Why was another provider not sought out (or at least further along in the process) before the end of the Aspire contract, bearing in mind the reported accounts in early 2023.
Response:		
<p>The Council was surprised and disappointed by the decision of the Aspire Trust to cease to manage these facilities and to enter into liquidation.</p> <p>The Council began negotiating with the Aspire Trust over a contract extension in March 2022. In July 2022, the Council and the Trust agreed a Partnership Delivery Plan for that 12-month contract extension period, and an associated management fee for that period.</p>		

	<p>In early 2023 the Trust told the Council that it did not believe it could continue to trade for that contract extension period without further financial support, and shared business plans and forecasts setting out the additional amount of support it believed it needed to continue. Following an independent review of the Aspire Trust's request and business plans, the Council agreed in principle to provide this additional level of funding requested and believed that it had reached an in-principle agreement with the Trust to continue on that basis. However, the Board of Trustees decided on September 26th not to continue to provide leisure services and to enter into liquidation. The Council was informed of this decision on Wednesday 27th September.</p> <p>Since being informed of this decision, the Council has been working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible. As part of that work, the Council has begun the process of procuring a new interim leisure services operator to reopen and manage the facilities for the next 12-18 months.</p>	
14.	From GN to the Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure	<p>Why was there no contingency for the contract of GL1 other than Aspire to take it on for one more year before going out to tender? It is a real shame that the leisure centre has closed as it was a hub of activity and a place for people to keep fit, especially those who can't afford other options. I would like to see GL1 reopened as soon as possible.</p>
Response:		
<p>The Council is working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible following the surprising and disappointing decision of Aspire Trust to close them at the end of September.</p>		
<p>The Council began negotiating with the Aspire Trust over a contract extension in March 2022. In July 2022, the Council and the Trust agreed a Partnership Delivery Plan for that 12-month contract extension period, and an associated management fee for that period.</p>		
<p>In early 2023 the Trust then told the Council that it did not believe it could continue to trade for that period, and shared business plans and forecasts setting out the additional amount of support it believed it needed to continue. Following an independent review of the Aspire Trust's request and business plans, the Council agreed in principle to provide this additional level of funding requested, and believed that it had reached an in-principle agreement with the Trust to continue on that basis. However, the Board of Trustees decided on September 26th not to continue to provide leisure services and to enter into liquidation.</p>		
Response:		
<p>The Council has provided significant financial and other support to the Aspire Trust, totalling over £1.5m since 2019, as it sought to help the Trust deal with challenges such as Covid and rising utility costs.</p>		

	<p>The Council began negotiating with the Aspire Trust over a contract extension in March 2022. In July 2022, the Council and the Trust agreed a Partnership Delivery Plan for that 12-month contract extension period, and an associated management fee for that period.</p> <p>In early 2023 the Trust told the Council that it did not believe it could continue to trade for that contract extension period without further financial support, and shared business plans and forecasts setting out the additional amount of support it believed it needed to continue. Following an independent review of the Aspire Trust's request and business plans, the Council agreed in principle to provide this additional level of funding requested and believed that it had reached an in-principal agreement with the Trust to continue on that basis. However, the Board of Trustees decided on September 26th not to continue to provide leisure services and to enter into liquidation. The Council was informed of this decision on Wednesday 27th September.</p> <p>Since being informed of this decision, the Council has been working hard to get the leisure facilities reopened as soon as possible. As part of that work, the Council has begun the process of procuring a new interim leisure services operator to reopen and manage the facilities for the next 12-18 months.</p>				
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Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Date:	30 October 2023
	Cabinet		8 November 2023
	Council		16 November 2023
Subject:	Temporary Accommodation Acquisition Programme		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy and Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	Yes	Budget/Policy Framework:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Neil Coles, Housing Innovation Manager		
	Email:	neil.coles@gloucester.gov.uk	Tel: 396534
Appendices:	1. Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To set out a programme of capital investment to increase the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio to reduce the costs associated with using hotels and other buildings to provide temporary accommodation for households who present to the Council as homeless.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the information in the report and make any recommendations to Cabinet.

- 2.2 Cabinet is asked to **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that:

- (1) Delegated authority be provided to the Corporate Director in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources and the Director of One Legal to:
 - a) approves the establishment of a capital investment fund, funded from borrowing, to enable an acquisition programme for buildings or other structures for use as temporary accommodation for households who present as homeless to the Council.
 - b) explore options and appoint a provider, or other arrangement, to manage the temporary accommodation provided on behalf of the Council.
 - c) procure and appoint contractors and associated professional services to carry out any works required to bring the properties into use as units of temporary accommodation.

- (2) Acquisitions will be made in accordance with the principles of this report and the total costs will not exceed £5m.

2.3 Council is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) Delegated authority be provided to the Corporate Director in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Performance and Resources and the Director of One Legal to:
 - a) approves the establishment of a capital investment fund, funded from borrowing, to enable an acquisition programme for buildings or other structures for use as temporary accommodation for households who present as homeless to the Council.
 - b) explore options and appoint a provider, or other arrangement, to manage the temporary accommodation provided on behalf of the Council.
 - c) procure and appoint contractors and associated professional services to carry out any works required to bring the properties into use as units of temporary accommodation.
- (2) Acquisitions will be made in accordance with the principles of this report and the total costs will not exceed £5m.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 Where households are threatened with homelessness, or are made homeless, the Council has a range of statutory obligations to safeguard those households. One of these is that in certain circumstances the Council provides emergency temporary accommodation for households until they have either secured alternative accommodation, or until such time as the Council determines that its statutory duty to accommodate has ended.
- 3.2 The Council has seen a marked increase in the number of households being accommodated within temporary accommodation during the last 6 months. This is due to the challenges faced by households in accessing sustainable accommodation due primarily to the continued high demand for rented accommodation in Gloucester. This situation is not unique to this Council, with similar challenges being faced across England.
- 3.3 As is the case across the whole of the South West, households in Gloucester who are on low incomes and/ or in receipt of welfare benefits are often unable to afford market rent levels due to the difference between market rent levels and local housing allowance rates.
- 3.4 While local housing allowance rates are below market rent for all household sizes, the differential worsens as households size increases, and consequently larger families tend to stay in temporary accommodation for longer periods than smaller households.
- 3.5 It is anticipated that, due to the current social conditions, increases in homelessness applications and the need to place in temporary accommodation over the coming year will continue to rise. This will continue to place a significant burden on the Council's Temporary Accommodation budget, because housing allowance does not cover the full cost of providing temporary accommodation.

- 3.6 The scale of the current demand is such that the approach outlined in this report will not fully address the issue. This approach will reduce the expenditure on hotels and/or B&B, but will not address the demand, nor will it reduce the costs on more affordable accommodation which will continue to be used by the Council.
- 3.7 The Council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 (appendix 1), outlines our intent to reduce the use of B&B accommodation by identifying and delivering better quality temporary accommodation options. Whilst, in recent years, the Council has acquired new schemes, as well as working in partnership with other to access additional units, the current demand requires these acquisitions to increase.

Temporary accommodation in Gloucester

- 3.8 The Council currently owns three properties that are used for temporary accommodation for households who present as homeless to the Council, however this provides accommodation for just over 11% of the current households accommodated in temporary accommodation.
- 3.9 Where the Council is unable to place people in Council-owned accommodation, the Council seeks to place people in temporary accommodation offered by registered housing providers (e.g. Gloucester City Homes). This accommodation includes associated support for households and is often the most appropriate accommodation available. However, where these placements are unavailable, the Council are often required to use hotel and/or bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 3.10 Where the Council use hotel and/or bed and breakfast accommodation, the associated costs are significantly higher than those associated with using Council or registered provider (RP) owned accommodation, and these costs fluctuate according to availability. For example, local or regional events which attract incoming visitors to the county often result in increased hotel costs as availability reduces. Hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation is often not the most appropriate option, especially for households with children, even though it meets the relevant statutory requirements for temporary accommodation.
- 3.11 The availability of temporary accommodation options may also result in the need to place households out of Gloucester on occasion, and due to the number of households being placed in temporary accommodation routinely, these instances are increasing in frequency. This is undesirable due to the potential costs of transporting children back to school, the breakdown of family support networks due to the distance, as well as increasing social isolation at a time when support is most needed.
- 3.12 The cost of temporary accommodation is offset by the housing benefit that is available to each household when they are placed in the accommodation. There is a shortfall between the weekly amount of housing benefit a household can claim compared with the cost of temporary accommodation, and this is particularly significant where households are placed in hotel and/or bed and breakfast accommodation. Crucially this cost must be met by the Council.
- 3.13 As of 17 October 2023, there are 182 households accommodated in temporary accommodation by the Council. This has risen by 12% in the last 12 months. There

are currently 38 households accommodated in hotel accommodation compared with 10 households at the same point last year.

- 3.14 In the 2023/24 Q1 Financial Monitoring Report, the forecasted overspend on temporary accommodation was in the region of £1.1m, highlighting the need to take action to reduce costs in year.
- 3.15 The reduction in the use of hotel and/or bed and breakfast accommodation is therefore important both to reduce expenditure but also to ensure that homeless households are placed in the most appropriate accommodation for their needs.
- 3.16 Properties for acquisition will be considered in all wards of the City and outside of the City, in surrounding Districts.

Aims of the acquisition programme

- 3.17 The temporary accommodation acquisition programme aims to deliver the following:
- A reduction in temporary accommodation cost to the Council.
 - A reduction in the use of hotel and/or bed and breakfast accommodation.
 - An increase in the proportion of temporary accommodation placements where care and support are provided to households, which can help address some of the reasons for homelessness and secure an appropriate pathway to long term, settled accommodation.
- 3.18 Officers will be tasked to identify and acquire accommodation for use as Temporary Accommodation, and to make management arrangements for their operation. Potential acquisitions will be assessed based on their suitability for use as temporary accommodation weighed against cost/ benefit including:
- Temporary accommodation demand relative to household composition.
 - Accommodation quality (e.g. amenities, rooms sizes etc).
 - Accommodation location (e.g. proximity to local facilities, transport routes etc).
- 3.19 Acquisition costs will be funded through borrowing, and loan repayments and on-going accommodation management costs will be supported by housing benefit income.
- 3.20 Potential acquisitions will also be assessed on their financial viability to ensure that the full costs associated with acquisition and the estimated mobilisation costs represent a cost saving compared with the spot-booking of other temporary accommodation. This viability assessment will be undertaken by the Finance Team prior to any acquisition progressing.
- 3.21 The viability assessment will be based on the following:
- Cost of purchase of the property including associated costs and refurbishment costs to get the property ready for habitation.
 - Cost of management and support elements
 - Income from Housing Benefit and/ or service charges
 - Any borrowing charges
 - Ongoing repairs and maintenance costs
 - Balanced against the average costs of other available accommodation at the time of the assessment

3.22 The viability assessment will ensure that the Council is only purchasing accommodation when the need requires it to do so to meet the Council's financial needs and/ or the support needs of the homeless households.

4.0 Social Value Considerations

4.1 The delivery of additional units of temporary accommodation will improve the well-being of households who present as homeless to the Council through the increased delivery of accommodation that provides appropriate support.

4.2 Any procurement for support services will likely meet the criteria for the social value policy and so social value considerations will be part of the decision making when appointing a contractor.

5.0 Environmental Implications

5.1 Where possible, the Council will look to ensure that energy saving measures are incorporated into planning to minimise the council's carbon footprint.

6.0 Alternative Options Considered

6.1 The option to continue the current approach of spot booking temporary accommodation without acquiring new units of temporary accommodation is not recommended as it would impact detrimentally on the Council's temporary accommodation expenditure, and it would result in continued uncontrolled use of hotel and/or bed and breakfast accommodation that while lawful does not provide the most appropriate accommodation for homeless households.

6.2 Further options include the consideration of policy levers to place homeless households outside of the County for the majority of cases. Whilst this is a suitable option to consider for some households, it will not be for many, and may result in significant transport costs to ensure children can remain in school, for example.

7.0 Reasons for Recommendations

7.1 The continued reliance on hotel and/or bed and breakfast accommodation as temporary accommodation for homeless households results in uncontrolled expenditure risk for the Council and does not provide the most appropriate accommodation for those households.

7.2 The extension of the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio provides the Council with greater security in respect of future expenditure while providing more appropriate accommodation for homeless households.

8.0 Future Work and Conclusions

8.1 If the resolutions are approved, officers will identify potential opportunities and undertake financial viability assessments prior to progressing acquisitions.

8.2 Officers will also undertake the procurement of tenancy management contracts as necessary for acquisitions to ensure that tenancy management and support is

available to occupiers at the point that the Council commences use of the accommodation.

- 8.3 Particular attention will be given to the opportunity to access so-called 'exempt accommodation' rates for Housing Benefit which would provide an increased rental income for the accommodation which would reduce the likelihood of the Council needing to 'top up' the rent. Exempt accommodation rates are payable where the accommodation is managed by a registered provider and specified care and support is provided to occupiers.
- 8.4 The temporary accommodation acquisition programme will support a reduction in costs to the council by reducing the use of the costliest hotel accommodation. However, this will not address all of the issues and further activity will be required to reduce costs and prevent homelessness, as well as looking at areas across the range of council business.
- 8.5 Following some focused work by DLUHC in the City in September 2023 we will be working through an action plan of recommendations to improve the housing pathways for residents in a variety of ways.
- 8.6 Discussions have taken place with the Gloucester MP who will be taking up issues raised by the City Council with Ministers in Central Government.

9.0 Financial Implications

- 9.1 The financial viability of each acquisition will be considered on a case by case basis to ensure that all relevant costs associated with the acquisition and its future operation have been identified and addressed to ensure that the acquisition represents a budgetary saving compared with the existing practice of utilising a range of accommodation options including purchasing hotels and/ or bed and breakfast accommodation on an ad hoc basis.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

10.0 Legal Implications

- 10.1 Specialist tax advice may need to be obtained in respect of SDLT liability. Such figures will vary according to the price paid for the property. SDLT payable may also be subject to change if there is a budget prior to the completion of a purchase.
- 10.2 A purchase will be under the powers contained in the Housing Act 1985; any future sale or lease (excluding to owner/occupiers) of the property will have to comply with the restrictions contained in that Act. It will not be possible to dispose of the property (including by a lease for a term of 21 years or more) without first obtaining the consent of the Secretary of State. This may prevent the Council from being able to grant a long lease of the premises to a management company and other options should therefore be considered.
- 10.3 The Council will need to ensure that persons in occupation following an acquisition do so under agreements which are not secure tenancies. This includes any occupiers who remain in occupation at the point that the property transfers to the Council.

- 10.4 A Council must have a Housing Revenue Account if it owns 200 or more social dwellings, and this should be borne in mind and appropriate measures taken when purchasing additional dwellings.
- 10.5 The Council will need to comply with its contract rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 when procuring contractors to provide tenancy management services and undertake works to the purchased properties.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 11.1 Potential acquisitions will be subject to a rigorous selection process to ensure that the resultant temporary accommodation will be suitable and appropriate for the purpose and will provide accommodation that can best meet the needs of the client group.
- 11.2 The financial risk associated with any acquisition will be mitigated through the financial viability assessment that will consider all relevant costs associated with the acquisition and its future operation to ensure that the acquisition represents a budgetary saving compared with existing practice utilising a range of accommodation options including hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 11.3 The property-based risks associated with acquisitions will be mitigated through the completion of a range of surveys and valuations to identify both short-term and long-term costs.
- 11.4 If the acquired accommodation is deemed to be no longer needed to meet this temporary accommodation demand, the Council may dispose of the property to reduce its overall borrowing position.
- 11.5 The delegated authority set out in this report aims to position the Council in the best position to take prompt action to secure acquisitions in the context of a fast-moving property market. There are a range of investor-landlords seeking to purchase property in Gloucester and it will be important for the Council to be able to make time critical decisions to secure acquisitions.
- 11.6 If the Council is unable to secure acquisitions that meet the requirements of this report, there is a risk that future temporary accommodation costs may rise to meet increased demand for temporary accommodation.

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

- 12.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact; therefore, a full PIA was not required.
- 12.2 The PIA Screening Stage considered the potential impact on homeless households who are required to be accommodated in temporary accommodation and how that may change if the recommendations contained within this report are implemented.

12.3 It is likely that the majority of the schemes identified for acquisition focus on the single and couples homelessness need. Where families with children require placement in temporary accommodation we will look to secure self contained units where possible.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

13.1 None

14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

14.1 None

Background Documents: Appendix 1- [city_1294-housing-and-homelessness-strategy_adopted-version.pdf \(gloucester.gov.uk\)](#)

Housing that works for everyone

Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy
2020-25



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- 5 Our vision and key priorities
- 6 Our cross-cutting themes
- 7 What we have done so far
- 8 Our priorities
- 16 Links to other strategies
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> Foreword

Welcome to Gloucester's new Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which sets out our plans for ensuring housing in our city works for those that want to live here and meets the needs of our residents.

We see the importance of ensuring the availability of a range of housing options that are affordable, accessible, meet the needs of our diverse city and allow communities to flourish. One size doesn't fit all, and this strategy reflects that.

Work over previous years to develop long term plans for the growth of the city and neighbouring districts, such as the Joint Core Strategy and the Gloucester City Plan, has enabled us to be clear about our aspirations for new housing and this has been reflected in the priorities. As part of this work, we have reflected on a wide evidence base which has helped us to understand the breadth of housing needs and the changes in our population, allowing us to understand trends and opportunities to meet future demand.

A high quality, well planned range of types of housing is fundamental to the diversity of our city and the health and wellbeing of our communities. Housing can also play a significant role in

underpinning economic growth and ensuring that Gloucester is a place that people want to live, work and play. Our city has a huge amount to offer and this strategy supports us to ensure our city as a whole can prosper.

We value our staff and partners providing housing and related support services here in the city and would like to thank our councillor colleagues from all parties at the city council and our valued stakeholders for their input and support in creating what we believe is a well balanced strategy with the potential for huge positive impact for the city'. This strategy has been adopted by cabinet following open public consultation, the feedback from which has shaped the final version.

We look forward to the coming years delivering on our ambitions with our partners and residents.



Cllr Jennie Watkins
Cabinet Member
for Communities and
Neighbourhoods



Cllr Andrew Gravells
Cabinet Member
for Planning and
Housing Strategy



Introduction



Population
129,285

(Mid-2018 population estimates, ONS) and estimated to increase to 138,300 by 2025.

Predicted

70% increase



for 65+ year olds by 2041 (2016-based Subnational Population Projections, ONS)

Median house prices

increased by 43%



from £139,995 in 2009 to £193,000 in 2018 (Median house prices for administrative geographies: HPSSA dataset 9) while median annual earnings increased by 8.6% (Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, ONS)



Pockets of significant deprivation including some areas in the top 10% most deprived in the country

The housing requirement for new homes for the five-year period from 2019/20 to 2023/24 is

3,590 dwellings

(Policy SP1: The Need for New Development)

Gloucester is a dynamic and diverse city with a population that is simultaneously growing and ageing. The population of Gloucester is forecast to increase to 138,300 by 2025, this is an increase of 7% from 2018.

Good quality housing, that is affordable, is fundamental to people's health and wellbeing and to the communities in which they live. It provides a stable base to enable people to build their lives. Poor or unsuitable housing can have a negative impact on many areas of personal and community life. Improving housing options via the delivery of this strategy is essential to contributing to the improvement of physical and mental health of our residents and to the city as a whole.

The strategy has three key high level priorities. It identifies the outcomes we want to have achieved during its five year lifetime and the actions that need to be taken to get there. The strategy also has a number of cross cutting themes which underpin it and will be fundamental to its delivery.

To respond to the challenges we face, we plan to increase the supply of new homes, make better use of existing stock, and focus on the prevention of homelessness and rough sleeping through proactive interventions.

In July 2019, the council declared a climate emergency and it will therefore be an underlying principle to ensure that the impact of this strategy is measured against the council's objective of becoming carbon neutral.

To deliver these outcomes we will need to work with local communities and be ambitious and innovative whilst ensuring we make best use of resources to deliver sustainable long-term solutions.

We recognise the importance that housing plays in health and life outcomes and this strategy therefore complements and supports the objectives of the Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019 – 2030.

Our Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy has a strong theme of partnership working. We can only deliver its outcomes through working with our partners. This includes both statutory and voluntary organisations, as well as our neighbouring local authorities and the county council. This is crucial to realising our vision of a housing offer for the city that works for everyone.



In 2017 **10.3% of households**

in Gloucester were considered to be in fuel poverty (Sub regional fuel poverty data, BEIS)

28% of children



are estimated to live in relative poverty once housing costs have been taken into consideration.

A household in poverty is defined as one which has an income 60% below the average income of £28,400. (End Child Poverty Coalition)

1,307

households assessed as owed a homelessness prevention or relief duty 2018/19 (MHCLG live tables)



150 households

in temporary accommodation 2018/19 an increase of 25% since 2012/13 (MHCLG live tables)



4096 households

currently on the waiting list for social housing.

Our vision 'Housing that works for everyone'

Our key priorities

Key priority

What does this mean?

Outcome



Increasing the number of new homes that are built

Making sure they are built to a high standard of design with the right balance and mix of homes to meet the needs of the local community



Maximising opportunities for regeneration and conversion to create more homes

Through interventions, improving housing quality and standards, enforcing them when necessary

Contributing to improving the health and wellbeing of our communities



Proactively intervening 'upstream' to prevent homelessness by working with our partners to enable people to find the right housing solutions, and responding promptly to immediate homelessness

Creating successful and thriving communities

2. Our cross cutting themes

These themes underpin all of the objectives of the strategy.

Partnership
working

Promoting
good design
and high
standards

Focusing
on health
and
wellbeing

Responding
to climate
emergency

5. What have we done so far?

Increasing supply



2494
homes
built

built in the period
2014/15 to 2018/19



Of these
545
were
affordable
homes



404
were
for
rent



Worked with stakeholders and partners
to develop the vacant Blackfriars site;
including the delivery of

300 units of student
accommodation

with a further 200 planned homes

Worked with registered
housing providers to
secure more than

£10m
in Homes
England
grants



to deliver affordable
housing in the city

Facilitating the delivery of
key housing sites
in the city centre

including Black Dog Way
and Greyfriars, for private,
affordable and social housing

Developed the Gloucester City Plan which sets out the city's
policies and proposals for development and use of land up to 2031

Adopting the Gloucester,
Cheltenham and Tewkesbury
Joint Core Strategy
(JCS)

2011 to 2031, which sets out the
amount of new homes, jobs and
supporting infrastructure that is
needed to 2031 in these areas

Making best use of existing stock

- Tackled poor standards within Houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)
- Spending over £700,000 in the last 4 years on Disabled Facilities Grants to enable people to remain within their own homes
- Working closely with Gloucester City Homes on developing supplementary planning guidance to enable the regeneration of Matson and Podsmead estates



Homelessness and rough sleeping

- With partners, securing millions in government funding to tackle homelessness in Gloucestershire, including two further outreach workers, specialist mental health support, specialist drug and alcohol support and landlord incentive schemes
- "Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub" in Gloucester opened in March 2019 to provide 24/7 assessment and support for rough sleepers
- ACTion Glos has supported 126 people in Gloucestershire since 2017 who have been rough sleeping or are long-term homeless with complex needs
- The Landlord Incentive Scheme, set up in November 2018, has had 86 enquiries, 71 arranged visits and 30 properties signed up. This allowed 18 households to be discharged from emergency accommodation with 12-month tenancies
- Potter's Place, run by the YMCA, is now providing temporary accommodation for homeless people in the city centre
- Updating the housing service in line with the Homelessness Reduction Act

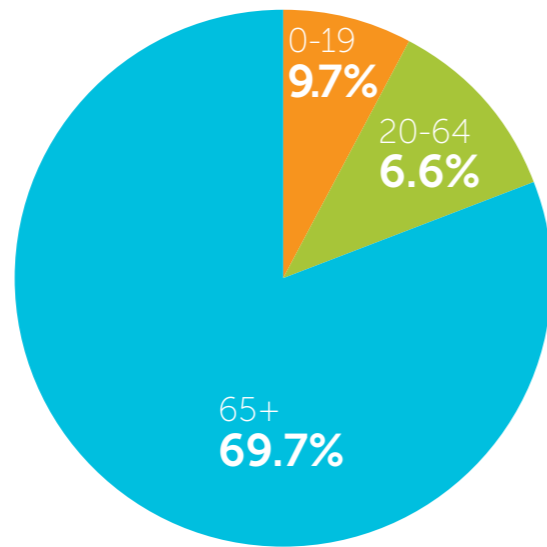
What are the challenges?

A growing population who are getting older

Projected % increase in population by age 2016 - 2041

0 - 19 20 - 64 65+

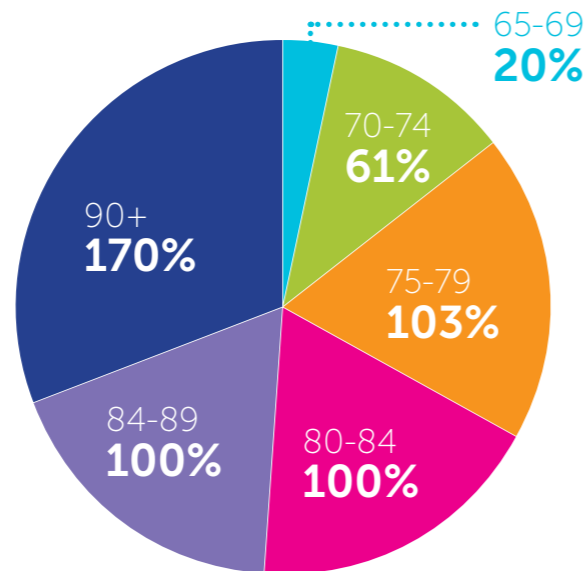
Assuming current population trends continue, the population in Gloucester will rise to 138,300 by 2025 and to 150,900 by 2041. This is a projected increase of 17.5%¹.



Projected % increase over 65's 2016-2041

65 - 69 70 - 74 75 - 79
80 - 84 84 - 89 90+

Those in the age group 65 or over are projected to increase from 20,800 in 2016 to 35,400 in 2041, equating to a growth of 69.7%. This increase is greater than all other districts in Gloucestershire and above the national trend for England. It means that by 2041 the proportion of people in Gloucester who are aged 65 or over will have risen from 16.2% to 23.4%².



An increase in those with health and disability issues

Given the projected increase in the population aged 65 and over, it is unsurprising that the number of people with health issues and requiring support is also expected to increase.

¹2016 based Subnational Projections, ONS

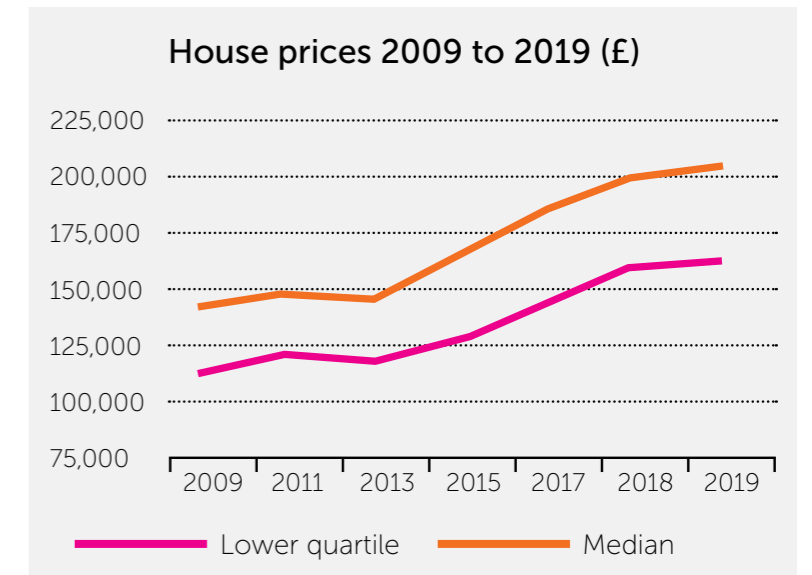
²2016 based Subnational Projections, ONS

House prices

We want to encourage younger people to live and work within the city to support economic activity and maintain the city's diversity. However, affordability of housing is a big issue for many residents.

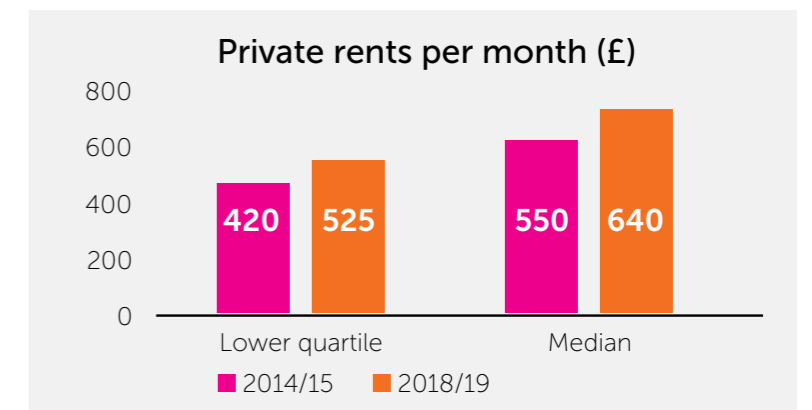
In Gloucester, median house prices increased from £139,995 in 2009 to £197,000 in 2019 and lower quartile house prices increased from £110,000 in 2009 to £157,000 in 2019, an increase of 43% and 42% respectively. Median annual earnings in Gloucester increased by 8.6% over a similar period.⁴

In 2018, a resident in Gloucester with median wages required 7 times their earnings to purchase a median priced property, with a similar ratio for lower quartile earnings to lower quartile house prices.⁵



Rents

Over the last five years median monthly rents in Gloucester have increased from £550 in 2014/15 to £640 in 2018/19, this equates to growth of 16.4%.⁶ This is higher than the county average (6.9%) and the national average (15.8%).



Development of new homes

- Gloucester is a growing city which is constrained by physical boundaries. This means that there is limited available land to develop new homes in the city.
- There is a lack of single-person and large family accommodation.
- There are insufficient attractive housing choices for older people that meet their aspirations and encourage them to move from their family homes, meaning that there are fewer housing options for families.
- Achieving the right balance between site viability, a high standard of design for new developments and affordability.

³ HPSSA Dataset 15. Lower quartile price paid for administrative geographies / HPSSA dataset 9, Median house prices for administrative geographies

⁴ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, ONS

⁵ Table 5c and 6c ratio of median and lower quartile house prices to median and lower quartile earnings by LA

⁶ Valuation Office Agency, Private Rental Market Statistics monthly rents recorded between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2019

²2016 based Subnational Projections, ONS

6. Outcomes and delivery

Priority 1 - Increasing supply

6. Our priority

Priority 2 - Making best use of existing stock

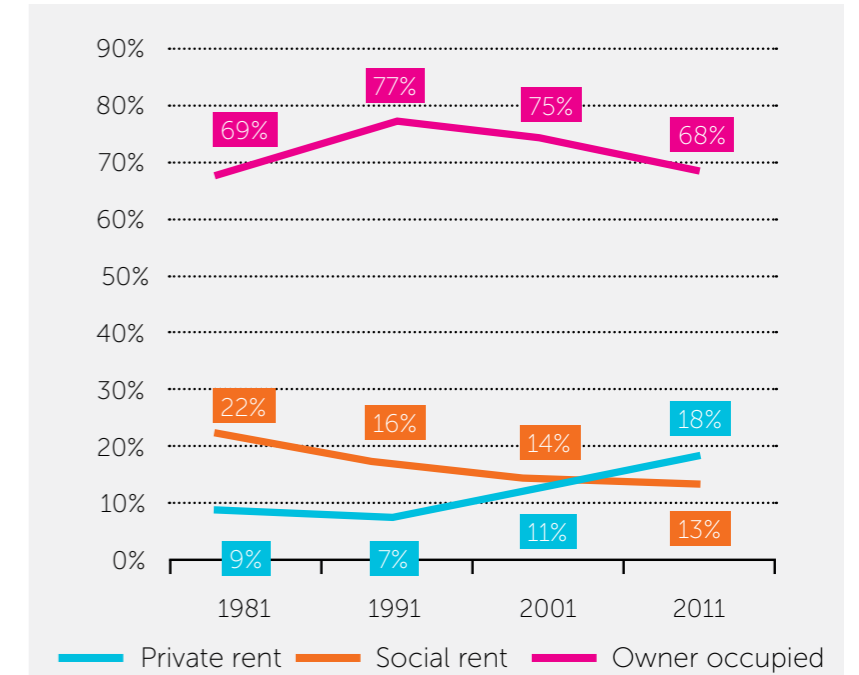
Outcome	Action
The housing supply objectives are meeting the delivery targets of the Gloucester City Plan and Joint Core Strategy (including numbers, size and tenure mix).	Fully implement the planning policies underpinning the Gloucester Plan and the Joint Core Strategy.
	Ensure that good design and layout of housing and associated infrastructure will support and promote safety, security, health and wellbeing.
	Contribute to the Joint Core Strategy Review to ensure the strategic sites contribute to the supply of homes to meet the needs of the city and people of Gloucester.
	Enable the completion of the development of St Oswald's Village through successful land assembly and procurement.
Land/existing buildings that are more difficult to develop and require strategic leadership to deliver are being brought in to use.	Explore the opportunities for joint ventures between the council and private and public sector to bring forward sites and meet housing need.
	Investigate and explore the options for the council to directly build new homes and the mechanisms to do this.
Public and private sector investment into housing and associated infrastructure projects is maximised.	Explore investment opportunities to leverage resources, both through land and funding streams to enable the delivery of more housing.
More larger family homes are being developed.	Work with partners to establish opportunities through new developments to provide larger family homes.
Housing is being designed to meet the changing needs of the population of Gloucester.	Put in place policies, that accord with the Gloucester Local Plan and aim to build at least 50% of new homes to accessible standards to enable them to meet current and future needs.
Specialist housing is provided to meet the needs of those who require it, such as older people and those with disabilities.	Work with commissioners and delivery partners to respond positively to identified specialist housing need to enable appropriate provision.
	Contribute to and assist in the implementation of Gloucestershire County Council's Housing with Care Strategy.
	Work in partnership with Barnwood Trust to support the completion of the Manor Gardens Scheme for people with disabilities and use as an example for further developments.
'Affordable homes' are affordable to more people.	Implement the Gloucester Local Plan to ensure that affordable housing requirements are policy compliant.

What are the challenges?

Increased reliance on the private rented sector

There have been significant changes in the housing market since 2000⁷. By 2011 the private rental market was larger than the social housing sector, with owner occupation in decline. National data shows this trend continuing.

The short term nature of many private rented tenancies can bring instability both to individuals and to the communities in which they live.



Condition of existing housing stock

There is a lack of robust data on the condition of the private housing stock, with the last full survey being undertaken in 2011. This survey showed at the time that around a quarter of homes in the private sector (of all tenures), failed to meet the decent homes standard. This was mainly due to disrepair and thermal comfort. A new stock condition survey is currently underway and the outcome of this will be used to inform this strategy.

However, it is reasonable to assume that, with an ageing housing stock, meeting modern standards, particularly around energy efficiency, and adapting homes for the changing needs of the population will continue to be of concern.

Empty homes

The number of empty homes in the city has increased by 17.6% since 2016. These empty homes represent a significant wasted resource which could contribute towards resolving the challenge of meeting housing needs as described under Priority 1.

- 2015 - 1,175
- 2016 - 1,160
- 2017 - 1,247
- 2018 - 1,364⁸

⁷Tenure trends 1981-2011 – UK Census of Population

⁸Council Tax Data- Gloucester City Council

6. Outcomes and delivery

Priority 2 - Making best use of existing stock

6. Our priority

Priority 3 - Reducing homelessness and rough sleeping

Outcome	Action
Standards in the private sector are raised.	Continue to develop a more robust regime for HMOs.
	Put in place a registration scheme for private landlords to support those offering good quality accommodation.
	Deploy enforcement powers pro-actively to address issues with landlords who are providing poor quality accommodation.
	Conclude the comprehensive review of the Private Sector Housing Service.
	Explore options for the council, through innovation, to assist owners in addressing disrepair and poor standards within their homes.
Good quality stock condition information is enabling pro-active and targeted intervention in the private housing sector.	Complete a Stock Condition Survey and put in place a system to continue to collect and manage data, so that it remains dynamic.
	Analyse outcomes from the Stock Condition Survey and put in place and deliver an implementation plan.
Improved housing conditions are leading to positive health outcomes and contribute to safety and security.	Put in place a system for targeting poor quality properties that pose a high health and safety risk.
	Proactively manage affordable warmth and energy efficiency initiatives.
	Adopt an effective and targeted approach to managing Disabled Facilities Grants.
Options to optimise the use of underused space and address under occupation are in place.	Continue the programme of bringing upper stories of heritage buildings into residential use in the city centre, in accordance with the council's Heritage Strategy.
	Explore opportunities to enable schemes that encourage owner occupiers to rent rooms to individuals, such as key workers.
	Adopt a targeted approach to prioritising problem and long standing empty homes.
	Develop a model to enable the identification and response to opportunities that arise to repurpose stock, where its current use is redundant, to meet housing need.
Housing stock meets the housing needs of residents.	Support private landlords and registered providers to bring homes in their ownership, including empty homes, into use for those who are homeless and/or who have more complex housing needs..
	Ensure housing stock supports us to fulfil our commitments under the Armed Forces Covenant.
Key regeneration schemes are completed.	Support and enable high quality regeneration of the Matson and Podsmead estates.
	Work with land owners and occupiers to explore opportunities for regeneration on Bristol Road to create a mixed use and sustainable neighbourhood.
	Put in place and enable a programme of smaller infill sites for housing (e.g. garage sites) with key partners.

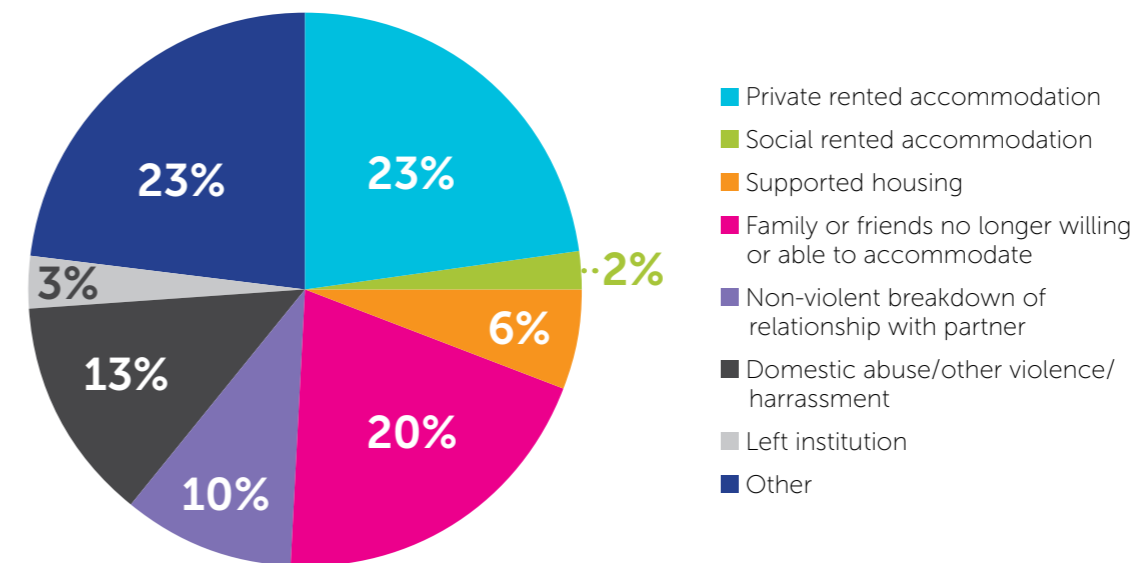
What are the challenges?

Increasing homelessness

The most visible form of homelessness is rough sleeping but homelessness can take many forms. There has been an increase in the number of approaches for assistance from those facing homelessness.

- There were 1,307 households assessed and owed a prevention or relief duty by the council in 2018/19;⁹
- There were 392 households assessed as statutory homeless in 2018/19;¹⁰
- There was an increase in statutory homelessness acceptances between 2012/13 and 2017/18 of 15%¹¹.

Reason for homelessness



In 2018/19, the most significant cause of homelessness was loss of rented accommodation (31%), followed by parents/other relative/friend no longer or willing to accommodate. Households having dependent children is the main reason for priority need, accounting for 59% of those who were accepted as statutory homeless, followed by those with mental ill health or a disability.

Households aged between 25-44 are the most common group accepted as statutorily homeless

⁹Table A1 - MHCLG H-CLIC Homelessness returns (quarterly)

¹⁰Table MD1 MHCLG H-CLIC Homelessness returns (quarterly)

¹¹Note comparison is only possible to 2017/18 due to changes in the way data is collected

6. Our priority

Priority 3 - Reducing homelessness and rough sleeping

Increased use of temporary accommodation

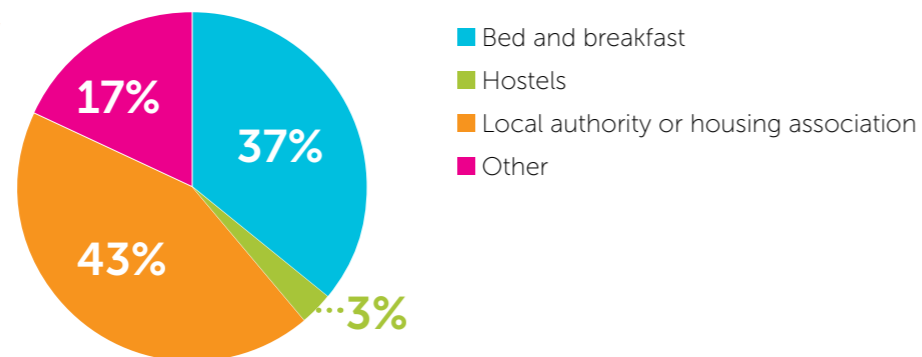
There are increased numbers and length of stays of households in temporary accommodation. A snapshot from 31 March 2019 showed that there were 150 households in temporary accommodation,¹² representing an increase of 25% since 2013.

Of these, 37% were housed in bed and breakfast accommodation. This is significantly higher than the national average where only 8% are placed in this type of accommodation. This reflects the lack of good quality alternative temporary accommodation locally.

Several factors are also contributing to the increase in homelessness:

- The lack of move on options from temporary accommodation to permanent housing solutions;
- Insufficient preventative outreach work has been taking place;
- Continuity and lack of certainty of funding for homelessness services.

Type of temporary accommodation



Page 70

Rough sleeping

Our approach to rough sleeping has the following objectives:

1. **Prevention:** understanding the issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing timely support for those at risk.
2. **Intervention:** helping those already sleeping rough with swift support tailored to their individual circumstances.
3. **Recovery:** supporting people in finding new homes and rebuilding their lives.

This reflects the government's Rough Sleeping Strategy published in 2018 which set out sets out the government's strategy for halving rough sleeping by 2022 and ending it by 2027. Our ambition is to eradicate rough sleeping within Gloucester by 2025.

Currently we participate with the county council and the other 5 district councils in Gloucestershire, along with a range of providers, in a comprehensive homelessness pathway. This, along with our Rough Sleeping Action plan, can be found on our website.

<https://www.gloucester.gov.uk/housing/housing-policies-and-strategies/rough-sleeper-action-plan/>

¹²Table TA1 - MHCLG H-CLIC Homelessness returns (quarterly)

6. Outcomes and delivery

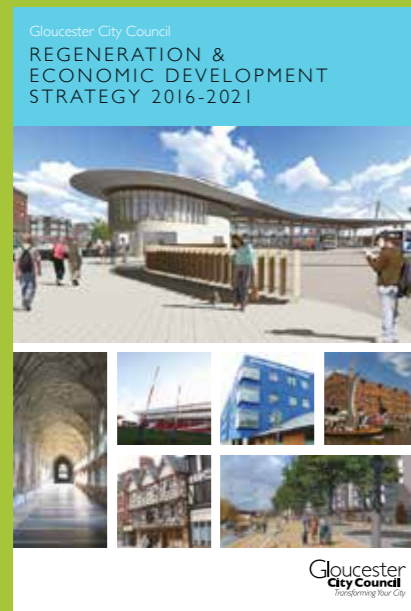
Priority 3 - Reducing homelessness and rough sleeping

Outcome	Action
The occurrence of homelessness is reduced through effective early intervention.	Liaise with landlords and providers at an early stage where homelessness has been identified as likely to occur and try to implement solutions.
	Explore with partners the opportunity to set up a fund to tackle the threat of potential homelessness, through for example a deposit scheme/rent in advance, whilst demonstrating cost effectiveness.
Response to homelessness is pro-active and person centred.	Ensure pathways for homeless people are understood by all partners and agencies.
	Review systems and processes to ensure that they are robust enough to enable consistency of approach, timely advice and earlier referrals and intervention whilst being customer focused and effectively co-operating with partners where appropriate.
	Offer a trauma and ACEs informed ¹ service to support holistic solutions and the building of resilience.
The use of temporary accommodation is minimised, with only good quality appropriate accommodation available. Bed and breakfast is no longer used.	Work with Gloucestershire County Council to develop an understanding of the accommodation needs of survivors of domestic abuse and implement appropriate solutions.
	Identify and deliver new, better quality temporary accommodation options. At the same time working with private and social landlords to put in place appropriate move on accommodation thus minimising stays and reducing the need for temporary accommodation.
	Put a clear programme in place to end the use of bed and breakfast as a form of emergency accommodation.
	Work with partners to ensure that those living in temporary accommodation, such as shelters and hostels, have plans put in place for re-housing.
Eradicate rough sleeping.	Establish options to enable individuals who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to move to directly to permanent accommodation.
	Work with partners to review the Homeseekers Policy with an aim to reduce barriers to housing for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, particularly those being discharged from hospital or in supported housing.
	Ensure that there is year-round severe weather provision for rough sleepers, including those with no recourse to public funds.
	Continue to contribute to the funding of the Assertive Outreach Team until at least 2022.
	Track experience of rough sleepers, their reasons for homelessness, and identify and implement actions needed to break the cycle of homelessness.
	Continue to support the 'ACTion Glos' until at least 2022 – which supports entrenched rough sleepers in living independently and assists them into training, education or employment.
Eradicate rough sleeping.	Establish means to ensure funding continuity for rough sleeping services post 2022, learning lessons from ACTion Glos and other services.
	Work with partners to provide place-based provisions, together with personalised support, that satisfies "Housing First" principles.

¹ <https://www.actionaces.org/what-are-aces/>

7. Links to other strategies

This Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy does not operate in isolation and links to our other strategies and our City Plan.



8. Monitoring and performance

Monitoring

This strategy is supported by the Housing Service Plan. This contains the detailed actions and tasks to enable the outcomes of the strategy to be delivered and will provide the golden thread between strategic objectives and practical measurable outcomes.

Performance measures

It is underpinned by key performance indicators. Progress made against the outcomes within this strategy are reviewed annually by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The current key performance indicators are:

- The number of homeless applications where a decision was made
- The delivery of affordable housing units
- The number of homeless households resident in temporary homes
- The number of successful homeless preventions





Gloucester City Council

Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25

Rough Sleeping Action Plan

February 2021

Introduction

A key priority within the council's Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-25 is to reduce homelessness and rough sleeping, and our approach to rough sleeping has the following objectives:

1. **Prevention:** understanding the issues that lead to rough sleeping and providing timely support for those at risk.
2. **Intervention:** helping those already sleeping rough with swift support tailored to their individual circumstances.
3. **Recovery:** supporting people in finding a new home and rebuilding their lives.

This mirrors the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy published in 2018 which aims to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end rough sleeping by 2027. Our ambition is to eradicate rough sleeping within Gloucester by 2025.

Currently we participate with the county council and the other 5 district councils in Gloucestershire, along with a range of providers, in a comprehensive homelessness pathway.

This action plan details how we intend to deliver on our aims to reduce rough sleeping and to ensure that by 2025 no-one has the need to sleep rough.

Rough sleeper numbers

In the autumn of every year local authorities undertake an annual 'count' of rough sleepers. This provides a snapshot of the position in each local authority area on a given night and shows that in Gloucester the number of people sleeping rough is reducing year on year (Table 1).

Table 1: Annual rough sleeper numbers across Gloucestershire since 2014

Local Authority	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Cheltenham	0	1	11	9	2	9	6
Cotswold	4	4	6	1	5	7	5
Forest of Dean	0	2	0	1	1	3	0
Gloucester	17	13	23	15	6	17	11
Stroud	1	1	2	2	4	2	5
Tewkesbury	4	0	0	2	1	2	1

In 2020, Gloucester had the highest incidence of rough sleeping within Gloucestershire, and this is likely to be attributed to the transport links and the location of support services for homeless households.

Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2020-2025

Gloucester City Council works in partnership with participate with the County Council and the other 5 councils - Cheltenham Borough Council, Cotswold District Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Stroud District Council and Tewkesbury Council and a range of providers in a comprehensive homelessness and rough sleeping pathway. This pathway has been modified and expanded upon as Gloucester and other authorities have taken up new funding opportunities to enhance the original pathway of services we have available. We believe our pathway provides a broad range of accommodation and support services to alleviate rough sleeping and our action plan indicates further options to continue to check that this remains as effective as it can be.

The action plan set out below details how we aim to eradicate rough sleeping in Gloucester by 2025.

Table 2: Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2020-2025

Action	Targets and Milestones	Target Date	Lead/Partnerships	Progress
We will work collaboratively with partners to ensure recently awarded funding opportunities are implemented effectively across the city, by reviewing outcomes.	Monthly partnership meetings Quarterly reviews	2025	Housing Services Districts and County Council Clinical Commissioning Group Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner	On-going
The Rapid Rehousing Pathway: Somewhere Safe to Stay and navigator funding (Access to immediate, short-term accommodation for rough sleepers coupled with support and specialist Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Navigators)	Somewhere Safe to Stay Hub and Navigator projects delivered	Autumn 2019	CHIG and CHIG + county-wide partnerships P3	Completed

<p>The Rough Sleeping Initiative: Increasing the Assertive Outreach services to support rough sleepers into accommodation and increasing personalisation budget</p>	<p>Assertive Outreach services to support rough sleepers implemented</p>	<p>Summer 2019</p>	<p>P3 County Homelessness Co-ordinator</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>Social Impact Bond: ActionGlos – supporting entrenched rough sleepers to live independently and into training, education or employment</p>	<p>Regular reviews of outcomes</p>	<p>Ongoing to summer 2021</p>	<p>P3 Pivotal County Homelessness Coordinator Housing Services</p>	<p>On-going</p>
<p>We will work collaboratively with partners to ensure we continue to fund the Assertive Outreach Team</p>	<p>Quarterly reviews of outcome</p>	<p>2019 - 2022</p>	<p>County Homelessness Co-ordinator Housing Services Districts and County Council Clinical Commissioning Group Police and Crime Commissioners Office CHIG and CHIG + county-wide partnerships</p>	<p>On-going</p>
<p>We will seek to ensure future funding opportunities are actively sourced.</p>	<p>As opportunities arise these will be picked up via monthly partnership meetings</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Housing Services Districts and County Council Clinical Commissioning Group</p>	<p>NSAP funding application successful Cold Weather Fund application 2020 successful</p>

			Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner	Protect Plus application 2021 successful
We will review outcomes from last winter's SWEP (severe weather emergency protocol) and agree any necessary adjustments ahead of 2021/22 winter	Approach to winter 2019/20 SWEP agreed, due to Covid 19 we need to review prior to 21/22	Summer 2021	Housing Services Districts and County Council Registered Providers & Faith Group Communities	Continual review of SWEP required to ensure it meets the needs of those it is designed to support.
We will support the Assertive Outreach Team in coordinating an annual count or estimate of the number of people rough sleeping in Gloucester	Agree with partners on this year's street count	Annual rough sleeper estimates	Housing Services District authorities P3	On-going
We will be in discussion with the faith community and Homeless Link on to improve the participation arrangements in relation to rough sleeping, acknowledging the role the faith community play and other stakeholders	Discussion with partners to commence Sept 19	Autumn 2019	County Homelessness Co-ordinator Faith forum Wider stakeholders	Completed
Explore 'Move on' funding with Registered Provider partners to expand the availability of move-on accommodation from supported housing environments	Commencement August 19	Winter 2019	Registered Provider partners.	Completed
Keep under review 'No Recourse to Public' Funding arrangements in light of any changes associated with Brexit	Monitoring Government announcements and legislation	Autumn 2019	Housing Services	Completed

Embed the arrangements for the new 'Vulnerable Women' commissioned project and learn from the outcomes and findings	Support to vulnerable women in conjunction with the Nelson Trust	August 2019	Housing Services County Council Nelson Trust	Completed
Review arrangements for those clients with Mental Health (MH) or Learning Disabilities (LD) who are at risk of rough sleeping and improve partnership working if required.	Explore linkages with LD/PD Commissioners.	On-going	Housing Services County Council	On-going
We will review intelligence concerning rough sleepers through Street Aware initiative and seek to adapt practices to ensure we divert rough sleepers from the streets at the earliest opportunity	Review outcomes	Ongoing	County Homelessness Co-ordinator Project Solace	On-going



Meeting:	Cabinet Council	Date:	8 November 2023 16 November 2023
Subject:	Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan – Public consultation (Regulation 18)		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Strategy		
Wards Affected:	ALL		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Adam Gooch – Planning Policy Manager		
	Email: adam.gooch@gloucester.gov.uk	Tel: 39- 6836	
Appendices:	1. Draft Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan Consultation Document		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek approval for public and stakeholder consultation in relation to the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan consultation document (Appendix 1).

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RECOMMEND** to Council that:

- (1) the Strategic and Local Plan Consultation Document (Appendix 1) be approved for consultation under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012
- (2) authority be delegated to the Head of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing, to prepare diagrams illustrating the general location of development options for inclusion in the consultation document, and to make any other necessary minor amendments, corrections and additions to the document prior to publication for consultation.

2.2 Council is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) the Strategic and Local Plan Consultation Document (Appendix 1) be approved for consultation under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012
- (2) authority be delegated to the Head of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing, to prepare diagrams illustrating the general location of development options for inclusion in the consultation document, and

to make any other necessary minor amendments, corrections and additions to the document prior to publication for consultation.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 In July 2023, the City Council approved a new Local Development Scheme (LDS) for the preparation of a new Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan (SLP). Around the same time, Cheltenham Borough Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council approved a similar LDS, supporting the progression of the SLP.
- 3.2 The SLP will set out the strategic development strategy; development requirements (for example new homes and jobs); cross-boundary strategic and other policies where there is value in a consistent approach; and 'locality policies', which address issues and opportunities of only local significance.
- 3.3 Once adopted, the SLP will supersede the adopted Joint Core Strategy (JCS), and for Gloucester City Council, the Gloucester City Plan (GCP) and any saved policies from the 1983 Local Plan. Details of the SLP programme are provided at Section 8.
- 3.4 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Council to hold the first full consultation on the emerging SLP. At this early stage, the purpose of the consultation is to:
 - Introduce the concept of the SLP, the timeframe it should cover and explore the issues the SLP should seek to address.
 - Present and consult on a draft Vision and draft Strategic Objectives, drawing on existing plans and council priorities, strategies and commitments.
 - Explore what will constitute a 'strategic matter' where a single cross-authority policy approach is necessary or desirable, and what are local matters relevant to individual councils or localities only.
 - Consider how the SLP can deliver the legal requirement to adapt and mitigate the implications of climate change, and deliver on the councils' climate change commitments, testing how the statutory development plan can be used to drive change.
 - Consider how much development, such as new homes, retail, employment land and infrastructure, the SLP should plan for.
 - Consider the alternative options for meeting development needs in ways that deliver genuinely sustainable development, drawing on an updated understanding of the capacity of the urban areas to accommodate development on brownfield and other sites in the urban areas.
- 3.5 At this early stage in the process, the statutory purpose of a Regulation 18 consultation is to ask people what they think the Plan should contain and help inform emerging priorities. Accordingly, the consultation document relies on emerging evidence, some of which is new and some updating that of the JCS. Evidence preparation is an ongoing workstream and will be informed by the findings of the Regulation 18 consultation.
- 3.6 Once approved by all three SLP authorities, consultation will commence. This will be undertaken in accordance with each council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI); Gloucester City Council adopted a new SCI in September 2023.

The consultation last for at least eight weeks and be framed around a series of questions, supported by events and consultation methods appropriate to the scope of the consultation. Comment will be invited from our various communities, the development industry, infrastructure/service providers and others with an interest in growth.

- 3.7 The consultation document will be accompanied by an emerging evidence base. This will include the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) which Government requires local planning authorities to maintain. The HELAA is a preliminary assessment, including mapping, of individual sites which have been submitted to the Council, or identified by officers, for consideration as development options. The consultation document itself will include various diagrams derived from the HELAA, illustrating broadly the various potential development locations being promoted to the councils which would be associated with each of the six development scenarios. The graphic design work in drawing up these diagrams is currently underway and will be shared with members prior to the consultation launch. It is important to note, however, that the inclusion of land on any accompanying maps or diagrams does not mean it is to be regarded as suitable or even available for development; nor that it will be supported by the local planning authorities. Decisions on preferred options for any sites and locations will only emerge at later stages in the plan-making process.
- 3.8 The adopted LDS identifies the intended programme for the preparation of the SLP. Following this consultation, focus will turn to the preparation of a Draft Preferred Options SLP. This will include a draft strategy, site allocations and policies, and be published for consultation in early 2025 (also under Regulation 18). To support this stage, it will be necessary to undertake a large amount of evidence to justify the plan and demonstrate its deliverability, including for example detailed transport modelling, an assessment of different site alternatives, and a new assessment of the need for new homes and employment land.
- 3.9 This will be followed by Publication of the Pre-Submission draft SLP (under Regulation 19) in early 2026, followed by Submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination.

4.0 Social Value Considerations

- 4.1 As the SLP progresses, there is an opportunity to secure social value through development opportunities, for example Employment and Skills Plans. However, at this early stage the focus is on considering the issues the plan should aim to address, with social value considerations further along the plan-making process.

5.0 Environmental Implications

- 5.1 The SLP will be a plan to meet development needs in a way which achieves sustainable development, including addressing the causes of climate change, mitigating its effects and promoting nature recovery. The SLP will also include policies to safeguard against other environmental effects of development. All local plans are required to be informed throughout their preparation by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA). A draft SA report has been prepared to inform this Regulation

18 stage, including evaluating the likely sustainability effects of the draft vision, objectives, and spatial options.

5.2 The emerging Plan is also required to be accompanied by a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to ensure adverse impacts on international habitats sites are avoided or, where this is not possible, effectively mitigated. A draft HRA has similarly been prepared to inform this Regulation 18 stage.

5.3 Both documents will be available to view on-line. This is an iterative process and future versions will inform decision making on the emerging Plan as the SLP progresses.

6.0 Alternative Options Considered

6.1 This consultation considers different alternatives and invites comment on other alternatives that should be considered through the SLP process.

7.0 Reasons for Recommendations

7.1 The City Council agreed to the preparation of the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury SLP in July 2023. This represents the first full consultation of the SLP under Regulation 18 and is an opportunity for the community and stakeholders to engage early in the process and inform the scope of the Plan.

8.0 Future Work and Conclusions

8.1 Once approved by all three SLP authorities, consultation will commence for a minimum period of six weeks.

8.2 This is the first consultation in relation to the SLP. The programme for preparation of subsequent stages is set out the adopted LDS 2023.

9.0 Financial Implications

9.1 Consultation activities are included within the overall SLP budget.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

10.0 Legal Implications

10.1 In preparing a local plan, under regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, a local planning authority must notify:

- Consultation bodies that may have an interest in the subject of the proposed local plan/as the local planning authority considers appropriate; and
- Such residents and other persons carrying on business in the local planning authority's area which it considers appropriate to invite representations.

of the subject matter of the local plan which it proposes to prepare and invite them to make representations about what a local plan with that subject ought to contain.

- 10.2 The local planning authority must take into account any representations made to them in response to those invitations and may carry out more than one Regulation 18 consultation in preparing a local plan. There is no minimum period for consultation at this stage of the plan making process, as opposed to the Pre-Submission stage which requires a minimum of 6 weeks.
- 10.3 Under section 19(3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 in preparing the local plan the authority must also comply with their Statement of Community Involvement.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 11.1 The main risk at this stage relates to the Government's proposal for reform to the planning system. However, the scope of the consultation and the questions that are asked will be relevant regardless of any proposed changes to the planning system.
- 11.2 As part of the consultation events will be held at external venues. Risk assessments will be undertaken to ensure the safety of staff and the community.

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

- 12.1 A PIA Screening has also been undertaken, which demonstrates impacts at this stage of the process are neutral.
- 12.2 Furthermore, the SA process (see Section 5) incorporates EqIA. This is a tool that enables the councils to consider the likely impact of the SLP on different groups who share a protected characteristic, as defined by the Equality Act. It is an iterative process and future versions will inform decision making on the emerging Plan as the SLP progresses.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

- 13.1 See Section 11.

14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

- 14.1 None

Background Documents: Local Development Scheme (July 2023)

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Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury

Strategic and Local Plan

**Issues and Options Consultation
(Spatial options and key policy areas)
October 2023**

Version Control: Council Draft Version 30 October 2023

Regulation 18 – Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

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About this Consultation

The Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury area is home to around 350,000 people, roughly 180,000 of whom are either working or looking for work. The population of the area is growing; it is forecast that an additional 23,000 families will form and make the area their home over the next 20 years. Our area is also an attractive and desirable place for people to move to for lifestyle reasons. The area's strategic location on major road and rail corridors is also expected to assist in continued economic growth with some forecasts projecting a further 36,000 jobs could be created across Gloucestershire by 2041.

The population of the area is also ageing, partly because generally people are healthier and living longer, and younger people often move out of the area.

We have very significant demands and pressures. For example:

- Housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable for people – both to rent and to buy with challenges and concerns around security of tenure. It is widely acknowledged that the nation is facing a housing crisis. In large part, this is due to a shortage in the number of new homes being built and the right type of housing to rent that is affordable or being able to buy at a price they can afford.
- The children of today will soon be grown up, looking for jobs and starting families of their own, without necessarily wanting to move away from their roots. They will need somewhere to live, work and send their own children to school in a way that is affordable. In June 2023 the Office for National Statistics reported that the average UK house price was £288,000, well beyond the reach of many.
- The affordability of rural housing is a particular challenge with recent analysis by the National Housing Foundation reporting that social housing waiting lists grew by 31% in the three-year period up to 2022, compared with a 3% increase in urban areas.
- People in their middle years may be looking forward to a well-earned retirement and will expect to be able to live in homes and neighbourhoods which are suitable for their long-term needs.
- Older people may well need secure, supported forms of accommodation, whilst retaining as much independence as possible.
- People will rightly expect health, transport, education, retail and other essential services and facilities to be of a decent standard and at an affordable level and for services and facilities to keep pace with growth.
- Business leaders see our outstanding environment with easy access to a skilled workforce and good road and rail connections, and want to locate in the area to invest in businesses and job creation in the area.
- Meanwhile, the agricultural sector continues to diversify in the face of acute structural and climate changes, whilst tourism and recreational demand has surged in many areas of the countryside, alongside other new opportunities for the rural economy.
- In addition to the challenges posed by a growing/ageing population and a prosperous economy, other issues to think about are:
- Accessibility and Transport: From a global to a local level, people need to have lower carbon choices available to them including how they travel to access jobs, schools, healthcare, shops and other services, and how they source energy to heat their homes and workplaces.

- **Air Quality:** New development may exacerbate air pollution issues. The main sources of air pollution come from road emissions with consequential adverse impacts on health and wellbeing.
- **Biodiversity and Geodiversity:** The conservation of biological and geological diversity (including a reversal of the current trend of biodiversity loss) and the protection and monitoring of endangered and vulnerable species and habitats. The government has introduced a mandatory requirement for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for all developments. There is a need to enhance water quality in watercourses in part to help improve the ecological status of rivers.
- **Climate Change:** People are concerned by the threats posed by climate change – for example through increased flooding and, extremes of weather and risks to food security. There is a need to increase low-carbon and renewable energy generation and usage. There is a need to increase the quality and quantity of green infrastructure to provide different benefits including improved carbon storage, urban cooling, natural flood resilience/flood water storage. Green infrastructure can provide a more attractive public realm to encourage active travel, as well as providing movement corridors for wildlife.
- **Economy:** With digital technology and changing social expectations, we are now shopping, working, travelling and spending leisure time in different ways to the past. This is shaping our town centres, employment patterns and how goods are delivered, how we interact and receive services and making us need to rethink how services and infrastructure will need to be planned for.
- **Historic Environment:** There is a need to protect and enhance heritage assets.
- **Landscape and Townscape:** There is a need to ensure that certain areas of particular importance are protected, which includes the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and Local Green Space. There are also more sensitive areas within townscapes that will need to be protected and enhanced.
- **Natural resources:** New development on greenfield land would be likely to result in irreversible loss of soil including the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. New development and increased population would be likely to place pressure on water resources. There is a need to consider the potential impact on water quality.
- **Population and Health:** There will be increased pressure on health facilities. There are health inequalities, particularly in Gloucester City. There are various pockets of deprivation. There is also social isolation and loneliness amongst the wider population. It is important to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities.

Plan-making is central to delivering change. By way of example, this can be seen through the progress of the Golden Valley Development. Starting from a strategic allocation in the Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy in 2017, this scheme is now progressing on its planning journey to create a vibrant, pioneering Garden Community integrating hi-tech business, residential and leisure uses, and creating a destination of global significance. By understanding our economy and facilitating the jobs and skills for local people, we can build a resilient and sustainable long-term strategy for growth.

We should also be mindful that the population and development pressures will materialise whether we plan for it or not. But the cost of failing to prepare a plan would result in great uncertainty as to where and how development would take place. It would lead to unplanned development which

would not occur in tandem with co-ordinated new infrastructure and would not enable a co-ordinated approach to climate change mitigation and nature recovery.

We must respond now by making long-term decisions over how our area should look and feel in the future. We need a plan. This consultation marks an important early step in preparing a Strategic and Local Plan – or “SLP”. The SLP will apply to the whole area covering Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury and will address the issues outlined above. The councils need your help in drawing up that Plan.

What is a Strategic and Local Plan and why do we need one?

Once agreed, the SLP will set out a vision for at least 15 – 20 years for our part of Gloucestershire to address exactly the sorts of complex growth needs described above. It’s about making decisions now for a future which will give everyone the best possible chance to live healthy and prosperous lives in whatever way they may choose. It’s equally important that we do this in ways which will not prevent future generations from also doing so.

The three councils are working together to draw up the Plan because, although we are separate councils with our own unique identities, the issues we are trying to address (things like housing needs, employment, environmental and climate change action), and the policies that will be needed to solve them, do not fit neatly to administrative boundaries. These are shared questions which will require shared answers.

Thinking about individual experiences, we may live in one area but go to work in another or we may spend leisure time in one area but access school or health services in another. Our Plan needs to recognise the complex ways in which people live their day-to-day lives.

So, we are working together to make sure we are being as effective as we can in making sure the needs of the existing population as well as the growth needs of future generations are met.

1. Introduction and context

- 1.1 Since 2008, Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury councils have worked together to produce a strategic plan covering their three areas. This resulted in the adoption of the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) in 2017, which provided a strategy for how the three areas would develop.
- 1.2 Major changes have happened since then including the effects of a global pandemic. that has touched our lives in many ways. As councils we have recognised climate change and ecological emergencies and understand that we have an active role to play in managing change that has these principles at its heart.
- 1.3 The three authorities have sought to influence national planning policy, including through responding to government consultations and lobbying by Councillors. Through the journey of the plan making route of the SLP, we anticipate change, but it is important that we make progress and build a plan that is flexible and able to adapt.

What's happened so far?

- 1.4 In the summer of 2023, the three councils agreed to produce a single plan rather than separate plans. The new approach to plan-making for the three local authorities was agreed through an update to their Local Development Schemes in July 2023. The new plan will be called the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan (SLP). Gloucestershire County Council has also joined the SLP as a partner.
- 1.5 The councils have worked with other councils in Gloucestershire to produce evidence to support the emerging plan. This includes information on how many new homes and jobs might be required in our area, and a review of issues and opportunities in our city and town centres.
- 1.6 Much more evidence gathering is either underway or will be produced later, including for example a new strategic flood risk assessment and a review of the Green Belt. More information is available on our website (insert website link).

What is the purpose of this consultation?

- 1.7 Now that the new approach to plan-making has been agreed by Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury councils, we want to present what work has been completed so far and engage with you on some key matters to help further develop the principles and priorities. These are:
 - a) What should the Vision be for the SLP? (i.e., what will the area be like as a place to live by the end of the plan period?)
 - b) What Strategic Objectives are necessary to deliver the Vision?
 - c) What are the strategic, cross-boundary issues and opportunities where a shared policy approach is necessary or desirable?
 - d) What are the local issues and opportunities that each council should address in its own section?
 - e) How much development is needed and are there any priority locations for growth?

- f) Are there areas where growth should not take place or where it would be unsustainable?
- g) How could development be delivered in a way that meets the Vision?
- h) How should the plan respond to climate change and ecological emergency?
- i) How should the plan ensure that Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury thrive for our residents, businesses and visitors?

1.8 At the end of each section there are a set of questions that we'd like to explore.

Responding to the consultation

1.9 This focused consultation will last for XXXXXXXX weeks between XXXXXXXX and XXXXXXXX. Comments should be received by 11.59pm on XXXXXXXX.

1.10 To raise awareness and encourage feedback, some events have been organised where officers will be on hand to answer questions. Full details, along with details of how to respond to the consultation are available on the SLP website.

1.11 The councils will review all comments that are made and will summarise the main issues. These will be used to help shape the next stage of the SLP.

Working with other councils and stakeholders

1.12 Councils have a duty to engage with other local authorities and stakeholders in seeking to address strategic, cross-boundary planning matters. The Gloucestershire district councils and county council have formalised this in preparing an agreement to a 'Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground' (SoCG). This includes 37 agreements on different issues such as climate change, the delivery of development needs, flood risk and transport and has been approved by all the councils.

1.13 At this early stage in the SLP process, conversations are ongoing on the various strategic planning matters and will continue as the plan progresses.

Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment) and Habitats Regulations Assessment

1.14 The SLP will be a plan to meet development needs in a way which achieves sustainable development, including addressing the causes of climate change, mitigating its effects and promoting nature recovery. The SLP will also include policies to safeguard against other environmental effects of development. All local plans are required to be informed throughout their preparation by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment. A draft SA report has been prepared to inform this Regulation 18 stage, including evaluating the likely sustainability effects of the draft vision, objectives, and spatial options.

1.15 The emerging Plan is also required to be accompanied by a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to ensure adverse impacts on international habitats sites are avoided or, where this is not possible, effectively mitigated. A draft HRA has similarly been prepared to inform this Regulation 18 stage.

1.16 Both documents are available to view on-line. This is an iterative process and future versions will inform decision making on the emerging Plan as the SLP progresses.

Planning reform

- 1.17 At the time this consultation is being undertaken, the Government is progressing various changes to the planning system. If implemented, these will lead to significant change and will impact the way Plans are prepared, what they look like and how long they take to prepare.
- 1.18 However, at this stage of the process, the councils are exploring broad issues with the community and stakeholders, such as the plan timeframe, what it should address, how much development is needed and how could that be delivered sustainably. This should be relevant to the plan, regardless of the system within which it is prepared.
- 1.19 The councils are very aware that plans take a long time to prepare and there are many benefits of having an up to date, adopted plan. With that in mind, the councils are keen to progress the preparation of the SLP as quickly as possible. Key milestones are set out in the approved Local Development Schemes.

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2. Strategic and Local Plan

2.1 The SLP will be a new plan that will cover the areas of Cheltenham Borough Council, Gloucester City Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council. The area covered by the SLP is shown in the map below:

Map showing area covered by the SLP:

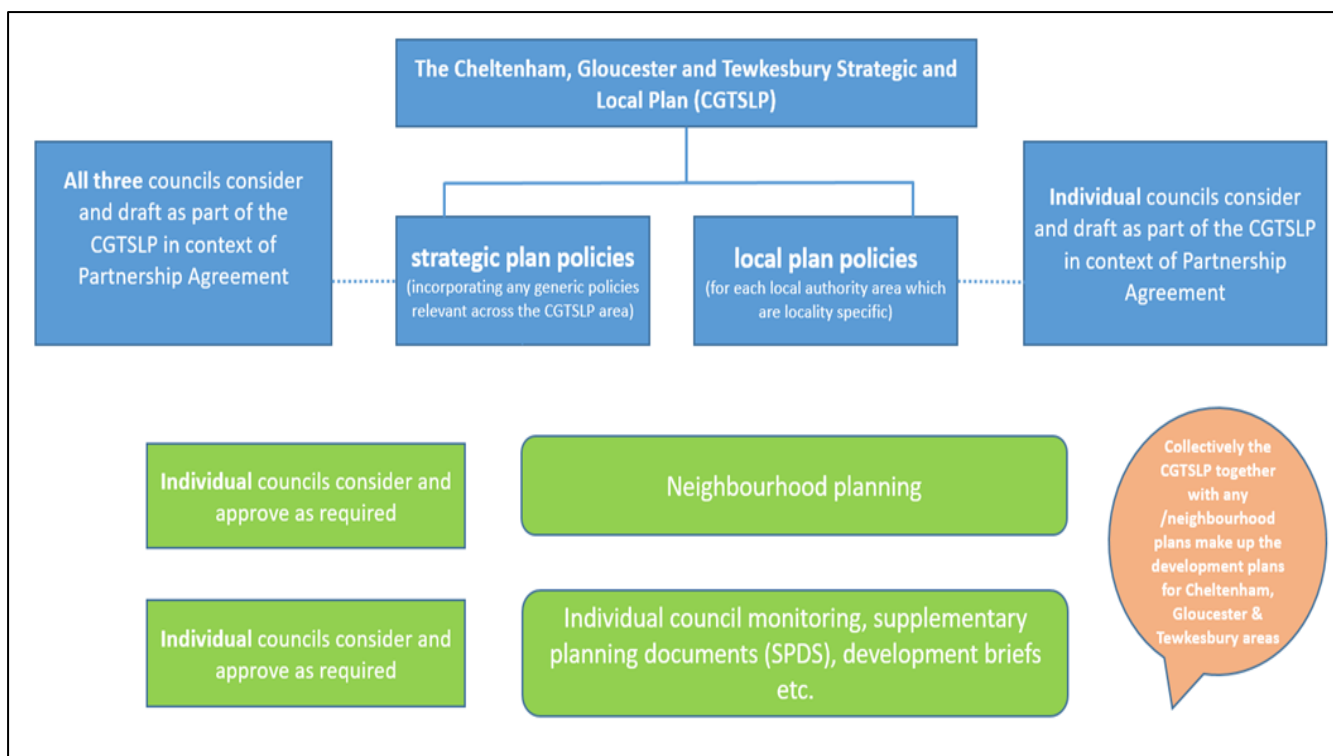
Insert map showing extent of SLP area

2.2 It will be a document containing policies which are used in making decisions on planning applications. It will:

- Set a clear vision, strategy and policies for how the area will grow, providing clarity for what development will and will not be acceptable.
- Set out requirements for the delivery of new homes, jobs and infrastructure to meet the needs of the community and the local economy in a way that is sustainable and addresses our commitments to climate change.
- Provide a strategic framework for Neighbourhood Plans, which can be developed by communities.

2.3 Taken together, the SLP, along with Neighbourhood Plans (which are approved by local communities through a referendum process), the Waste Local Plan and Minerals Local Plan (both prepared by Gloucestershire County Council), form the statutory 'Development Plan' for our area. The development plan comprises a number of different documents that set out planning policies, which are used to decide whether to approve planning applications and to seek to ensure that the right type of development takes place. The proposed structure of the SLP is shown below.

Diagram showing the structure of the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Strategic and Local Plan



2.4 It is intended that the SLP will provide strategic policies that cover the entirety of the council areas. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines, at paragraph 20, what strategic policies should cover:

‘Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for:

- (a) housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;*
- (b) infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);*
- (c) community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure; and*
- (d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change and adaptation.’*

2.5 Strategic policies should look ahead at least 15 years from when a council adopts the plan but can look further ahead for larger scale developments to take into account timescales for the development(s). They should not go into detailed issues. The SLP will then include separate sections that cover each local authority area only, providing ‘locality policies’ that address issues and opportunities specific to that area.

2.6 The approach taken in the currently adopted plans for Gloucester and Cheltenham councils is that the JCS provided all of the strategic policies, and the district plans provided locality policies. The Tewkesbury Borough Plan took a slightly different approach in providing both strategic and locality policies.

- 2.7 The SLP is an opportunity to reconsider what issues are of strategic cross-boundary importance where a single overarching policy approach is necessary or desirable. Equally, what is a local matter that is just relevant to one of the councils and should be a locality policy. This will remove repetition and duplication and help with the useability of the Plan.
- 2.8 It is also necessary to consider what time frame the SLP should cover. As discussed above, the Government requires a plan to cover a period of at least 15 years from the point of adoption. Where the plan includes larger sites that will take longer to develop, the vision and policies can cover a long period of at least 15 years.
- 2.9 At this early stage, preferred development sites have not been identified. However, sites promoted to the councils to date including by landowners, agents and the wider community are presented. It should be emphasised that this consultation does not seek to allocate sites but presents them as part of the wider evidence base. Some sites are big enough to justify a longer period if they were to be chosen. However, the longer the timeframe of the plan, the greater the need for development and infrastructure that will need to be addressed in the plan.
- 2.10 The current timetable for the SLP is for submission to the Secretary of State in April 2026. The Secretary of State will then appoint an independent Planning Inspector who will then examine the SLP. On this basis, the SLP would need to plan up to at least 2041. Finally, once adopted, it is intended that the SLP will replace all policies in the JCS and district plans. It will then be necessary to review the SLP every five years.
- 2.11 It is also important to consider what the SLP will not cover. With plan making in the past, we have often extensively duplicated elements of planning policy that are set out in the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This can increase complexity and at times be confusing for users of the development plan. Therefore, we will aim for the SLP to be focussed, remove duplication, and provide appropriate signposting.
- 2.12 As you review the following summaries of key issues and questions, we ask you to be focussed and succinct in your responses. This will aid drawing together the consultation response report as quickly as possible and will assist in identifying the main issues raised.

Questions

- 1. How far into the future should the Strategic and Local Plan cover?**
- 2. Are there any strategic policy topics, not identified above (paragraph 2.4), which should also be considered?**
- 3. What local policy topics are unique to only a council area, neighbourhood or community?**

3. Draft Vision and Strategic Objectives

- 3.1 The SLP needs to provide a positive Vision for the development of the area; a framework for addressing housing needs and other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings (NPPF, paragraph 15).
- 3.2 The Vision should be supported by Strategic Objectives, which set out the key ways that it will be delivered. The Vision and Strategic Objectives provide the foundation on which the plan's strategy and policies are then based. Visions should be bold and ambitious, but realistic, and set the approach for at least the next 15 years.
- 3.3 The adopted JCS and district plans provide the most recent Vision and Strategic Objectives for our area. These drew on the priorities of the councils and national planning policy at that time. Since this time however, the councils have reviewed and updated their priorities, for example through the preparation of new corporate strategies and plans. The Government's expectations and priorities for local plans has already changed, with the publication of a new NPPF. As a result, there are a number of key planning issues which the SLP will need to address, and which will shape the Vision and Strategic Objectives. The key issues are:
- a) The need to address the causes and mitigate the effects of climate change.
 - b) The need to promote nature recovery.
 - c) Recognising and addressing the implications of an ageing population and improving health opportunities alongside creating opportunities for our young people to want to stay in our area rather than needing to look outside of the SLP area due to a lack of opportunities.
 - d) Ensuring the right amount of land for homes and employment is identified to meet needs throughout the duration of the Plan's period.
 - e) Ensuring that people can access the right types and sizes of homes at an affordable price, including those with specialist housing needs such as travellers and people with disabilities.
 - f) Ensuring new homes and jobs are provided in locations where services and facilities, including community facilities, can be accessed by a choice of means of transport, including public transport, walking and cycling.
 - g) Providing the right types of employment land to meet the needs of modern urban and rural business and as a vehicle for inward investment.
 - h) Putting placemaking at the heart of development and securing high quality design and respecting the character of our existing communities and the surrounding landscape.
 - i) Managing town, city and other centres in a way which responds to changing shopping and leisure habits, including in the rural area.
 - j) Identifying and facilitating the infrastructure, including (but not limited to) education; transport, e.g. mass rapid transit routes; health; e.g. GP surgeries; green infrastructure, and digital infrastructure, that are needed to support growth and our communities.
 - k) Ensuring the SLP's proposals are viable and deliverable.
- 3.4 Considering these issues, a review of the existing Vision and Strategic Objectives has been undertaken and a new draft provided below for comment. Many of the elements of the existing Vision and Strategic Objectives remain valid. For example, the need to deliver the

right amount and type of new homes and jobs and ensuring that developments occur in sustainable locations.

- 3.5 However, some elements need updating or there is a need to reflect a new or stronger priority. This includes for example the need to address the implications of climate change, with each council making strong commitments that require delivery over the coming years and importantly, through the SLP.

Draft Vision

By 2041, and beyond for larger scale developments, the Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury area will have harnessed the opportunities of green growth to create thriving, beautiful, energy efficient, resilient and healthy places. Growth will have afforded the highest possible quality of life for all in a manner which achieves carbon reductions and addresses the causes and effects of climate change.

Investment in training, skills and development will have attracted and retained a younger workforce and provided new premises and flexible workspaces to support a flourishing circular economy in both urban and rural areas. Inward investment, innovation and growth in key sectors including, amongst others, cyber and digital-tech, food/agri-tech, advanced engineering and tourism will have been fostered.

People's housing needs will have been met through the provision of sustainable, high-quality market, affordable and other specialist homes set in beautiful, safe places and conforming to sustainable standards of design and construction. The focus will have been on making best possible use of brownfield sites in built up areas and large-scale, comprehensively planned new development to ensure our valuable green spaces and highest quality farmland are preserved. The vital role of the area's city centre, town centres and high streets will have been improved through careful management of development and land uses.

Growth in sustainable locations will have enabled the provision of healthy, accessible and walkable neighbourhoods, the promotion of active travel and sustainable travel, and provision of new transport systems that work for local people.

Growth will have been supported by the provision of a range of essential digital, transport, community and other infrastructure. Equally, alongside conserving the area's special landscapes and its attractiveness as a place to visit, a network of interconnected green spaces and waterways will have secured a high-quality environment for people and nature. Together with necessary retention and management of existing sports and leisure facilities, this will have unlocked opportunities for healthy lifestyles, inclusive access to sport and recreation, active flood risk management and improvements to biodiversity.

The area's thriving cultural offer will have flourished, and its rich diversity of heritage assets preserved through carefully considered developments and enhancements.

Draft Strategic Objectives

Meeting the challenges of climate change

- 1. Ensure that growth contributes to decarbonisation through reduced reliance on fossil fuels and achievement of biodiversity net gain; and the delivery of zero and low carbon development that is resilient and adaptable to climate change incorporating measures to aid urban cooling and biodiversity such as green walls and tree planting.**
- 2. Ensuring growth takes place in sustainable locations that minimise the need to travel and provide genuine sustainable transport and active travel options.**
- 3. Making the most effective use of previously developed land, including higher density development in city and town centres and other locations well served by public transport.**
- 4. Ensure development effectively integrates with existing development, and/or is a self-contained development that provides shops, services, facilities through walking, cycling or public transport.**
- 5. Delivers low and zero carbon energy development, making the most effective use of renewable energy opportunities, both in new developments and off-site energy generation.**
- 6. Ensure development is located in areas that are not liable to flooding, considering the implications of climate change, making effective use of sustainable drainage systems and natural flood management techniques. Ensure that existing infrastructure is adequately protected from the threat of flooding, and that existing flood defences are protected and enhanced.**
- 7. Ensure development incorporates measures to reduce waste.**
- 8. Ensure people can make carbon friendly choices at home by providing easy to use cycle storage, covered space to dry washing outside, space to grow food and compost.**

Building strong, competitive and sustainable urban and rural economies

- 1. Providing the right conditions and sufficient land in the right locations to support existing and new businesses and deliver the 'green growth'.**
- 2. Improve the area's economic resilience, supporting a highly skilled workforce, skills and educational development attainment. Providing the right environment for business start-ups, entrepreneurship, and the improvement and expansion of education and training facilities to develop the skills employers need.**
- 3. Supporting the needs of agricultural businesses, encouraging farm diversification, the development of small rural business units, the conversion of existing buildings for rural business use, appropriate expansion of existing businesses.**
- 4. Supporting effective home working through provision of housing with adequate space and services.**
- 5. Developing the area's role as a tourist destination, building on the unique and varied cultural offer that already exists.**
- 6. Ensuring access to high speed, reliable full-fibre broadband connectivity in both urban and rural areas.**

Ensuring strong and vibrant city and town centres

- 1. Ensuring a network of city and town centres that meet the needs of communities, including supporting cultural uses and events, and that are able to respond and evolve as the role and function of centres changes.***
- 2. Support the provision of a wide range of different uses appropriate to city and town centres, including new homes, to create activity at different times of the day and build an active city and town centre community.***
- 3. To draw on the uniqueness of the different centres in planning for their future.***

Delivering a wide choice of homes that meet the needs of our communities

- 1. Delivering sufficient new homes in the right places to meet the needs of our communities, including market and affordable, specialist homes (e.g. older persons), Gypsy, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and those wishing to build their own homes (self and custom build homes).***
- 2. Delivering housing of the right size, type and tenure to create mixed and balanced communities, in sustainable locations and with good access to shops, services and facilities.***

Delivering well designed, beautiful and safe places

- 1. Supporting the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places through good design.***
- 2. Ensuring that new development is integrated well with existing communities and providing well-located infrastructure which meets the needs of communities;***
- 3. Creating a strong sense of place through high quality and inclusive design that respects and enhances local distinctiveness.***

Prioritising sustainable transport and active travel

- 1. Reducing the need to travel by creating real options for healthy, accessible and walkable neighbourhoods where key services are available without the need to use motorised transport;***
- 2. Promoting the use of sustainable travel modes by improving existing and providing new frequent public transport links and safe walking and cycling routes in all new developments;***
- 3. Reducing reliance on the private vehicle by improving access to services in rural and urban areas through new development, improved integrated transport links and supporting local and community led transport initiatives in the Local Transport Plan;***
- 4. Creating a genuine choice between different modes of transport by integrating new development with existing networks and enhancing these wherever possible.***

Making as much use as possible of brownfield land and conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environments

- 1. Protecting and enhancing the area's unique historic and cultural environment, archaeological heritage and geological assets whilst enabling appropriate development that facilitates the cross-cutting objectives of sustainable development;***

- 2. *Conserving, managing and enhancing the area's unique natural environment and biodiversity, including its waterways, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), the Cotswolds National Landscape, and areas of landscape and biodiversity importance, and maximising the opportunities to use land to manage flood water;***
- 3. *Ensuring developments support green infrastructure and improve existing green infrastructure within urban and rural areas to provide movement corridors for people and wildlife.***

Promoting healthy and resilient communities

- 1. *Delivering new developments that are supported by the necessary social and community infrastructure, including schools, open space, playing fields, community facilities and green and blue infrastructure and promote community cohesion.***
- 2. *Supporting and safeguarding village shops that serve the everyday needs of local communities.***
- 3. *Delivering new developments that are fully integrated into the green infrastructure network to allow people access to nature and green spaces to maximise wellbeing and active travel opportunities.***
- 4. *Ensure new developments create high quality living environments and prioritise health and mental wellbeing.***
- 5. *Ensure that all homes have useable functioning amenity space that allows residents the opportunity to live, work and relax outside.***

Questions

- 4. Do you agree with the draft Vision?**
 - a. If not, what changes would you like to see?**
- 5. Do you agree with the draft Strategic Objectives?**
 - a. If not, what changes would you like to see?**

4. Planning for climate change and nature recovery

- 4.1 The SLP will need to support the transition to a low carbon future and help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience. It will also need to respond to a significant decline in biodiversity over many decades and protect important habits and support nature to recover.
- 4.2 The proposed Vision and Objectives set out that the SLP should meet the challenges of climate change, deliver green growth, prioritise sustainable and active travel, making as much use of brownfield land, ensuring nature recovery, and promoting healthy and resilient communities.
- 4.3 This would mean ensuring:
- Development is located in the most sustainable locations.
 - New homes and buildings are of high quality, low and zero carbon, and energy efficient whilst creating and storing their own energy.
 - Providing secure and local energy supplies; making the places people live and work rich in wildlife and close to valuable natural spaces.
 - Making it easier for people to move around in healthy ways to access services close to their homes without relying heavily on the private car.
 - Protecting people and infrastructure from flooding.
 - Encouraging the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings.
 - Supporting renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
 - Supporting measures to promote conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, protect and support the recovery of priority species, and support biodiversity improvements.

Issues

- 4.4 Scientists have widely reported that the UK's first 40°C day, in summer 2022, was the clearest indication yet that climate change has arrived in England. The Government advisory body, The Climate Change Committee has noted increases in heat related deaths and the disruption to infrastructure climate change is causing in the UK, and that its impacts will intensify in coming decades.
- 4.5 The UK Government and each of the SLP councils have declared a climate change emergency. In the face of this emergency, the councils have committed to become net zero (achieving a balance between the carbon emitted into the atmosphere, and the carbon removed from it) by 2045 at the latest. There are clear objectives and national targets in place to limit global temperature rise to 1.5. The UK has legally pledged to reduce economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions by at least 68% by 2030, and a 78% decrease in all emissions by 2035.
- 4.6 There is also a recognition that there has been a significant decline in living organisms over many decades, including animals, insects, plants, bacteria and fungi. The 'State of Nature' report from 2019 suggests there has been a 13% decline in the abundance of wildlife in the UK since the 1970s. It is essential that this decline is reversed, and measures are put in place to address this.

- 4.7 Certain habitats are also protected by law, for example Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and sites designated under the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar sites). They are protected by law because of their international importance. This includes, amongst others, the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC (located in Stroud District Council's area) and the Severn Estuary SPA and Ramsar site (located in the Forest of Dean District Council's area).

Policy framework

- 4.6 Local planning authorities are bound by a legal duty, to ensure that, taken as whole, planning policies contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change. The NPPF similarly requires a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change. It states that new development should be planned for in ways that help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide a positive strategy for renewable and low carbon energy and heat.
- 4.7 It further requires that *"all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to: meet the development needs of their area; align growth and infrastructure; improve the environment; mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects."*
- 4.8 We know that climate change is bringing wetter winters and hotter, drier summers. It is important that the growth required to support our increasing population does not harm to the climate or the natural environment.
- 4.9 In terms of biodiversity, the Environment Act 2021 introduced a mandatory requirement for 10% 'Biodiversity Net Gain' (BNG), which comes into force in January 2024. This means that through development, the natural environment will be left in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. If possible, this should happen on-site.
- 4.10 The NPPF requires Plans to identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks. Local plans should promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species. Plans should also identify and pursue opportunities for securing BNG.
- 4.11 It will be necessary to assess the likely impact on internationally protected sites, arising from growth, e.g. through more people living nearby, and worsening air quality. Emerging evidence will be kept up to date on the councils' websites.

The role of a local plan

- 4.12 In line with the NPPF, the SLP will need to take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, and supporting nature protection and recovery in a way that creates better and more equitable lives for the people of Gloucestershire. There are many areas where plan making can take action. These can be summarised as:
- Built environment – buildings, streets and hard landscaping such as public squares and car parks. The places where we live, work, access shops and services, what those places look like, where they are located, and how they function and are heated and cooled.

- Natural environment – Landscaping, open spaces, gardens, trees, woodland, hedgerows, plants and animals and their habitats, soil, ponds, streams, rivers and canals, and the flood plain.
- Movement – how we get around between places by supporting delivery of public transport, pedestrian and cycle links.
- Renewable energy – energy from sources that do not deplete (such as the sun, wind, geothermal, tidal) to heat, cool and run the built environment without creating harm to the natural environment.

4.13 The table below outlines some of the policy actions within each of the above categories that we might consider through the SLP.

Climate Change			
Built Environment	Natural Environment	Movement	Renewable Energy
Energy efficient homes, practical homes, the right location, layout, density, amenity space, design, materials, waste, allotments, air pollution, reuse, retrofit schemes, heating and cooling, insulation.	Flooding, sustainable urban drainage, green infrastructure, biodiversity (plants and animals), protecting soil, beautiful places, shading, sustainable urban drainage, agricultural land and food security, open space, management of waste and pollution, creation of carbon sinks through tree planting and wetland creation.	Sustainable transport, active travel, choice, proximity of jobs, shops and services, low emission vehicles, e-bikes, cycling and walking.	Homes and businesses generating their own power, making the most of wind and solar opportunities, air source heat pumps, ground source heat pumps, phasing out gas, decentralised, combined district heating.

4.14 While the focus of this element of the consultation is to engage people on the ways in which the SLP can respond to climate change, consultants working on behalf of the councils have prepared a Phase 1 Renewable Energy Study. This looks at locations across the SLP area that could be suitable for different forms of renewable energy, such as wind and solar. The study can be accessed via the SLP website. The Phase 2 study will focus on opportunities, including those that could be delivered through site allocations.

4.14 For nature recovery, there is an opportunity for the SLP to consider going beyond the minimum 10% improvement in biodiversity required by the Environment Act. However, this would be an additional cost to developers, and it is important to be mindful of viability, which is a challenge in some parts of the SLP area.

4.15 Where BNG is to be delivered offsite, the councils would like this to happen in a coordinated way that benefits the SLP areas and Gloucestershire more widely. The councils would like to

explore, through this consultation, if there are any site opportunities for BNG that the councils should consider.

- 4.16 With internationally protected sites, as discussed earlier it will be necessary for the SLP to assess the likely impact on those sites resulting from development, and to ensure that negative impacts are mitigated. The approach taken at present for most developments where there would be an impact, is for either the impact to be addressed on-site, or for a payment to mitigate elsewhere. That payment is used to:
- a) Provide measures on site (for example this could be a warden, new signs or paths), and
 - b) Deliver alternative sites, known as 'Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace' (SANG), that are attractive to use and provide a genuine alternative for people to use, reducing pressure on the protected site.
- 4.17 To support this consultation, independent consultants have prepared a Habitats Regulations Assessment, which is available to view on-line.
- 4.18 Through this consultation, the councils would like to explore whether there are sites that should be considered as opportunities for environmental purposes through the SLP. This includes wildlife / biodiversity net gain and SANG, as well as recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling and shading, carbon storage and food production.

Questions

6. In what ways do you consider the Strategic and Local Plan can most effectively address the impacts of climate change?
7. What measures and standards should the Strategic and Local Plan introduce in respect of the:
 - a. Construction and operation of new buildings?
 - b. Retention and reuse of existing buildings?
8. Should the Strategic and Local Plan require more than the mandatory minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain through development?
9. Are you aware of any land that could be identified for environmental purposes, such as wildlife / biodiversity net gain, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling and shading, carbon storage and food production?
10. Which key services and facilities do you think are most important to be provided within easy reach of developments?
11. Should we allocate sites in the SLP specifically for renewable energy generation or storage?
 - a. If so, what forms of renewable energy would be appropriate and in which locations?

5. Planning for community and business

- 5.1 A key part of good planning is ensuring that those who live in the area now as well as those who may live in the area in the future have a home that meets their needs. Whether that be an older household wishing to downsize; a young professional wishing to move out of their parents' home; or a growing family needing more space.
- 5.2 The planning system has a key role in addressing housing pressures and particularly the affordability of housing. This chapter explores what the housing policies in the SLP could look like to help to deliver the right homes in the places where they are needed.

New homes

What type of new homes might be needed?

- 5.3 It is important to understand the types, sizes and tenures of homes that will be required to meet the wide range of different groups in the community.
- 5.4 The NPPF makes it clear that the housing needs of those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes should be catered for in local plans. However, this is not an exhaustive list. For example, some people express an interest for community-led housing, including co-housing, and other innovative forms of housing such as tiny homes.
- 5.5 The existing Local Housing Needs Assessment (2020) provides a snapshot of evidence in relation to the range of housing needs in our area. The councils will be updating this evidence. In the meantime, we would like to hear your views as to what forms of accommodation you think we should plan for in the SLP.

Affordable housing

- 5.6 Housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable for people – both to rent and to buy with challenges and concerns around security of tenure. It is widely acknowledged that the nation is facing significant housing challenges. This includes a lack of affordable homes and rents that are increasingly unaffordable.
- 5.7 The children of today will soon be grown up, looking for jobs and starting families of their own, without necessarily wanting to move away from their roots. They will need somewhere to live, work and send their own children to school in a way that is affordable. In June 2023 the Office for National Statistics reported that the average UK house price was £288,000, well beyond the reach of many.
- 5.8 The affordability of rural housing is a particular challenge with recent analysis by the National Housing Foundation reporting that social housing waiting lists grew by 31% in the three-year period up to 2022, compared with a 3% increase in urban areas.

Housing for older and disabled people

- 5.9 The SLP will need to ensure that the needs for housing for older and disabled people are addressed. The PPG sets out advice on the different types of specialist housing designed to meet the diverse needs of older people, which can include:
- Age-restricted general market housing.
 - Retirement living or sheltered housing.
 - Extra care housing or housing-with-care.
 - Residential care homes and nursing homes.
- 5.10 Other models of housing delivery include co-housing, including for seniors, which are created and run by residents, based on the intention to live with groups of people with similar needs and desires.
- 5.11 The SLP will similarly need to consider the need for accessible and adaptable housing to enable disabled people to live more independently and safely, with greater choice and control over their lives.

Student accommodation

- 5.12 Within our area there are three further education establishments: the University of Gloucestershire, the University of the West of England and Gloucestershire Royal Hospital. Outside of the area, but in close proximity, is Hartpury University and College. There have been recent investments, for example the conversion of the former Debenhams building in Gloucester City Centre as a new campus for the University of Gloucestershire. This is due to open in September 2024 and once fully open, will provide brand new teaching facilities for 4,500 students. To support the growing student population there have also been significant new student accommodation developments, including Pitville student village in Cheltenham and Blackfriars in Gloucester.
- 5.13 Through the SLP, it's important to support the delivery of new student accommodation to meet the needs of the growing universities and further education establishments. However, this form of accommodation tends to be used by students in their first year, with private sector housing used for later years. This can cause problems with the loss of family housing to student lets and issues arising from the loss of character of an area.

Traveller communities

- 5.14 The accommodation needs for Gypsies, traveller and boat dwellers is an area where specific evidence is required under Government policies, and so this is addressed in the section below.

How many new homes?

- 5.15 In deciding how much housing will be needed, the Government provides local planning authorities with a starting point based on a formula known as the 'standard method'. This uses various inputs to determine a minimum average annual need figure for new homes, including average population (household) growth and the affordability of housing in the council area. It is updated periodically to reflect changes.
- 5.16 The most recent evidence produced collectively by the Gloucestershire councils was set out in the Gloucestershire Local Housing Needs Assessment, which was published in 2020. In

respect of annual housing needs, this reflected the standard method figure applicable at the time. The current figures based on the standard method are set out in the table below.

Table showing current annual local housing need for each Council (based on standard method).

Council area	Annual need for new homes	20 year need for new homes
Cheltenham Borough	547	10,940
Gloucester City	681	13,620
Tewkesbury Borough	557	11,140
Total	1,785	35,700

- 5.17 The NPPF makes clear that alternatives approaches to the standard method in deciding the number of homes needed may be adopted where there are exceptional circumstances to do so, and where this would also reflect current and future demographic trends and market signals.
- 5.18 The councils therefore need to consider whether there is any such exceptional justification for calculating local housing needs using a method other than the standard method, which may result in a need for more, or fewer, homes than set out in the table above. An example may be where an area has such significant plans for economic growth that it would attract more people to its area, requiring more homes. Although our current evidence exploring economic growth forecasts and their relationship to the need for new homes have concluded there is currently no justification for amending the needs figures, this evidence is required to be kept under review.
- 5.19 It is important to note, however, that the housing need figure is only the first step in deciding how many homes should actually be planned for – this is known as the “housing requirement”. The housing requirement will need to be determined on the basis of an understanding of individual site constraints and opportunities.
- 5.20 It is important to note that the sites identified in the JCS, district plans and other sites with planning permission will deliver new homes in the new timeframe for the plan (the JCS and district plans covering up to 2031). This includes large sites that have planning permission and are delivering new homes at Twigworth, Innsworth, Brockworth and Churchdown. A large number of homes required are therefore already accounted for.

Questions

- 12. Should the Strategic and Local Plan use the local annual housing need calculation from the Standard Method?**
 - a. If no, please set out what you consider the councils should use instead.
- 13. Are there any constraints or other reasons why the number of houses to be actually planned for in the Strategic and Local Plan should differ from calculated needs?**
- 14. Are there any specific types, sizes or tenures of housing that the SLP should require for particular groups in the community?**
 - a. If so, please explain further.

Traveller Communities

- 5.21 Councils need to assess the need for new homes for all communities, including traveller communities. This includes Gypsies, Roma, Travellers, Travelling Showpeople and boat dwellers. The Gloucestershire councils have recently completed a new assessment of the need for traveller sites in Gloucestershire and the results are set out below. Full details are available in the Gloucestershire Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment.

Table showing the need for Travelling Showpeople plots.

Travelling Showpeople need					
Council area	2021 - 26	2026 - 31	2031 - 36	2023 - 41	Total
Cheltenham Borough	0	0	0	0	0
Gloucester City	14	4	5	5	28
Tewkesbury Borough	10	3	3	4	20
Total	24	8	8	9	48

Table showing the need for Gypsy/Travellers pitches.

Gypsy and Traveller need					
Council area	2021 - 26	2026 - 31	2031 - 36	2023 - 41	Total
Cheltenham Borough	6	1	1	1	9
Gloucester City	28	2	3	3	36
Tewkesbury Borough	29	21	22	24	96
Total	63	24	26	28	141

Table showing the need for Boat Dwellers.

Boat dwellers need					
	2021 - 26	2026 - 31	2031 - 36	2023 - 41	Total
Gloucestershire	50	1	1	1	53

- 5.22 There is also the need to consider the needs of traveller communities travelling through the area, that need somewhere to stop overnight or perhaps for a few days. These could be formal 'transit' sites, or more informal approaches where suitable land is identified.
- 5.23 At this stage we are considering how we can meet the needs of the traveller community. Between 22nd August and 6th October 2023, a 'call for sites' was held by councils across Gloucestershire. This is where any person or organisation can submit a site, which will then be assessed to see if it is suitable and could be delivered for the community. As part of this process, the councils notified many public bodies and other organisations, and met directly with some, to encourage the submission of as many sites as possible.
- 5.24 In total, this process resulted in XX sites being submitted and these are currently being assessed. A background document, setting out the methodology, process and results is available to download from the SLP website.
- 5.25 This isn't the end of the process. The councils are always happy to receive any sites for further consideration outside a formal 'call for sites', including through this consultation. Detail of how to submit a site is provided on the SLP website, or feel free to get in touch with one of the councils to discuss further.
- 5.26 The 'call for sites' has resulted in sufficient sites being submitted to meet the needs for permanent moorings for the boat dweller community. However, for other traveller communities there is still a need for more sites. We therefore need to think about other opportunities that could be available.
- 5.27 At the time of writing, we are considering whether certain existing sites could be used more effectively i.e. can more pitches or plots be accommodated on them. Another option is to require pitches and plots as part of large (strategic) allocations in the SLP, as part of a wider mix of development, including bricks and mortar housing, offices and industrial buildings. This has been used successfully elsewhere in the country.
- 5.28 We would like to explore through this consultation your views on these options and whether there are any other options to delivering for the traveller community that should be considered.
- 5.29 In identifying sites for the traveller community in the SLP, we need to make sure they meet the needs of the different communities and are in the right location. We'd like to explore this further through this consultation.

Questions

- 15. Should sites for traveller communities be provided as part of large developments for housing and/or employment?**
- 16. Are there any other ways that sites for traveller communities could be met in our area?**
- 17. What site characteristics and locations would be most suitable for different traveller communities?**

Jobs and the economy

- 5.30 One of the roles of the SLP will be to establish the right level of employment growth and ensure that the right type of employment land is provided in the right sorts of locations for business wishing to invest, expand and adapt.
- 5.31 The need for ‘employment land’ includes offices, industrial estates, warehousing and distribution. Unlike the need for new homes, the Government doesn’t give councils a starting point. To explore the existing state of the economy of the area and how it may grow in the future, the councils in Gloucestershire worked together on a ‘Gloucestershire Economic Needs Assessment’ (DLP Planning, August 2020), which provided a high-level assessment of the Gloucestershire economy. The Gloucestershire Economic Needs Assessment looked at different economic forecasts and provided an indicative range of employment needs for different types of employment.

Table showing Employment Land Needs by Local Authority, 2021-2041

	Use Class B1a/b* (Offices and Research and development)		Use Class B1c (Light industry) / B2 (general industry) /B8 (Storage and Distribution) *	
Source	Labour Supply Growth (hectares)	Labour Demand Growth 1 (hectares)	Labour Supply Growth (hectares)	Labour Demand Growth 1 (hectares)
Cheltenham	22.9	26.2	15.4	17.6
Gloucester	31.1	33.7	19.2	19.9
Tewkesbury	20.7	23.0	63.1	75.5
JCS Area (Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury)	74.7	82.9	97.7	113.0

*All buildings fall under a Planning Use Class. As there have been changes to the different types of Use Classes, this will need to be considered through any new evidence.

- 5.32 The labour demand scenarios consider the level of land needed to support the level of employment growth, which is based on different job forecasts in different sectors. The labour supply scenarios are based on population growth. This is historically used to estimate the level of employment land needed.
- 5.33 It is acknowledged that the evidence in the Gloucestershire Economic Needs Assessment was prepared at a time when the implications of Brexit and Covid-19 were not fully known, and therefore the intention is that this evidence will be reviewed to inform subsequent stages of the SLP. There will also be a need to take account of changing working practices, particularly since Covid-19 with a greater move towards home working or hybrid working as well as changes in logistics associated with increased on-line shopping, whilst recognising that there will still be a need for business premises of the right quality in the right locations.

Any evidence will need to take account of 'market signals', which includes what changes in skills are likely to be needed; how many people will be there to take up jobs; does the existing employment land that is available meet the needs of existing businesses or people looking to set up businesses in the area.

- 5.34 It will also be important to ensure that rural communities are also able to capitalise on the potential for economic growth. Whilst agriculture remains important, the rural economy is increasingly diversifying. Tourism and recreation have grown strongly, particularly in response to the Covid pandemic. Equally, however, the composition of urban and rural economies has become more closely aligned over time and there may be opportunities for sectors such as manufacturing, technological, creative and other commercial employment in the countryside.
- 5.35 The emerging Gloucestershire Economic Strategy being produced by Gloucestershire County Council and the GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is due for approval in early 2024. The Strategy will include an updated long-term vision for the county that will focus on creating improved employment opportunities within the context of achieving the county's climate change commitments as it transitions to a low carbon economy.
- 5.36 The emerging Strategy identifies four key propositions to support delivery of the vision.
1. Sustainable Growth which supports a strategic approach to planning and delivery of new housing and employment sites to ensure that new growth proposals are at a sufficient in scale to support carbon net-zero targets while ensuring that all supporting infrastructure is financially viable, so it is delivered in the right place and at the right time.
 2. Inward Investment which builds on supporting Gloucestershire's reputation as a welcoming and supportive environment for businesses from the UK and abroad to invest, fostering innovation, creating jobs, and promoting prosperity across the county.
 3. Skills and Employment which seeks to ensure that every resident has the opportunity to grow their skills and make the most of job opportunities in a diverse and flourishing economy.
 4. Business Support which provides an offer to enable businesses of all sizes and types to innovate, create jobs, and positively contribute to the transition to a low carbon economy.
- 5.37 The SLP will help to deliver the vision in the emerging Economic Strategy, including green growth. Currently, the M5 corridor is a magnet for employment growth, as acknowledged in the Local Transport Plan. This is because businesses, their supply chains, workers and consumers collectively depend upon a good quality highway network to move goods, delivery services and travel to work and other service facilities. However, the Local Transport Plan also acknowledges that the M5 motorway junctions are subject to significant demand which result in congestion, delay and at times safety concerns as a result of mainline queuing. It therefore concludes that the continued functioning of the M5 as a reliable and fast link providing regional connectivity can only be ensured with a transport strategy that will also see a significant shift in demand from the M5 to the Birmingham to Bristol rail link that runs in parallel to the M5. The same is true for the City Region's east-west connectivity provided by the A40 which is also paralleled by a rail line.
- 5.38 There will be various exciting developments taking shape over the coming years, including the National Innovation Centre in Cheltenham capitalising on the presence of GCHQ

(Government Communications Headquarters), as part of the Golden Valley development. Cheltenham has recently been recognised as an innovation hotspot (Centre for Cities, September 2023, Innovation hotspots, Clustering the New Economy), which is essentially where firms cluster together in terms of sharing infrastructure and access to workers. The SLP will need to consider how best to facilitate the environment for businesses, positioning our city, town and other centres in a way that embraces growth, flexibility, change and innovation.

- 5.39 In Gloucester City, longstanding regeneration opportunities are coming to fruition with the development of the Forum, which will provide a new digital and technology campus with space for approximately 1,000 jobs, 131-bedroom hotel, new homes, leisure and retail. The University of Gloucestershire are also developing a new city centre campus which will provide teaching facilities for 4,500 students.
- 5.40 Tewkesbury Borough is an established investment location with a diverse range of economic sectors including advanced manufacturing and engineering, construction, transport, technology, financial services and creative industries. Tourism is also a particularly important industry.

Questions

- 18. What economic and regeneration needs should the Strategic and Local Plan address in supporting businesses to invest, expand and adapt?**
- 19. How should the Strategic and Local Plan best seek to accommodate employment needs and provide an environment that is attractive to inward investment?**
- 20. How should the Strategic and Local Plan support and encourage rural employment?**

Retail and town centres

- 5.41 Our city and town centres, as well as smaller village, farm, and neighbourhood shops, are really important. In addition to providing local access to shops, services and facilities, they often form the focus within communities, providing the opportunity for interaction between people, and a source of local employment.
- 5.42 Within our area, there are a wide range of different retail centres that perform different but equally important roles. Within the JCS, there is a hierarchy of city and town centres. This identifies Cheltenham Town Centre and Gloucester City Centre as main centres that offer a wide range of different things, and that have a wide catchment area, acting as sub-regional centres, with people living in areas such as the Forest of Dean, the Cotswolds, Tewkesbury Borough and Stroud Borough using them on a regular basis for shopping, leisure and services.
- 5.43 There are many smaller town centres that provide an important role in supporting the needs of local people and a wide rural area, i.e., Tewkesbury, Winchcombe and Bishops Cleeve.

These tend to offer limited range of food stores, clothing and essential services such as a post office.

- 5.44 Below this, there are smaller centres still that have a much more community/neighbourhood focus, referred to as either 'local centres', district centres', or 'neighbourhood centres'. These tend to provide a small number of shops, services and facilities that meet people's day-to-day needs, usually including a food shop plus maybe a post office, takeaways, pub and community hall.
- 5.45 Over the past few years, most centres have undergone significant change and challenge. The way people shop and use city and town centres has shifted away from shopping, which had always been the main reason to. People now look for shopping experiences and good quality and varied hospitality. Increasingly, people shop online or use retail parks.
- 5.46 There is now a need to rethink the role of our city and town centres and establish a long-term strategy that allows them to be flexible, adapt, evolve and thrive. Given their historic nature we need a strategy that enables flexible adaptation, while being respectful of conservation.
- 5.47 To help the councils consider how best to plan for our city, town and village centres, independent consultants prepared a Retail Study. It assessed the 'health' of centres at a point in time and considers strategy and policy options to ensure they remain important and respond to the needs of the community and visitors. Alongside this, an assessment looked at future economic forecasts to understand if it's likely to be necessary to plan for more retail units over the lifetime of the plan.
- 5.48 For the main three city and town centres in our area, the 'health check' is summarised below; however, in responding to the questions, we invite comments on any centre in the area. It is important to note that this assessment was completed in 2019 and since then changes will have occurred. It is likely the assessment will be updated through the preparation of the SLP.

Gloucester City Centre

- a) Factors such as a reduction in 'turnover' and an increase in vacancies suggest a city centre that is vulnerable and at risk from increased competition elsewhere (for example out of centre retail parks). Proposals for retail development outside of the traditional city centre should be carefully assessed.
- b) The delivery of Kings Quarter regeneration / the Forum, refurbishment/redevelopment of Kings Walk Shopping Centre, and redevelopment of the former Debenhams building for a University of Gloucestershire campus are all important in improving the quality of offer and bringing more people into the city centre.
- c) The quality and choice of shops was considered good, but with a need for better quality retail units. Planning strategy and policies should support refurbishment, redevelopment and reconfiguration of existing shops and units, and focus on a smaller area.
- d) Policies should seek complementarity between the traditional city centre and the Docks/Gloucester Quays.

- e) Since the study was completed Gloucester City Council has been proactive in working with stakeholders and partners in driving forward regeneration and has recently adopted a new City Centre Vision, which is now moving to the delivery stage.

Cheltenham Town Centre

- a) Cheltenham has the strongest town centre in the area, with the highest number of shops and services (and higher than the national average). When last assessed, vacancies were low.
- b) Since then, Cheltenham Borough Council has been proactive in putting a vacant units action plan in place and is working alongside the Cheltenham BID, landlords and agents to have collective responsibility to drive change.
- c) There is a small need for food shopping to provide for the need of the community over the period of the plan and this should be directed to the town centre which lacks a decent sized food store.

Tewkesbury Town Centre

- a) Plays an important role for residents of the town, the wider rural area and tourists. The mix of shops, services and facilities is broadly comparable to other similar towns, but with a growing number of vacancies at the time the study was undertaken.
- b) The key future challenge for Tewkesbury will be to create and maintain its own distinctive role and for it to adapt and meet the needs of the local community and visitors.
- c) Healings Mill and Spring Gardens offer opportunities to improve the offer of the town.

5.49 In terms of future needs, the assessment concludes that there is very little need to plan for additional retail up to 2041. In fact, there is forecast to be an oversupply in some areas. The exceptions are a small amount of need for food shops in Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve, and small-scale provision to support new communities at larger developments through local / neighbourhood shopping centres.

5.50 Outside of the main city and town centres, village and farm shops, community facilities, such as village halls and public houses and local services are essential to support communities in meeting every day needs. There is a role for planning policies to protect these important community facilities and support their diversification.

Questions

- 21. How could the Strategic and Local Plan best enable change and encourage investment to support our city and town centres to adapt, evolve and thrive?**
- 22. How can the Strategic and Local Plan protect and encourage essential shops, services and facilities in villages and rural areas?**

Infrastructure

5.51 The NPPF as well as Planning Practice Guidance sets out that Plans should set out the policy requirements for the contributions expected from different types of development and where necessary, from different sites. In particular, this should set out the policy

requirements for the level and types of affordable housing and for supporting infrastructure, including (but not limited to) education, transport, health, green and blue infrastructure, and digital infrastructure. Policies of the Plan should also seek to ensure the timely provision of the infrastructure required to support the level of development proposed.

- 5.52 There are a number of key issues that are affecting the delivery of sites and their associated infrastructure. The delivery of greenfield sites may raise viability issues due to the need for new infrastructure to develop sites, or environmental constraints such as flood risk which will need to be mitigated. However, brownfield (sometimes described as Previously Developed Land) sites may pose their own viability challenges.
- 5.53 Further evidence will be produced to help better understand these viability issues and deliver the infrastructure needed to support sites. There will be a need to balance the delivery of physical infrastructure against the requirements of other policy considerations such as the delivery of affordable housing and green infrastructure. The timing of infrastructure delivery in association with new development will need to be carefully considered and identifying funding for infrastructure will be critical. An Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which identifies the types of infrastructure needed as well as costings, will be produced alongside the SLP, as will an assessment to ensure it is affordable (called a Viability Assessment).
- 5.54 New homes and employment will need to be supported by new infrastructure for example, schools, roads, public transport, health services, and recreation provision. This will need to be funded through central and local government funding streams and contributions from developers.
- 5.55 In some cases, it may be necessary to safeguard routes for longer term infrastructure projects. Safeguarded is a technical term for an established part of the planning system that aims to protect infrastructure projects, such as public transport, highways or other infrastructure such as pipelines, from conflicting developments. Safeguarded areas include land that will need to be identified as being likely to be needed for such projects.

Questions

- 23. What types of infrastructure do you consider are most critical to be delivered alongside new development?**
- 24. Given their size, if strategic scale new settlements were to form a part of the Strategic and Local Plan, what accompanying infrastructure would be necessary?**
- 25. What key services and facilities do you consider most important in deciding if a rural settlement is a suitable location for new homes and other forms of development?**
- 26. Should the Strategic and Local Plan safeguard sites or routes for longer term infrastructure projects?**

6. Planning for sustainable development

6.1 The SLP is required to plan positively for the development needs of the area, including new homes, employment, commercial uses and for traveller communities. At this early stage in the process the councils have various sources of evidence to draw on as a starting point. This evidence will be updated, and new evidence produced to support the Plan, such as updated flood risk assessments. The councils also need to consider whether there are any alternatives approaches that should be considered.

6.2 Through this consultation the councils are considering different approaches to how development needs could be delivered in a way that meets the draft Vision and Strategic Objectives.

The Existing Strategy

6.3 The existing approach to delivering growth is set out in the adopted JCS. It guides the location of new development based on a 'settlement hierarchy'. The key urban areas of Cheltenham and Gloucester are identified as the focus for new development where housing and employment needs can be provided close to where they are needed and where occupiers of new development can benefit from the existing and enhanced sustainable transport network.

6.4 Given that there is only limited land for development within Cheltenham and Gloucester, the strategy also relied on urban extensions to their built-up areas, mostly on land within Tewkesbury Borough Council's area.

6.5 Tewkesbury town itself plays a lesser role for new housing and economic development due to its small size. In turn, a network of Rural Service Centres (Winchcombe and Bishop's Cleeve) and a number of smaller Service Villages provide for needs within the rural area.

6.6 In preparing the SLP, we need to consider afresh what the development strategy should be in the future, and whether it ought to continue to be based on the settlement hierarchy described above.

6.7 We have done this through the identification of six distinct scenarios, commonly known as 'spatial options'. They have been considered in isolation, the aim being to test the implications of each option and understand their 'pros' and 'cons'. To help with this, we have mapped all the site opportunities currently being promoted to the councils for development, to understand the geographical spread. This, along with our ongoing evidence review, engagement with stakeholders and the findings of this consultation will be used to build up a preferred approach, which will be introduced at the next stage of consultation.

6.8 None of these scenarios would, on their own, deliver sustainable development; the final strategy will be a combination of different elements.

6.9 It is essential to note that no policy or site allocations are being put forward at this stage of the plan-making process. Information contained in the accompanying evidence base includes Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessments (HELAA), which Government requires councils to produce. The HELAA is a broad preliminary assessment, including mapping, of the individual sites which have been submitted to the councils for consideration as development options. The various diagrams in this consultation document are taken from

the HELAA. They illustrate diagrammatically the various sites and locations that are currently being promoted to the councils, which would be associated with each of the six growth scenarios, as set out earlier. **It is important to note that the inclusion of land on any accompanying maps or diagrams does not mean that the land is suitable for development, or that the land is necessarily available for development, or even that it will be supported by any of the councils. Furthermore, any such maps or diagrams do not have any planning status. Any allocations of land will be made at a later stage of the SLP process.**

The scenarios

- 6.10 The six different development scenarios tested at this stage are:
1. Urban concentration
 2. Urban extensions
 3. Urban extensions, avoiding the Green Belt
 4. New strategic settlements
 5. Rural dispersal
 6. Sustainable transport
- 6.11 As a starting point for all the scenarios, we have included all currently known site opportunities in the urban areas (also known as 'baseline capacity'). Full details of this are available on the website. This is because it's important to ensure that all brownfield sites, and those in urban areas are identified in the first instance, before then considering other options, including those on undeveloped land (i.e., green field).
- 6.12 The section below summarises the main conclusions of the assessment, including the pros and cons.
- 6.13 Through this consultation, we would like your feedback on the different options, the assessments we have undertaken, and whether there are any other scenarios you think we should consider. This consultation is also a further opportunity for additional site opportunities to be submitted for the councils to consider. This includes all forms of development, including housing, employment/industrial, retail/ commercial, and that for traveller communities. Details of how to submit a site are available on the website.
- 6.14 It's also an opportunity for those who have already submitted a site to the councils to provide any new or updated information they may have to help the councils consider the opportunity fully.

Scenario 1 Urban concentration

6.15 This option would involve much more intense development than would traditionally be expected on urban sites in Gloucester and Cheltenham, particularly on previously developed land. This would include substantial increases in densities; higher buildings even in more sensitive areas such as Conservation Areas; conversions or rebuilding of retail or other town centre properties into housing or mixed-use schemes.

6.16 This differs from the baseline position. This means that the number of homes that could fit on the land would be pushed as high as possible.

Insert diagram

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More people living in and using shops, services and facilities in the main city and town centres. • Bringing more life and vitality to the city and town centres, including at night. • Concentrated development in urban areas, supporting use of bus and rail, walking, cycling and car clubs. • Supports maximum use of 'previously developed land' and urban regeneration. • Protects the existing Green Belt and minimises the loss of greenfield sites and higher quality agricultural land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On its own, along with baseline capacity, would not deliver sufficient new homes and jobs. • Would only provide for a limited range of housing types, sizes and tenures (based on higher density schemes). • Could lead to loss of some existing employment and commercial space to housing. • Increased journey lengths as housing and economic growth diverted to alternative locations outside of the SLP area. • Likely harm to the setting and significance of important heritage assets and character of the urban area. • Limited opportunity to deliver climate change mitigation measures, strategic and community infrastructure. • Potential strain on existing social and community infrastructure, such as schools and health facilities.

Scenario 2: Urban extensions

- 6.17 This option would mean seeking to deliver development as urban extensions to the key urban areas of Cheltenham and Gloucester and could include sites which fall within the designated Green Belt. The development strategy of the JCS focused on such extensions as a means of meeting some of the housing needs of Gloucester and Cheltenham. In addition, several areas of land were removed from the Green Belt and “safeguarded” for longer term development needs.
- 6.18 Urban extensions may be one of the most effective ways of supporting high quality public transport infrastructure such as the Mass Rapid Transit scheme proposed in Gloucestershire County Council’s Local Transport Plan.
- 6.19 Nevertheless, it will need to be demonstrated through the SLP if new urban extensions, including the previously ‘safeguarded’ sites, should form part of the preferred development strategy for our area.
- 6.20 As with all options, this includes the urban capacity of Gloucester and Cheltenham as a starting point.

Insert diagram.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely range of available sites may enable housing and economic needs to be met in full. • Development can be delivered close to where the need arises, reducing the likelihood of unnecessary travel into and out of the area. • Provides the opportunity for a wide range of housing types, sizes, and tenures to meet local need. • Urban extensions to existing urban areas would increase the catchment population to shops, services and facilities in city and town centres, access to employment opportunities, and existing/improved public transport, walking, and cycling (depending on location). • Would provide opportunity to be supported by high quality public transport infrastructure such as Mass Rapid Transit. • Opportunity to enable sites to be comprehensively planned to incorporate social, economic and environmental infrastructure, e.g. everyday shops and services and open spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of some Green Belt land and potentially reducing the gap between Gloucester, Cheltenham, and Bishops Cleeve. • Loss of greenfield land. • Potential loss of higher quality agricultural land for food production.

Scenario 3: Urban extensions, avoiding the Green Belt

- 6.21 This option means seeking to deliver development as urban extensions to the main settlements in the area but avoiding the Green Belt. This scenario has been identified because the government attaches great importance to Green Belt and the NPPF makes clear that its boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances to do so are fully evidenced and justified through a Local Plan. For this reason, the role of the Green Belt in planning for long-term growth is subject of much national debate.
- 6.22 Given the existing Green Belt is concentrated around Gloucester and Cheltenham, and between Cheltenham and Bishops Cleeve, it is appropriate to explore, as part of this consultation, the merits and consequences of a strategy which would support urban extensions to the main urban areas but excluding designated Green Belt land.
- 6.23 The inclusion of this scenario is not to say that Green Belt considerations are of any greater significance than protected areas such as the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or Sites of Special Scientific Interest. However, such designations have statutory protection whereas Green Belt land is, as a matter of national policy, designated as a means of managing urban growth, rather than providing environmental protection. This scenario would include land which was previously removed from the Green Belt in the JCS and ‘safeguarded’ to meet longer term needs.
- 6.24 As with all options, this includes the urban capacity of Gloucester and Cheltenham as a starting point.

Insert diagram

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protects the existing Green Belt, limits the loss of green field sites and higher quality agricultural land. • Some benefits from an increased catchment population to shops, services and facilities in city and town centres, access to employment opportunities, and existing/improved public transport, walking and cycling, due to constraint on development and less sustainable locations. • Would provide opportunity to be supported by high quality public transport infrastructure such as Mass Rapid Transit. • Some opportunity to enable sites to be comprehensively planned to incorporate social, economic and environmental infrastructure, e.g. everyday shops and services and open spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On its own, along with baseline capacity, would not deliver sufficient new homes and jobs. Would only provide for a limited range of housing types, sizes and tenures (based on higher density schemes). • Increased journey lengths as housing and economic growth diverted to alternative locations outside of the SLP area. • Loss of greenfield land • Potential loss of higher quality agricultural land for food production.

Scenario 4: New strategic settlement

- 6.25 This option means seeking to deliver development through one or more comprehensive, master-planned new settlements, of a minimum of around 4,000 new homes with supporting infrastructure. Currently, three such potential locations have been identified based on information submitted on behalf of landowners/promoters. The locations are around Boddington on land to the south of the A4109 between the A38 and M5 corridors. A further potential option is presented straddling the boundary of Tewkesbury Borough and the Forest of Dean between Churcham and Highnam in the south west of the SLP area. The third option lies to the east of the M5 at Ashchurch on the edge of the built-up area of Tewkesbury.
- 6.26 The latter option – the Tewkesbury Garden Town – was awarded Garden Town status by the Government in 2019. In this context, Tewkesbury Borough Council is currently establishing a programme to work with local people and landowners/developers to plan for a large sustainable new settlement consisting of a wide mix of homes together with the supporting infrastructure required such as schools, health, transport, green infrastructure and other community facilities. Gloucestershire County Council and National Highways are also, as the relevant local highway authorities, drawing up detailed proposals for major improvements to Junction 9 (M5). This would both address existing recognised pressures on the strategic road network as well as potentially provide the additional road capacity necessary to support the development of the proposed Garden Town. The overall planning merits of the proposed Tewkesbury Garden Town will be assessed formally through this SLP process alongside other development options being promoted by others as part of the overall development strategy for the Cheltenham – Tewkesbury – Gloucester area.
- 6.27 As with all options, this includes the urban capacity of Gloucester and Cheltenham as a starting point.

Insert diagram

Pros	Con
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent on location, could reduce the need to build on the designated Green Belt (except at Boddington). • Would concentrate development in the rural area whereas otherwise would be a larger number of scattered sites. • Would enable provision of a wide choice of housing sizes, types and tenures, and a choice of types of employment space. • Once delivery is underway, could provide greater certainty over long-term supply of housing. • Opportunity to enable sites to be comprehensively planned to incorporate social, economic and environmental infrastructure, e.g., 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would result in the loss of greenfield land. • Could potentially lead to loss of higher quality agricultural land. • Unlikely to provide for all of the new homes and jobs needed resulting in worsening housing unaffordability and constrained economic growth. • May not provide homes and jobs where they may be needed close to urban and rural settlements. • Would require longer lead-in times before homes and employment spaces are built given the amount of work needed to prepare masterplans and co-ordinate the provision of transport and community infrastructure.

<p>everyday shops and services and open spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could enable provision of accessible local/district centres and everyday facilities and services such as schools, libraries and health facilities; provide extensive climate change mitigation measures; on-site biodiversity net gain; green spaces; flood water management; allotments; large scale renewable energy and community buildings. • Dependent upon location, could provide or enhance bus/rail services, support car clubs, and promote active travel by walking and cycling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent on location, may not support the vitality and viability of larger city and town centres. • Investment in rural shops, services and facilities would not be supported.
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Scenario 5: Rural dispersal

- 6.28 This option means distributing growth widely across the rural area by encouraging development at many existing settlements and potentially other rural locations (such as redundant industrial sites or farm complexes). This would mean the smallest of hamlets and villages could contribute to meeting overall development needs, even where they are not currently recognised in the JCS settlement hierarchy as Rural Service Centres or Service Villages.
- 6.29 As with all options, this includes the urban capacity of Gloucester and Cheltenham as a starting point.

Insert diagram

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could support the re-use of redundant rural sites and buildings. • Would be likely to safeguard the Green Belt. • Could provide significant potential for supporting thriving and vital rural communities by supporting shops, services and facilities, and rural employment. • Would provide many choices for people to live and work in the countryside where they may have family or employment ties. • Would make significant contribution to providing affordable housing in rural areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would likely harm the character and setting of existing settlements and surrounding countryside. • Unlikely to provide for the full amount of new homes and jobs needed, resulting in worsening housing affordability, and constrained economic growth. • Increased journey lengths likely as housing and economic growth diverted to alternative locations outside of the SLP area. • May not provide for a full range of housing sizes, types and tenures as a result of dispersing development thinly. • May not provide a suitable range of locations and types of employment space. • Unlikely to enable sites to be comprehensively planned to incorporate social, economic and environmental infrastructure, e.g. everyday shops and services and open spaces. • Unlikely to support existing or new public transport, leading to greater dependency on the private car and road congestion, particularly for travel to larger built-up areas. • Could lead to conflict between new homes, jobs and agriculture as a result of rural densification. • Would potentially add to pressure on existing rural services, facilities and other community infrastructure.

Scenario 6: Sustainable transport scenario

- 6.30 This option means delivering development in locations along existing and potential high frequency public transport, walking and cycling routes. It draws on the broad objectives of Gloucestershire County Council as the body responsible for managing road and public transport networks. The Local Transport Plan in particular, promotes sustainable travel. Development under this scenario would need to be integrated in, or linked to, the Gloucestershire cycle spine and the proposed Gloucestershire Mass Rapid Transport system, which is a longer-term aspiration. Furthermore, all the local authorities in Gloucestershire have agreed a Statement of Shared Intent to in principle to reduce carbon emissions from transport in line with science-based targets to achieve net zero ambitions by 2050.
- 6.31 Adopting a sustainable transport strategy as part of the SLP would therefore mean prioritising new sites for housing and economic development in locations which would maximise people’s choice to travel by means other than the car to access services, facilities and jobs. This would also tend to reduce the need to travel at all and would help reduce carbon emissions.
- 6.32 As with all options, this includes the urban capacity within Gloucester and Cheltenham as a starting point.

Insert diagram

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A pattern of growth which would provide optimum accessibility by sustainable transport and active travel, making a significant contribution to creating a more sustainable Gloucestershire and mitigating the effects of climate change. • Development close to main existing settlements would provide opportunities for accessing larger shops, services and facilities and jobs by connecting with existing and enhanced sustainable transport networks and the opportunity for active travel. • Would enable a significant proportion of, or all, housing and employment needs to be met close to where they arise, reducing the likelihood of unnecessary travel into and out of the JSP area. • Could provide a wide range of housing sizes, types and tenures; and a choice of employment space. • Strategic scale development in locations along mass transit routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would result in the loss of designated Green Belt between Cheltenham, Gloucester and Bishops Cleeve, green field sites and potentially higher quality agricultural land available for food production. • Could result in the coalescence of Cheltenham and Gloucester in particular. • Growth of Gloucestershire Airport could be a constraint on development between Cheltenham and Gloucester; and conversely limit options for future growth at the airport. • Could divert growth and investment, including transport infrastructure, away from the rural area. • Would not generally meet the needs of the rural economy or provide development in locations served by strategic road infrastructure.

<p>would support the vitality and viability of city and town centres and enable clusters of employment growth close to large built-up areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would support the development of brownfield sites within and adjoining large settlements. • Opportunity to enable sites to be comprehensively planned to incorporate social, economic and environmental infrastructure, e.g. everyday shops and services and open spaces. 	
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Questions

- 27. Are there any additional development scenarios that should be considered?**
 - a. If yes, please describe what they are.**
- 28. Are the pros and cons identified for the six development scenarios a fair and accurate assessment?**
 - a. If not, which one(s) and what are your reasons?**
- 29. Which of the development scenarios, or combination of them, do you consider the most appropriate for the Strategic and Local Plan?**
- 30. Are there any places not currently identified in the rural settlement hierarchy, which could/should be included?**

7. Conclusions and next steps

- 7.1 This consultation is the first step in the preparation of the SLP and is intended to ask a broad range of questions to help understand what the Plan should cover. The feedback provided through this consultation will be reviewed and used to shape the draft plan.
- 7.2 However, this consultation is an opportunity for stakeholders and the community to express any other issues, concerns or opportunities that do not easily fit within any of the key questions set in this consultation document.

Questions

31. Is there anything else you would like to raise – has anything been missed, or are there any general comments you would like to make?

- 7.3 The next full consultation is programmed for early 2025. This is intended to be a draft plan, which will include a preferred strategy, proposed site allocations and draft policies.

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Meeting:	Council	Date:	16 November 2023
Subject:	Council Membership – Dispensation		
Report Of:	Monitoring Officer		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Alice McAlpine, Monitoring Officer		
	Email: alice.mcalpine@gloucester.gov.uk		
Appendices:	None		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 For Council to consider granting a dispensation, via the council’s Managing Director, pursuant to Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, to Councillor Pullen whose current leave of absence will exceed six months on 4 December 2023.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Council is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) A period of absence from meetings by Councillor Terry Pullen pursuant section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 is approved.
- (2) The Monitoring Officer is authorised to extend Councillor Terry Pullen’s current period of absence for up to three months, to 3 March 2023.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

3.1 On 5 June 2023 Cllr Pullen attended a meeting of the council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee and has not been able to attend a subsequent meeting due to ill health.

3.2 Under section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 a councillor will cease to be a member if they fail to attend meetings of the council for a period of six months without prior approval. Cllr Pullen has been unable to attend a meeting of the council in the past 6 months. A decision of Council is required to approve Cllr Pullen’s period of absence as there is no discretion to extend the 6-month period of absence under the Local Government Act 1972 or the constitution and if not approved an automatic disqualification will occur on 5 December 2023.

4.0 Social Value Considerations

4.1 Not applicable.

5.0 Environmental Implications

5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Alternative Options Considered

6.1 To not grant Cllr Pullen a three-month extension to his leave of absence. This is not recommended. Cllr Pullen has taken a period of leave due to ill health.

7.0 Reasons for Recommendations

7.1 The proposed extension is recommended because it is a reasonable period within which the councillor may return to public duties.

8.0 Future Work and Conclusions

8.1 Not applicable

9.0 Financial Implications

9.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

10.0 Legal Implications

10.1 Section 85(i) of the Local Government Act 1972 states “if a member of a Local Authority fails throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of his last attendance to attend any meeting of the Authority, he shall unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the Authority before the expiry of that period cease to be a Member of the Council.

10.2. Attendance in an official capacity at a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of the council or at any meeting of a joint committee or other such body discharging functions of the council or at any meeting as a representative of the council is deemed to be a ‘meeting of the council’.

10.3 After six months from the date of a member’s last attendance to attend any meeting, the council has not approved the absence then the member as a result of the operation of law ceases to be a member of the council from that date. The six months runs from the date of the member’s last attendance and approval must be given within that six-month period.

10.4 Once approval had been given and it can be for no more than 6 months prospectively or retrospectively or a combination of both – this statutory six-month period begins to run from the end of the period for which approval has been given.

(The Monitoring Officer has been consulted in the preparation this report.)

11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

11.1 Not Applicable

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

12.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact; therefore, a full PIA was not required.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

13.1 Not applicable

14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

14.1 Not applicable

Background Documents: None

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