

Cheltenham Borough Council Council

Meeting date: 12 May 2025

Meeting time: 2.30 pm

Meeting venue: Council Chamber - Municipal Offices

Membership:

Councillors Paul Baker (Chair), Dr David Willingham (Vice-Chair), Frank Allen, Glenn Andrews, Victoria Atherstone, Adrian Bamford, Garth Barnes, Dilys Barrell, Graham Beale, Angie Boyes, Jackie Chelin, Barbara Clark, Julia Chandler, Flo Clucas, Mike Collins, Ashleigh Davies, Chris Day, Iain Dobie, Jan Foster, Juan Carlos Garcia Clamp, Steve Harvey, Rowena Hay, Hannah Healy, Sandra Holliday, Martin Horwood, Peter Jeffries, Tabi Joy, Alisha Lewis, Cathal Lynch, Tony Oliver, Ben Orme, Dr Helen Pemberton, Richard Pineger, Julie Sankey, Stan Smith, Dr Steve Steinhardt, Izaac Tailford, Julian Tooke, Simon Wheeler and Suzanne Williams

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Contact: democraticservices@cheltenham.gov.uk

Phone: 01242 264 246

1 Apologies

2 Communications by the retiring Mayor

3 Election of Mayor 2025-26 (Chair of Council)

4 Election of Deputy Mayor 2025-26 (Vice-Chair of Council)

5 Declarations of interest

6 Minutes of the last meeting (Pages 5 - 40)

To approve the minutes of the meetings held on

- 21 February 2025
- 17 March 2025

7 Communications by the Mayor

8 Communications by the Leader of the Council

9 To receive petitions

10 Public Questions

These must be received no later than 12 noon on Thursday 1 May 2025

11 Member Questions

These must be received no later than 12 noon on Thursday 1 May 2025.

12 Community Governance Review (Pages 41 - 54)

Report of the Leader

13 Appointment of the Chair of Licensing Committee

14 Notice of Motions

These must be received no later than 12 noon on the seventh working day before the date of the meeting.

15 Any other item the Mayor determines as urgent and which requires a decision

Gareth Edmundson
Chief Executive

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Cheltenham Borough Council

Council Minutes

Meeting date: 21 February 2025

Meeting time: 2.30 pm - 4.20 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Paul Baker (Chair), Frank Allen, Glenn Andrews, Victoria Atherstone, Garth Barnes, Dilys Barrell, Angie Boyes, Jackie Chelin, Barbara Clark, Julia Chandler, Flo Clucas, Mike Collins, Ashleigh Davies, Chris Day, Juan Carlos Garcia Clamp, Steve Harvey, Rowena Hay, Sandra Holliday, Martin Horwood, Peter Jeffries, Tabi Joy, Alisha Lewis, Cathal Lynch, Andy Mutton, Tony Oliver, Ben Orme, Dr Helen Pemberton, Richard Pineger, Julie Sankey, Stan Smith, Dr Steve Steinhardt, Izaac Tailford, Julian Tooke and Suzanne Williams

Also in attendance:

Paul Jones (Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer)), Claire Hughes (Director of Governance and Customer Services and Monitoring Officer), Gareth Edmundson (Chief Executive) and Gemma Bell (Director of Finance and Assets and Deputy S151 Officer)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Bamford, Beale, Dobie, Foster, Wheeler and Willingham.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2024 were approved as a true record and signed accordingly.

4 Communications by the Mayor

The Mayor shared the some events he has attended and news items:

- Cheltenham Town Women's Football Club's game with Wolverhampton Wanderers in the FA Cup. Although they lost the match, Cheltenham is going from strength to strength, under the chairmanship of Andy Biddle who has been working for the club for many years;
- two great matches at Cheltenham Rugby Club – one men's, one women's, who are doing particularly well and are top of their league. He thanked the chairman Steve Ratcliffe for his long-standing dedication to the club;
- it is always a pleasure to invite groups to the Mayor's Parlour, and he has recently welcomed the Pittville Swans and Friends Group, who work hard to protect the swans on Pittville Lake, Marle Hill Women's Institute, and Dave Bath, a very active volunteer in the town. They spoke about Petersfield and he hopes that this exciting project will come to fruition;
- it is also great to open new businesses: this month he was invited to open Obsidian, following a refresh of its business - he welcomed the company's investment in the future of Cheltenham and job creation – and also the Longfield Hospice Charity Shop in Coronation Square who do a fantastic job;
- Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January was a very emotional occasion, with an event held in the council chamber;
- the borough should be extremely proud of No Child Left Behind – the recent event at the town hall was magical, well attended, and promised an exciting year ahead;
- the recent retro-fit show, Future Fit Homes, which helps people make their properties more environmentally friendly, was well attended. Congratulations to all involved.

5 Communications by the Leader of the Council

The Leader said that since December, the local government devolution process has taken up most of her time, but she was lucky to be invited to the opening of the new Men in Sheds facility at Cheltenham Enterprise Centre. This organisation is run by an amazing team of volunteers, who help men from different walks of life with different skills, and produce excellent planters.

The Mayor said he also attended this event, and that Men in Sheds is a fabulous organisation.

6 To receive petitions

There were none.

7 Public Questions

Seven public questions had been submitted. The questions and written responses were taken as read.

1. Question from Mr David Redgewell to the Leader, Councillor Rowena Hay

Can the Leader provide an update on what progress Gloucestershire's six district and borough councils and county council are making towards becoming a unitary council?

Leader's response

I'd like to thank Mr Redgewell for his question.

The government has invited all two-tier local authority areas (those with both county and district councils) to submit their proposals for local government reorganisation.

All affected councils have been asked to submit their interim proposals for reorganisation by 21 March with final proposals being submitted by November.

The government has asked that councils work together on developing proposals but has also acknowledged that not every area will agree on the best way forward.

Gloucestershire is a unique county where there are strong identities associated with our towns, cities and places. At present, not all councils in Gloucestershire agree on the best path for reorganisation with some advocating a single unitary and others advocating two.

As Leader of Cheltenham Council, it is important that we get the best for our town, its residents and business and that is what I will continue to strive for regardless of the eventual shape and size of the council that we end up with.

Supplementary question

In view of the tight timescale for devolution in Gloucestershire, and there is an economic imperative in not delaying our response. Will the Leader make sure a positive case for Gloucestershire is submitted to the Secretary of State in March to ensure we are not pushed to the back of the queue?

Leader's response

Since the government's announcement on 16 December, CBC has been working with the county and other districts to ensure a cohesive response, although this will not mean total alignment across the county. All leaders will focus on doing the right thing for their respective councils, and do their best to ensure the government receives a very positive response from Gloucestershire, whether collective or individual. Also, we should not forget the importance of our MPs across the county, and include their input in the response to government.

2. Question from Mr Tim Harman to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Alisha Lewis

In reply to another member of the public at the last meeting, the cabinet member indicated that the public toilets in Montpellier Gardens should finally open in the new year after a huge delay. At the time of writing this question, they are still fenced off. Can the cabinet member state when she expects them to finally open?

Cabinet Member response

I'd like to thank Tim for his question. The delays in completing the refurbishment of Montpellier Gardens toilets are frustrating for us all. Initially, the project faced delays due to the need for more extensive structural repairs than originally anticipated and as a result of adverse weather which meant parts of the work needed to be pushed back or repaired before the project could progress. The delays since Christmas, and the last Council meeting where a similar question was posed, have been caused by poor contractor performance.

Both the contractor and their sub-contractors have failed to comply with the contractual requirements to finish the remaining work and provide the necessary health and safety documentation upon its completion. Following the previous lessons learned on the MX project, the Council have had both construction and commercial management officers working to support the delivery of the toilet refurbishment but their tireless efforts have had little impact on the contractor performance. As a result, the Council have taken legal steps available within the contract framework to deal with the situation as it is vital that this public facility is brought back into use for our residents and visitors. This may require the engagement of new contractors to complete the work. Any costs we incur in doing this will be passed to the existing contractor through the mechanisms in the contract.

We will endeavour to make sure that this results in minimal additional delays to the re-opening of the toilets but at present are unable to confirm a date when this is expected. We are obviously deeply disappointed with the status of the project but hope that in the steps we have that we send a clear message to the market that in bidding for work within the public sector that contractors are aware that we expect the same high standard and delivery as anywhere else.

Supplementary question

Everyone is frustrated with the delay, but from a practical point of view, with the National Hunt Festival and Jazz Festival coming up, will the Cabinet Member ensure there are sufficient temporary facilities in place until the new facility is available?

Cabinet Member response

I agree that it is frustrating and we have already explored alternatives, including bringing in another contractor to finish the work, with the current contractor charged in full. The priority is to get the toilets fixed and finished as soon as possible.

3. Question from Mr Tim Harman to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Alisha Lewis

In reply to another member of the public at the last meeting, the cabinet member indicated that the EV charging facilities in the Bath Terrace car park should open for public use in the new year

Can the cabinet member state when she expects this much-delayed project to be completed and available for public use?

Cabinet Member response

I'd like to thank Tim for his question. As he knows, the original plan was for these sites to be open in time for the 2024 Christmas trading period. Some disruption to

parking was unavoidable, but the aim was to have everything up and running for the busy festive season.

Unfortunately, last-minute, unforeseen issues with the electricity distribution network operators caused a delay, which in turn held up the EV network operator responsible for the installation. The council stepped in over the festive period and into the new year to help resolve the problem.

I'm pleased to say that this has now been sorted, and I'm sure Tim will be glad to hear that the worst-case scenario is completion within the next three months. If there are any further delays, the operators will still begin paying the council their ground rent—so they'll have every incentive to finish ahead of schedule!

This situation highlights yet again the practical challenges of delivering a national EV network—challenges the previous Government failed to address. We remain committed to making Cheltenham a great place to live, work, and visit for EV drivers, and we will continue delivering more charging sites in key locations across the town.

Supplementary question

This same situation appears to be happening elsewhere in Cheltenham, suggesting a theme of problems with project management at the council. Maybe the council needs to step up attempts to deliver projects on time through more efficient project management and contract control.

Cabinet Member response

This particular case arises from a national crisis around access to electricity; the Secretary of State Ed Miliband has even had to step in to stop anyone else from applying for this kind of access as the national grid cannot take the level of demand. I stand behind and thank the officer team for their hard work on this project, in particular OneLegal, who will support the contractors who ultimately deliver these points, and am confident that there is nothing more we could have done. On the positive side, the company delivering the charging points will soon start to pay rent.

4. Question from Mrs Emma Nelson to Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, Councillor Alisha Lewis

From when the council first learnt of the new Environmental Standards that the Swindon Road Recycling Centre would need to adhere to, what financial contingencies and budget measures were put in place to meet those new standards?

Cabinet Member response

I would like to thank Emma for her question. The Environment Agency are introducing upcoming changes to their rules that will directly affect the Swindon Road HRC. The government originally published a consultation exercise in 2018 and the date for some of these changes which impact Swindon Road have yet to be announced but are expected in 2025. These changes will mean that CBC will need to apply for a new, more stringent permit than that under which the Swindon Road HRC currently operates.

Specialist advice and quotations have been sought, and it is estimated that approximately £1million will need to be spent on the Swindon Road HRC in the next financial year in order for an application for a new permit to be successful.

- Permit application £20,000 (excluding any extra research or additional background reports needed to meet the standards required by EA)
- Ground works £638,405
- Move compactors £10,267
- Other compliance works £320,000 (approx, depending on EA judgement)

All of the above does not, however, guarantee success. We could complete all of the steps above and still be refused a permit - leaving taxpayers £1 million down with little to show for it.

The planned maintenance of all the Council's assets is managed by the property team and work is funded by the annual £600k budget which is allocated across all operational sites owned by the Council. We operate planned maintenance reserves and budgets to address any cyclical repairs required to our buildings.

This specific instance of works required on the Household Recycling Centre was not forecasted as part of the capital investment strategy, as the requirements set out by the Environment Agency are in response to changing central government regulations rather than to any structural or maintenance issues we may have been monitoring or forward planning remediation of on the site. The goalposts have been shifted under us, with little clarity from government on exactly when we'd have to meet the new criteria. We're not entirely sure they know themselves!

The additional level of capital investment required to meet these requirements exacerbates funding challenges facing the Council at a time when our own financial recovery post pandemic is now threatened by the new Government's Fair Funding review which will be implemented in 2026/27. The levels of funding cuts expected for this Council are currently unknown and make decisions around funding major schemes of additional expenditure extremely challenging. It is right that we are undertaking the prolonged closure, to better understand the comparable operational costs of delivering services in different formats, like our bring banks across town, and to stress test additional demand on the County Council's Wingmoor Farm site.

5. Question from Mrs Emma Nelson to Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member Major Developments & Housing Delivery, Councillor Peter Jeffries

In terms of the total amount borrowed, interest rate, length of loan, and total interest payable, could the Cabinet Member for finance please clarify the exact terms of the Council's loan to purchase land at the Golden Valley (Cyber Central) site?

Cabinet Member response

I would like to thank Emma for her question.

In order to finance the short-term cash-flow of the original £37.5m transaction, the council took out eight loans from five local authorities with an interest rate of less than 0.7%. It is also worth noting that the £37.5m was split between the General

Fund (£26.6m) and the Housing Revenue Account (£10.9m), recognising the difference between delivering affordable housing and the commercial elements.

Treasury management is the management of the Authority's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Authority has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk are therefore central to the Authority's prudent financial management. Cheltenham Borough Council manages its overall portfolio rather than isolating individual transactions through its Treasury Management activity for the maximum benefit to the taxpayers of Cheltenham which is reflected in the council's strong asset to debt ratio of 0.32.

More importantly I need to put on record why Cheltenham Borough Council made this investment.

After a decade of austerity, a global pandemic followed by the current cost of living crisis – the Council has been dealing with a perfect storm of cuts in funding, rising demand for services, and economic growth challenges. With regeneration at the core, the Council had to change its mind-set to become more commercially focussed but under an ethos of acting commercially for the wider public benefit.

Whilst early adoption of this commercial mind-set was focussed on investment in existing assets such as Offices and a Supermarket, we cannot lose sight of the fact that our primary role is one of enabler and that our main streams of income are local taxation through council tax and business rates.

At present those green fields do not raise tax revenues – unlike institutional investors, none of our investments are primarily about yield – yes we need to make a commercial return – but the drivers for us are local taxation generation, job creation and place-making – ensuring an environment where everyone thrives and providing opportunities for the next generation.

6. Question from Mr Rich Newman to Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Victoria Atherstone

Regarding the Bell Inn on Bath Road, what measures is this council taking to respond to the clear community message, as demonstrated by the number of signatures on the petition, to declare The Bell an Asset of Community Value?

Cabinet Member Response

I would like to thank Mr Newman for his question about the asset of community value nomination for the Bell Inn.

The nomination was received by the Council on the 6 January and was reviewed initially by an assessment panel on 22 January. The panel requested some additional evidence, and the nominator resubmitted the nomination form.

The updated nomination form, and supplementary information has now been re-assessed by the assessment panel.

I am pleased to confirm that the Director of Community and Economic Development will be making a decision by Friday 28 February. The decision will be communicated to the nominator, the freeholder and leaseholder.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the nominator for all their hard work in collating the information required by the assessment panel to support the asset of community value nomination process.

7. Question from Mr Rich Newman to Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, Councillor Mike Collins

What plans does the council have to protect pubs in Cheltenham from unnecessary closure in the future? What can be done to protect our local heritage?

Cabinet Member response

I'd like to thank Mr Newman for his question. The planning system cannot directly prevent a business from closing as business closure does not fall within the scope of planning control. However, planning policy does, in certain circumstances, seek to protect certain uses (typically those of community value) by carefully managing changes of use and/or redevelopment.

Many changes of use do not require planning permission, but the relevant legislation *excludes* public houses from that very permissive regime. The starting point therefore is that national legislation brings the potential loss of pubs caused by changes to alternative uses, under council control. As such a planning application will always need to be submitted to Cheltenham Borough Council for a change of use away from an existing public house use.

Planning applications, including those proposing a change of use of a pub, are judged against the policies set out in the Joint Core Strategy and Cheltenham Plan, as well as any other relevant material consideration. The value of a pub to the local community and particularly the impact of a pub's loss (on the community) are material considerations that are weighed into the balance. It is important to note however that all applications are ultimately assessed on their own merits and a key consideration is often the extent to which alternative, similar facilities exist locally

Supplementary question

With the loss of so many pubs nationwide, people in Cheltenham hope that councillors would have an interest in protecting our local pubs, so why did no councillor call the Bell Inn decision in to committee rather than leave it to officers?

Cabinet Member response

Thank you for your question. I can't talk about specific planning applications, but would refer you to the Cabinet Member response to your previous question which covers some of what you have asked. Being realistic, most pubs these days are owned by management companies or big breweries, with privately-owned pubs in a minority. Central government needs to make some changes around legislation to

make it easier for these to survive, such as reducing management charges and business rates, but it should be noted that the previous government oversaw huge numbers of pub closures, so some of the responsibility must lie with them.

8 Member Questions

Three Member questions were received. The written responses were taken as read.

1. Question from Councillor David Willingham to Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Victoria Atherstone

Could the Cabinet Member please confirm whether this council has any historic Street Litter Control Notices still in force, and whether are there any Community Protection Notices currently in force in respect of tackling littering. If so, could the Cabinet Member please provide details of where and to whom these notices currently apply?

Cabinet Member response

There are no Street Litter Control notices; these are now called CPNs (Community Protection Notices). We also have Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) that includes littering, and there is a PSPO live for the entire borough, where locations have been highlighted to be an issue of enviro-crime and this covers Cheltenham- wide locations. There are also PSPOs in place in green spaces to specify dog control and alcohol use.

2. Question from Councillor David Willingham to Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Victoria Atherstone

I understand Community Protection Notices (CPN) have now replaced Street Litter Control Notices but CPNs do still give councils the powers to force businesses to clear litter from around their premises and to take steps to prevent future littering. Could the Cabinet Member please advise whether these CPNs can be issued pre-emptively based upon previous litter issues elsewhere, and if not, what evidence the council would need to commence action, how this evidence would need to be presented to the council, and by whom?

Cabinet Member response

A CPN can be used for an issue of litter in a location caused by a business, as this can be seen as a trade waste offence, and can include mitigation and management of the waste produced by the business and its customers. This can lead to further receptacles being provided for customers and business staff frequently servicing the units to ensure usage by the customer on site and surrounding area. If there is an issue of littering in the area by customers due to the use of the business then this is considered an offence and a fixed penalty notice (FPN) can be issued to the individual, whether in a vehicle or on foot. The local authority would need to receive reports of this taking place, so a service request can be raised for an officer to attend and investigate the most appropriate mitigation process.

A CPN cannot be issued pre-emptively as evidence needs to be ascertained to confirm the offence and issue is apparent, and alarm, harassment and distress are having a detrimental effect on the surrounding community.

This can be evidenced using the reporting tool function for littering or fly-tipping that will trigger an investigation to the patch officer.

3. Question from Councillor David Willingham to Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities, Councillor Victoria Atherstone

Could the Cabinet Member please give me an assurance that if a litter problem can be evidenced as resulting from a specific vendor, that the council will take robust enforcement action, including issuing a Community Protection Notice (CPN) to hold the business accountable for the costs of dealing with litter that ends up in the public realm, and advise what other litter control powers the council could target in this area?

Cabinet Member response

If reports are received of litter offences being committed on site or surrounding areas by the customers using the premises, then enforcement action will take place via evidence received or a Neighbourhood officer who will attend the location reported and evidence an offence taking place. If there is a persistent issue, mobile CCTV can be erected to monitor and enforce offences from vehicles and actions anti-social in nature in such as littering and fly-tipping.

If the business is evidenced to be breaching waste management legislation and not mitigating the issue of site waste, a CPN can be issued due to the detrimental effect on the surrounding community; this would provide a list of requirements for improvement and rectification.

9 General Fund Revenue and Capital - Final Budget Proposals 2025/26

After explaining the process to Members, the Mayor invited the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets to introduce her report.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets said the devolution white paper published before Christmas had left the council in the dark when shaping its budget, and unclear on how to plan for the future without knowing how long that future would be. She said she has been criticised in recent weeks for being too political when talking about the budget in the context of local government reorganisation, but said she feels strongly that local government decision-making and control over its spending is inherently political. She believes that a strong central government should collaborate with local authorities, be willing to learn from the people who know their communities best, and offer its expertise, whereas a weak government assumes that cooperation is impossible and chooses the simplest solution – fewer councils, fewer

voices, and fewer people to stand in its way. She said she would question any plan that required the abolition of an entire tier of government to work.

She went on to say that at times like this, CBC must do everything in its power to make a positive dent in the wall of anger, resentment and frustration that defines politics today, and although we may not have all the choices that we would like, what we do with those choices is what really matters. In this critical window – maybe the last when decisions about Cheltenham will be made in Cheltenham by the people who know Cheltenham best – it was important to make the most of the choices we have, and so the budget includes:

- major investment in parks and gardens, with increase in staff time;
- installation of electricity infrastructure at festival sites to ensure our iconic festivals are more sustainable for the planet and for future generations;
- continued investment in the Golden Valley Development, to future-proof careers for people in Cheltenham, and build homes, transport links and more green spaces; future profits from this home-grown investment will come back help fund public services, depending on what the new authority chooses to do with them;
- protection of the town's regency heritage with an expanded planning team, and easier, quicker access to planning advice;
- support for veterans, many of whom exist just above the poverty line, by ensuring that armed forces compensation scheme income isn't counted when council tax discounts are assessed;
- bucking the trend by reopening underused community buildings, to bring people back and leave a legacy of spaces to be enjoyed for many years to come;
- creating fiscal breathing room to make the most of every last minute of the next few years with smarter and faster decisions.

She said she didn't want to regret choices that the council could or should have made if it had the money to make them, and that this is the first budget proposal in nearly five years where the contribution to balances and reserves far exceeds the new savings we have to find – an incredible achievement, with so many councils facing bankruptcy. In 2024, our budget required £2.47m savings to make a £629k contribution to general balances; if Members back today's budget, it will only need to find £500k in new savings or additional income to contribute £560k to general balances and £939k to earmark reserves – this is the result of hard choices.

This budget sets a singular goal of making fewer heart-breaking choices and giving greater options and flexibility as we face an uncertain future in local government. It does all it can to safeguard Cheltenham's future, from the pensions of hardworking staff to improving homes for tenants, to ensure we are in the best possible position before abolition. She said that come what may, we stand with our town, committed to delivering the best services and the best future for Cheltenham.

The Cabinet Member for Major Development and Housing Delivery seconded the budget proposals and reserved the right to speak.

Questions

In response to a Member's question, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets confirmed that a Schedule D property will face an annual increase of £7.00 in its

council tax bill (2.99%). The Member said this is amazing, in view of all that CBC does for its communities, organisations, businesses, and No Child Left Behind. She thanked officers, Cabinet Members and colleagues for all of this.

The Mayor said it was also worth bearing in mind that the vast majority of council tax income goes to the county, and also to the police and crime commissioner's office, with CBC receiving the smallest share.

There were no questions for the S151 officer.

Statements from Group Leaders

The Leader of the Green Group thanked that Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets for her comprehensive speech, and recognised the difficult challenges she had faced in her first year in post. She said the Green Party was particularly pleased to note:

- the refurbishment of the public toilets in Montpellier, including a Changing Places facility. These are an absolute necessity and it is great use of public money to update and make them more inclusive. She said the delay was regrettable but it has to be done right;
- extra funding for apprenticeships, which offer great job and education opportunities and will benefit many young people;
- the huge reduction on exposure to gas and oil investments, from £120k in December 2024 to £61k now. It is essential to keep making positive steps to take the number as close to zero as possible.

She said that the Green Group has been thinking about what it would like to see in a future budget, and with officer advice, would ask that the following suggestions are considered:

- a re-evaluation of car park charges, based on existing projects elsewhere in the country, redirecting profits to air quality improvement schemes;
- the delivery of recycling receptacles to leisure centres and community hubs rather than direct to people's homes, which would incentivise people to visit, encourage them to recycle, and remove the individual delivery fee.

She said the budget was a refreshing read this week in particular, focussing on local issues and things which really matter to us, such as maintenance of our parks and gardens. She thanked residents who fed in and all staff who worked on the budget, for their hard work in preparing a very comprehensive report.

The Green Group had no budget amendments

Debate

In debate, Members thanked and commended the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets and all the finance team for achieving a financially sound budget in the face of uncertainty and the failings of others, and made the following comments:

- the council has effectively had to subsidise the county council for many years, including maintaining the Household Recycling Centre and support for people in need through No Child Left Behind. Neither of these are the council's statutory

responsibility, yet CBC has found the money without invoicing Shire Hall because the Liberal Democrats care;

- the county council's election leaflets accuse CBC of being incompetent and not good with money, yet it has squandered at least £250k on the failed Zone 15 parking scheme, causing considerable inconvenience and stress to residents. The county will use the budget to try to deflect attention from its own failing administration, but CBC has a mandate and a mission, and will continue to fight for the people of Cheltenham;
- it is clear that an huge amount of work has gone into creating the budget, and it is worth repeating that CBC only receives 11% of council tax, with 14% going to the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office and the remaining 75% to the county. With its small share, the council has always undertaken a huge amount of work, and it is regrettable that changes to the HRC, which was never CBC's statutory responsibility, are still giving rise to a great deal of criticism through the press and social media;
- the council goes above and beyond to provide discretionary services and step in where others have failed, and it is good that the county is finally doing something about Zone 15 parking after many years of problems and a huge waste of money. CBC does a great deal with its 11% share of council tax, and the budget doesn't waste money. There are many concerns as we look to the future, and it is to be hoped that this budget sets the standard for future authorities to build on – this is what our town and our residents expect, want and deserve;
- a welcome change from the draft budget is the allocation of £90k additional resource towards streets and ground works, which is particularly important to residents across the town;
- the way the council is run financially is second to none, and something of which we can be proud. It is amazing that, despite what is happening in many other councils, we still have growth. Additional resource for the planning team is particularly welcome and critical to the town, with several big applications expected in the next 12-24 months, which will require a huge amount of resource;
- also particularly welcome is the capital budget allocated for noise monitoring equipment, which will enable the council to investigate the many complaints it receives more fully; the enhancement of play areas, Pittville Park being one of the best in the county and emulated elsewhere; investment in CCTV, in light of young people's real fear of being out in the town at night; and money still being available for the development of the Sandford Park toilets building – hopefully the community will decide what it wants here in the coming year;
- special thanks must go to officers for No Child Left Behind, which has so far helped seven thousand children and many families in real difficulty, in the absence of aid from the government or county. Tracy Brown, Kelly Patterson and Helen Down have done a huge amount of work, and thanks too to all the local organisations – including IT Schools Africa, Caring for Communities and People (CCP), food networks and the various groups who help with housing, school uniforms, shoes, materials and IT equipment. Thanks must go to the Cabinet Member for Major Development and Housing Delivery for the original idea for NCLB, and the Cabinet Member for Communities and Safety for taking it

forward. The town should be very proud, and over the next four years will show others what to do and how it can be done.

The Cabinet Member for Major Development and Housing Delivery, seconding the budget proposals, thanked the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets, and having previously been in her shoes, said it is excellent to see growth with budget initiatives from previous years coming to fruition now. He reiterated what colleagues have said about the many great things in the budget, saying that this is inevitably a political budget based on political choices. He is always amazed at the extent to which the collective groups of finance officers and Members are able to find ways, means and solutions to mitigate for the incompetence and failure of others. The budget underpins many great things in Cheltenham – its economy, parks and gardens, new homes, and Golden Valley investments – but for him the greatest of all is No Child Left Behind which does so much to address the divide in communities.

Summing up

In summing up, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets thanked Members for their comments, and agreed that CBC's financial strategy is second to none; she considers the finance team to be the best in the country and thanked them for all their work. She agreed that a lot of the county's criticism of the budget is unfair, and that it is not a box-ticking exercise but a brass tacks review of everything CBC does, spends and invests.

She thanked the Cabinet Member for Major Development and Housing Delivery for seconding the budget, and for all his advice and support, and the Green Party for their generous comments. She said she too was proud of CBC's investment in apprenticeships and the great opportunities these offer, and confirmed that the council's exposure to oil and gas investment would continue to fall by allowing current investments to run their course without adding any further investments. She added that she would be happy to discuss car parking charges, adding that the council plans to invest in more EV charging points in car parks, despite current setbacks, to continue to make Cheltenham a more attractive place to live, work and visit.

She ended by thanking everyone for their input: the public, whose comments contributed to making the budget what it is; Cabinet colleagues for accommodating tough decisions to make the budget and investments for the next few years stack up; and the Leader and Cabinet Member for Major Development and Housing Delivery for their trust and support, and for being a source of good advice and practical common sense.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the revised budget for 2024/25 which is reported as part of the budget monitoring process for 31 December 2024 in Section 6 and Appendix 17 is approved;**
- 2. the budget assessment by the Section 151 Officer at Appendix 2 is considered in agreeing the following recommendations;**

3. the final budget proposals including a proposed council tax for the services provided by Cheltenham Borough Council of £244.79 for the year 2025/26 based on a Band D property (an increase of 2.99%), as detailed in paragraphs 9.1 to 9.6, are approved;
 4. the savings / additional income totalling £1,130,000 and the budget strategy at Appendix 4 are approved;
 5. the revenue growth items totalling £392,647 at Appendix 5 are approved;
 6. the capital programme at Appendix 6 is approved;
 7. the use of reserves and general balances is approved and the projected level of reserves, as detailed at Appendix 7, is noted;
 8. the programmed maintenance programme at Appendix 8 is approved;
 9. the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) detailed in Appendix 9 is approved;
 10. the flexible use of capital receipts strategy as detailed in Appendix 10 is approved;
 11. that the Council position in relation to the Gloucestershire business rates pool for 2025/26 is noted;
 12. the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26, including the continued payment of a living wage supplement at Appendix 11, is approved;
 13. the responses to the questions raised during the budget consultation in Appendix 12 are noted;
 14. the proposed fees and charges schedule for 2025/26 at Appendix 13, subject to appropriate consultation where required, are approved;
 15. the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2025/26 at Appendix 14 is approved;
 16. a level of supplementary estimate of £100,000 for 2025/26 as outlined in Section 18 is approved.
1. Based on the information included in Section 15 of this report:
 17. the delivery of the Mobility Hub as a single-phase construction is approved, and the Council's commitment under the Development Funding Agreement to facilitate this change is increased;
 18. a single-phase delivery is forecast to generate a further £4.8m in land receipts to the Council is noted;

19. despite an increased funding commitment under the Development Funding Agreement, it is noted that this is more than offset by the provision of £20m in Levelling Up Funding; overall borrowing is circa £10.6m lower than previously approved.

20. authority is delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Delivery to finalise the terms of a Deed of Variation to the Development Funding Agreement.

For: Allen, Andrews, Atherstone, Baker, Barnes, Barrel, Boyes, Chandler, Chelin, Clucas, Collins, Davies, Day, Garcia Clamp, Harvey, Hay, Holliday, Horwood, Jeffries, Joy, Lewis, Lynch, Mutton, Oliver, Orme, Pemberton, Pineger, Sankey, Smith, Steinhardt, Tailford, Tooke, Williams

Against: None

Abstentions: None

10 Housing Revenue Account - Final Budget Proposals 2025/26 and revised Forecast 2024/25

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets began by saying that the incentives and opportunities which made Arms' Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) so attractive in the early 2000s have faded over time, which is why Cheltenham Borough Homes has been welcomed back to Cheltenham Borough Council the last year. This not only ensures more joined-up working, but also offers a launch pad to deliver the ambitious social housing strategy that our town deserves. She was happy to present the first HRA budget to be created and delivered in house, and went on to highlight the following:

- the budget delivers the right number and mix of social housing in Cheltenham, where rents are high and home ownership increasingly out of reach for many families; this is a constant challenge, with demand growing every day;
- despite enormous challenges, CBC doesn't shy away from doing the right thing, from setting aside £0.75m to support fire safety improvements, to addressing both the climate emergency and cost of living crisis head on with bold decarbonisation programmes to make homes not only more sustainable but also warmer, safer and cheaper to live in;
- another challenge is tackling voids – properties unfit to be lived in – with action plans to bring them back into use or, where appropriate, dispose of them to invest in more safe, clean homes;

- former Councillor Max Wilkinson set an ambitious council budget of £180m to be spent on social housing over the lifetime of the Golden Valley development, and this HRA is a serious step towards that goal, undertaking to invest £40m in existing homes and new acquisitions. Although the costs are eye-watering, the human cost of inaction is far greater.

She concluded that it is clear that CBC has the ambition and the plan and, with the help of Full Council, can deliver on its vision.

The Cabinet Member for Major Development and Housing Delivery seconded the HRA Budget and reserved the right to speak.

There were no questions, and the Green Party had no further comments.

In debate, Members made the following points:

- this is a great report and highlights the fact that tenants rather than bricks and mortar are at the heart of everything – their involvement, influence and ideas; it is wonderful that both the tenants panel and leaseholder panel are so active and represented on the Housing Cabinet Committee, and that there is money available to help them achieve and be part of the decision-making process;
- with CBH now back in house, we are starting to see an increase in the provision of social housing in the town - at Monkscroft, Swindon Road, and West Cheltenham. This is the most important thing the council can do.

In seconding the HRA budget proposals, the Cabinet Member for Major Development and Housing Delivery agreed that this budget sets a foundation to continue all the of CBH's good work in housing. He added, however, that we should not forget the national blight of homelessness, commenting that it was a national disgrace that homeless people who were accommodated safely during the pandemic were back on the streets when it ended, and regrettable that nothing can be done to solve this problem.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets thanked the Cabinet Member for Major Development and Housing Delivery for being passionate about housing and leading the charge on further delivery, and other Members for their support.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the final HRA budget proposals for 2025/26 shown at Appendix 2 is approved;**
- 2. a rent increase of 2.7% for social rent homes, affordable homes and shared ownership homes and changes to other rents and charges as detailed within this report is approved;**
- 3. the HRA capital programme as shown at Appendix 3 and the detailed capital programme in Appendix 4 is approved;**
- 4. the revised HRA forecast for 2024/25 and impact on the HRA balance is noted.**

For: Allen, Andrews, Atherstone, Baker, Barnes, Barrel, Boyes, Chandler, Chelin, Clucas, Collins, Davies, Day, Garcia Clamp, Harvey, Hay, Holliday, Horwood, Jeffries, Joy, Lewis, Lynch, Mutton, Oliver, Orme, Pemberton, Pineger, Sankey, Smith, Steinhardt, Tailford, Tooke, Williams

Against: None

Abstentions: None

11 Council Tax Resolution

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets introduced her final report of the day, saying that having approved the most ambitious budget ever, Members now needed to approve the council tax resolution to support it. She reminded everyone that CBC receives just 11% of council tax, with the rest going to the county and the Police and Crime Commissioner's office. She said CBC does a great deal of good work with its share, from maintaining the town's green flag parks to keeping the night time economy safe.

The Cabinet Member for Major Development and Housing Delivery seconded the council tax resolution.

A Member agreed that CBC faces many challenges and makes excellent use of its tiny slice of council tax, in its parks and gardens and waste and recycling, as well as its No Child Left Behind agenda. The county has a larger responsibility for social care and highways, but has been letting the town and the county down, leaving a lot of gaps to fill. He hoped that residents would bear this in mind when seeing a very small increase in council tax leaving their bank accounts each month.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the formal Council Tax resolution at Appendix 2 is approved and the commentary in respect of the increase in Council Tax at Paragraph 6 of Appendix 2 is noted.**

For: Allen, Andrews, Atherstone, Baker, Barnes, Barrel, Boyes, Chandler, Chelin, Clucas, Collins, Davies, Day, Garcia Clamp, Harvey, Hay, Holliday, Horwood, Jeffries, Joy, Lewis, Lynch, Mutton, Oliver, Orme, Pemberton, Pineger, Sankey, Smith, Steinhardt, Tailford, Tooke, Williams

Against: None

Abstentions: None

12 Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities began her introduction by saying that the Gambling Act 2005 requires every council to produce, consult on and publish

a Statement of Principles to regulate all forms of gambling in the UK, namely gaming, betting and participation in a lottery, and to set out a number of licensing objectives by which the council is bound when discharging any of its functions under the act. These objectives, which are promoted through cooperation and partnership with responsible authorities, local businesses and residents, are:

- to prevent gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder, or being used to support crime;
- to ensure that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way; and
- to protect children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

She said the act also requires the statement of principles to be kept under review and re-published at least once every three years. It is proposed that the existing statement of principles, published in 2022, is re-adopted as there have been no substantial changes to legislation or national guidance since that time. However, central government is currently consulting on a white paper entitled 'High Stakes – Gambling Reform for the Digital Age', and the statement of principles will be reviewed again when this is published later in 2025.

A Member welcomed the report but asked if there was any provision for the needs of children in the care of someone with a gambling addiction, which could be eclipsed by that person's reliance or dependence on gambling, impacting on them financially or having a negative effect on their quality of life.

The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities confirmed that in September 2024, the GCC public health team met with the county working group to share common standards and draft an area profile for each local authority area to better understand the local picture for gambling-related harm in each district. She undertook to address this issue in the policy once the updated guidance is received.

The Mayor commented on how frustrating it is that the council does not seem able to control the growth and proliferation of gaming and betting shops in the town, following a lost appeal for a new gaming shop on the high street. It is hoped that the government review may encompass a review of the criteria local authorities have to consider for future applications. The Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities said that over the last couple of months she has looked to explore with officers what scope there is for the council to have more control over the concentration and numbers of betting and gaming shops in town. This is currently addressed as a planning issue rather than a licensing one, and she looked forward to working on the issue in the future.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the current Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles, attached at Appendix 3, is re-adopted for a further three-year period.**

13 Revisions to the Constitution

The Leader introduced the report, saying that the constitution is a living, breathing rule book which needs to move with the times and be amended when necessary. She thanked the Constitution Working Group for their support, drive and help with the amendments proposed today.

There are several minor amendments, plus the following:

- as a result of government revisions to the Procurement Act 2023, the council has more flexibility around the suppliers it uses, allowing it to look to engage local suppliers first; this benefits Cheltenham residents and the local economy;
- the deadline for public and Member questions is currently seven working days before the date of the meeting, but it is proposed that where there is significant public interest, or a question is particularly urgent, the Leader, relevant Chair or Mayor can accept a question up to 48 hours ahead of the meeting. This reflects feedback from Members and the public, who are reminded to use the Forward Plan to keep track of upcoming agenda items;
- Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee will amalgamate with Standards Committee, which hasn't met for many years, resulting in more streamlined governance. In addition, there is a recommendation to allow independent persons to sit on the Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee.

The Leader of the Green Party welcomed the amendment to the public question deadline, but asked whether there was any threshold for what would be defined as public interest and what would count as an urgent question. The Leader said this would be at the discretion of the Leader or Chair of the meeting, but as a general rule if just one person raised an issue, it could probably wait until the next meeting but if 50 people raised the same issue, it would not be turned down. Whether or not a late question is permitted will be decided on the basis of the questions that are submitted, and on the understanding that some of these will be genuine while others may be politically motivated.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the revised contract rules as set out in Appendix 1 are approved;**
- 2. the removal of decisions to award contracts made by the Cabinet or Cabinet Members from the call-in process, as set out in Section 3 of this report, is approved;**
- 3. the inclusion of an urgent question process for member and public questions as set out in Section 4 of this report is approved;**
- 4. the responsibilities of the Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee and the Standards Committee are merged with effect from the next Annual Council meeting;**
- 5. from the next Annual Council meeting, the Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee will comprise of seven Elected Members plus two non-elected independent members**
- 6. Authority is delegated to the Monitoring Officer**
 - a. to make the necessary changes to the Constitution to reflect these decisions.**

- b. in consultation with the Director: One Legal, to make any necessary changes to the Contract Rules, including any changes required to ensure compliance with guidance, policy, updated or secondary legislation**

14 Council Diary 2025-2026

The Leader introduced the report, saying that a large number of meetings are incorporated in the Council Diary in the best possible way to enable the maximum number of Members can be present. She said a huge amount of work goes into compiling the diary, and although it can never be perfect, with some dates not easy for working people, and some meetings having to take place on particular days, she hoped that Members would approve and support the diary as set out for 2025-26.

There was no debate on this item.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the draft Council Diary of meetings for September 2025 - August 2026 is approved.**

15 Council Order of Precedence - Nominations for Mayor Elect 2025/26

The Chief Executive said the annual Order of Precedence sets out the order and eligibility of councillors to become Mayor, with the election taking place at the Annual Council Meeting in May.

He confirmed that Councillor Willingham has been nominated to be Mayor, and Councillor Horwood has been nominated to be Deputy Mayor for the municipal year 2025-26

There were no questions or debate on this item.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the Order of Precedence in Appendix ii is noted;**
- 2. Councillor David Willingham be put to the Annual Council Meeting for election as Mayor for the Municipal year 2025-2026;**
- 3. Councillor Martin Horwood be put to the Annual Council Meeting for election as Deputy Mayor for the Municipal year 2025-2026.**

16 Notice of Motions

There were none.

17 Any other item the Mayor determines as urgent and which requires a decision

There were none.

Cheltenham Borough Council Council Minutes

Meeting date: 17 March 2025

Meeting time: 2.30 pm - 4.35 pm

In attendance:

Councillors:

Paul Baker (Chair), Dr David Willingham (Vice-Chair), Frank Allen, Glenn Andrews, Victoria Atherstone, Garth Barnes, Dilys Barrell, Angie Boyes, Barbara Clark, Julia Chandler, Flo Clucas, Mike Collins, Ashleigh Davies, Chris Day, Iain Dobie, Jan Foster, Steve Harvey, Rowena Hay, Sandra Holliday, Martin Horwood, Alisha Lewis, Dr Helen Pemberton, Richard Pineger, Julie Sankey, Stan Smith, Dr Steve Steinhardt, Izaac Tailford, Julian Tooke, Simon Wheeler and Suzanne Williams

Also in attendance:

Paul Jones (Deputy Chief Executive (Section 151 Officer)), Claire Hughes (Director of Governance, Housing and Communities) and Gareth Edmundson (Chief Executive)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Bamford, Beale, Chelin, Garcia Clamp, Jeffries, Joy, Lynch, Oliver, Orme, Smith and Tooke.

2 Declarations of interest

With reference to Agenda item 9, Councillor Horwood declared an interest, as a member of Leckhampton with Warden Hill Parish Council with responsibility for its neighbourhood plan. He does not regard this as a prejudicial interest, and on advice will not withdraw from the Chamber during consideration of that item.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 February will be approved at the next meeting of Council.

4 Communications by the Mayor

The Mayor began by saying his mayoral year had flown by and it has been his privilege and pleasure to serve Cheltenham as its Mayor.

He had enjoyed a busy few weeks, with the following highlights:

- a visit to the School House Café in St Paul's, an amazing facility which provides space and support for the local community. He attended a great event run by a charity called Wiggly, which provides free meals – on this occasion pancakes;
- the YMCA's BIG Shelter Build event invited over 40 primary school children to design and build cardboard shelters, conveying a powerful message in a practical and fun way. This was followed by a Sleep Easy Soup Kitchen event where people slept out in the shelters, raising money to support local people without a safe place to call home. It was a great occasion, although sad that it is needed;
- a first experience of Park Run, another fabulous national event involving nearly 700 runners at Pittville Park every week, with a different charity taking responsibility for marshalling. He encouraged people to give it a try;
- Gloucestershire's Young Musician of the Year event, where incredible talent was on show, in a county blessed for music.

He said the future Mayor and Deputy Mayor have much to love and look forward to in the year ahead.

Turning to sad news, he reported the recent passing of two former councillors and prominent members of the local community: John Oates, who represented Park Ward on the borough council for many years, had a passion for aviation, and was very involved in the airport committee; and Charmian Sheppard who served as a county councillor for St Peter's for 20 years and had a particular interest in education. He thanked them both for their dedication and hard work over the years, sent condolences to their families, and invited Members to share their thoughts.

Councillors Hay, Willingham, Wheeler, Collins, Atherstone, Horwood and Barnes all paid tribute to the councillors, thanking them for their huge contributions to the borough, and also extending condolences to their families and friends.

5 Communications by the Leader of the Council

The Leader shared the following communications:

- following some public concern, the county council has engaged in a dialogue about its proposal to replace paving with tarmac on the Promenade outside Cavendish House. This engagement is welcome, particularly in light of the problems with the quality of work on The Strand. CBC is not the responsible authority but the Leader will write to the leader of the county council requesting

that they pause their plan, re-think, and engage more widely before making a final decision;

- the sale of the of the Municipal Offices and the airport is moving forward, and we will shortly be in a position to announce the preferred bidders for both;
- the Golden Valley planning application is also getting closer, with ongoing dialogue with the county council highways;
- work has started at North Place, and we look forward to the site providing much-needed attainable housing;
- the county council has applied for planning permission for a new sports hub at Pittville School – this is particularly welcome, and helps with the delivery of our sports strategy. It is also good to note that a new Special Educational Needs school is planned, although this is likely to be full as soon as it is built.

6 To receive petitions

There were none.

7 Public Questions

There were none.

8 Member Questions

There were none.

9 Neighbourhood Planning Protocol

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control introduced his report, asking Members to adopt the Neighbourhood Planning Protocol and to delegate authority to make any minor changes and update the constitution if necessary. This is being done in line with government guidance and to ensure that the document, which dates back to 2015, remains fit for purpose and in line with a number of government acts as well as our own Corporate Plan priorities. He said the council always supports local communities and parish councils in creating their own neighbourhood plans, and it is important that the protocol remains up to date and live, with reviews on a regular basis.

A Member asked how the council can encourage more communities to get involved in neighbourhood planning, saying that in some areas, finding the requisite 21 people is difficult with the result that areas with good volunteer networks are much more likely to engage with the process. The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control said that this is an age-old question and applies to most things the council does. He said the protocol doesn't address this issue in detail – it is basically a list of what needs to be done and the various stages and gateways - but the council wants to do its best for all communities in Cheltenham and anyone coming forward will have its full support.

In debate, a Member welcomed the report and timely update of the protocol and hoped that the reforms proposed can be carried forward as part of a greater process

of reforming the neighbourhood planning processes, noting the various barriers to engagement for some communities. He was also conscious of the difference between parished and non-parished areas of Cheltenham, with significant deprivation in some of the unparished areas, and hoped that the council might bring forward new measures to encourage outreach work on neighbourhood plans and the establishment of more neighbourhood forums. He supported the report as a good first step towards that.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control suggested that elected Members are responsible for taking the lead in their communities, to make sure the people they represent know what is available, support their first steps, and direct them towards officers for help and guidance if appropriate. He said the protocol is a living document and can be improved in the future to ensure it is always fit for purpose.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the Cheltenham Borough Council Neighbourhood Planning Protocol, attached to the report at Appendix 4, is adopted;**
- 2. authority is delegated to the Director of Community and Economic Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, to prepare the Neighbourhood Planning Protocol for publication correcting any minor errors such as spelling, grammar, typographical and formatting changes that do not affect the substantive content of the Protocol;**
- 3. authority is delegated to the Corporate Director and Monitoring Officer to make changes to the constitution, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report;**
- 4. authority is delegated to the Director of Community and Economic Development, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Building Control, to make any future amendments to the Neighbourhood Planning Protocol such as updates to references to Government guidance, to ensure it remains fit for purpose.**

10 Capital, Investment, Treasury Management Strategies 2025/26

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets introduced her report, saying that the Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategies would provide the funding for the ambitious multi-million pound strategy set out in the budget approved in February, and ensuring that council tax payers' money is spent and invested wisely for maximum return. She said it is the real heart and soul of how the council manages money and services, from regenerating our favourite assets to EV charging points and safe cycle parking.

She went on to say that the housing capital programme proposed a £104.7m investment between 2024-25 and 2028-29, to increase the supply of social and affordable housing in Cheltenham, in addition to the £35m already spent on this.

Although a huge sum, she said there will always be a housing list, but the council will use every penny of the housing revenue account wisely and do all it can to deliver houses – as always in investing in Cheltenham for Cheltenham.

She urged Member to approve the strategies, and thanked officers of the finance and assets team for making the detail of the work a reality and delivering one of the most innovative and inventive financial strategies of any council of the country.

Questions

A Member thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for the report, noting that the Capital Strategy states that capital expenditure will be funded from external resources, and capital receipts from the disposal of surplus assets where possible, with borrowing only used if no other funding source is available, and debt repayment and interest costs covered without additional pressure on the revenue budget. He said Table 2 of the Capital Strategy shows £171m of capital expenditure being financed by debt over the next three years, and Table 7 shows financing costs for the same period falling from £4.6m to £4.2m, a reduction which, given current and future interest rates, can only be achieved if a substantial portion of planned investment is financed from external resources and capital receipts.

He asked for assurance that in reality, the majority of planned investment will be financed from external resources and capital receipts rather than the amount of new debt shown in Table 2, and asked if the Cabinet Member agreed that while a prudent level of borrowing to fund investments is acceptable, it would be inappropriate to borrow to meet interest payments.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets said she would stand behind the finance team's decades of experience in investment planning, and said that with some substantial assets in its portfolio, the council will do all it can to finance within its means through asset disposals and redeployments. .

In response to further questions, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets confirmed that:

- the county council receives 74% of council tax income, understandable as it delivers very expensive services such as social services, education and highways, but unfortunate in that it means that CBC has no jurisdiction over some things, such as potholes and paving. This is one of the problems highlighted by the devolution conversation - when delivering standardised services at scale and over an extremely large area, the community-driven ethos and connection is lost – but every financial decision the council makes is about delivering the best it can for the people of Cheltenham;
- regarding the Environmental, Social and Governance Policy (ESG) in respect of treasury management - specifically what the council is doing to try and tackle the worst excesses and detrimental effects of extreme capitalism (including the tobacco and alcohol industries and irresponsible gambling companies) - the ethos at CBC is to invest in Cheltenham for Cheltenham. Investment decisions align with that, particularly ESG decisions around climate, and she is confident that we have no investments in any of those areas.

Debate

In debate, Members thanked officers and the Cabinet Member for an excellent piece of work and made the following points:

- carrying out peer reviews on other authorities, it is interesting to note the different attitudes to borrowing: some councils are completely risk averse and will not invest anything in their towns until they have enough money in the bank - laudable in some ways but not benefitting their residents – while others prefer to borrow at a reasonable rate to finance essential regeneration work. CBC is very good at managing its debt ratio, and lucky to have some highly valuable assets; prudent borrowing is an important part of what we do;
- Paragraph 2.3 of the Capital Strategy is particularly important, demonstrating that the aim is not just to get cash and spend it, but to look at what Cheltenham people and communities need and build everything we do on addressing those needs. Our finance team understands that and knows what to do to make Cheltenham's economy grow and benefit all its residents;
- the council is blessed with fantastic staff across the board, and investing in our town from property and industrial units to affordable and social housing is key to Cheltenham's success. We cannot sit back and be complacent – we need to take sensible risks, including borrowing, to invest in people and property which will in turn generate returns through council tax or rents. CBC is one of the best authorities in the country when it comes to investing in the town and its future.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Assets thanked Members for their comments. She said life is about risk, and CBC is not afraid to take the best risks available in a field it knows well, or to invest to make money to improve residents' lives. Unlike other more cautious authorities which are incapable of seizing opportunities and are subsequently living with the challenges that approach has brought them, CBC has followed this successful strategy for the past ten years, and always got it right on the things that really matter. She thanked the Leader for embarking on this strategy of commerciality with a reasonable amount of risk when she was Cabinet Member for Finance.

RESOLVED THAT:

- **the Capital Strategy 2025/26 at Appendix 2;**
- **the Investment Strategy 2025/26 at Appendix 3; and**
- **the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26 at Appendix 4**

are noted and approved.

11 Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation

The Leader introduced her report, which proposes the abolition of Cheltenham Borough Council, following the government's white paper requiring all remaining two-tier local authorities to become unitary councils.

She made the follow points:

- in many ways, it feels like the wrong time to be embarking on a lengthy and costly distraction for the local government sector, especially for CBC with its ambitious programmes – including Golden Valley, improving housing services, providing more affordable homes, and being a town of sanctuary for refugees, asylum seekers and the homeless – as well as delivering excellent services day in day out;
- CBC has a clear choice, however - to step aside and wait for reorganisation to happen or to take a proactive role and make a clear statement about what we believe is best for Cheltenham – and has opted for the latter, this being so important for the future of the borough;
- together with a joint cover letter from all Gloucestershire councils, three interim proposals will be submitted to government: a single county-wide unitary; CBC's preferred option for two unitaries – one in the east and one in the west; and a 'greater Gloucester' model;
- the two unitaries proposed (Gloucester City, the Forest of Dean and Stroud in the east, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and the Cotswolds in the west) are the right shape and size to meet the government's assessment tests but still be connected to residents, and this is the preference of five Gloucestershire MPs, including Max Wilkinson. This plan is ambitious, progressive and promotes innovative potential solutions to the significant problems that threaten to outstrip and overwhelm local government if we continue on the same path;
- the government believes growth and productivity are the way to solve the country's problems, and CBC's plan will do that and more, using technology to enhance our clusters in cyber security, and green energy to make residents more prosperous and healthy and less reliant on expensive care services;
- the proposal is ambitious for the future, keeping devolution front and centre, and in addition boldly calls for Gloucestershire to become part of the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), to help create a bigger strategic authority with a strong regional voice at the heart of government. We need to engage with existing WECA authorities on this plan to make sure it works for all; if we hesitate, the government may step in and place us in a strategic authority that isn't right for Cheltenham or the county;
- the main message to convey is that achieving management efficiencies through rationalising councils is ultimately a dead end - we need real, positive change, to push the boundaries on what is possible.

She concluded by saying that although she and the Cabinet have approved the decision, she was keen to bring the matter to Council to enable Members to have their say.

Questions

In response to a Member's question, the Chief Executive confirmed that:

- to clarify what is meant by shadow authorities, and based on what has been implemented in other local government reorganisations - in particular in Cumbria as part of the last round of local government reorganisation – there would be a shadow election in May 2027, with the vesting date and creation of the new authority from April 2028, an election four years after that point, and a four-year election cycle thereafter;

- the shadow authority and existing local authority would run side by side for a 12-month period, the main responsibilities of the shadow authority being to oversee the implementation of the new authority, appointing the chief executive and senior officers, and getting the building blocks of decision-making in place. To ensure alignment during the 12-month period, the shadow authority would also be given district and county powers, and none of the three bodies – shadow authority, district council, county council – can make significant decisions without the agreement of the others .

In response to further questions from Members, the Leader confirmed that:

- there will be more consultation in the next phase of the process, including engagement with schools and education providers;
- the company commissioned to write the report is Plexal, CBC's partner for the MX project. They have provided a very full report in just four weeks; the cost was £34k;
- a cabinet working group has been set up, headed by the Leader, as the first step of a governance review to consider what will happen to residents who do not live in one of Cheltenham's five parishes. A meeting is scheduled for later this week, focussing first on existing parishes and what they want - to expand and be strengthened or to be absorbed into a single town council. Area forums have been set up in some parts of the country; Cheltenham must decide collectively on what is best for us, and this work will run alongside the devolution programme, involving a lot of consultation. There are also some very active residents' associations in Cheltenham, who will be part of this process;
- regarding the possibility of tweaking some boundaries to make them more logical and practical and based on the River Severn, the white paper is not entirely clear about this, and it is not part of this submission. If our submission is recognised, however, proposals will be worked up between now and November, including consideration of boundaries.

Debate

In debate, Members made the following comments:

- the report and conclusion to address three levels of local government are strongly supported. At the top strategic level, it is right that we aim to be part of the existing WECA with Bristol and South Gloucestershire, to create a logical whole which rather than splitting up the area in fact reunites historic Gloucestershire, and at unitary level, two authorities will keep power as close to the people as possible;
- a smaller local unitary authority ensures a greater chance of supporting culture and the arts, so important to the people of Cheltenham, in the face of discretionary spending against big ticket items such as statutory adult social care and children's services; we also need the strongest representation on unitary committees and decision-making bodies when it comes to the critical planning decisions to be made in the next few years, such as the Municipal Offices and Cavendish House;
- regarding population, the unitary councils of Bath and North East Somerset (BANES), South Gloucestershire, and North Somerset are smaller than the

proposed unitaries, but exercise control over children's services, education and more with no worse a record than Gloucestershire County Council's – bigger is not always better;

- regarding parish and town councils, this is a real opportunity to look at more devolution and local-based neighbourhood decision making, to reinvent and bring that level of government even closer to local people;
- the government has given us a great opportunity to be radical and innovative about how to provide services to residents in local communities. Gloucestershire is a huge land mass, with many local identities, and the report highlights areas of excellence in both sides and across the county; there would be concerns about one unitary delivering the services people need, and although the government has recommended 500k as a minimum population size, it is good that it is open to proposals which do not fit to this;
- we know that the two-tier model doesn't always work, and are aware of the desperate need to invest more in highways, housing and schools across the county; how do we ensure that residents' voices are heard and the services they need are available to allow communities to prosper and grow? Trying to achieve this on such a huge scale can't give them what they need;
- there is a question around the number of councillors who will represent each division, each county division (made up of two wards) currently being represented by five councillors: a reduction from five to two councillors would represent the loss of 110 councillors across the county and a saving of £490k. There is a potential negative impact to be considered here, taking into account the need for representation across all areas and the challenge for councillors of working age or with full-time carer responsibilities of having time for all their residents;
- there are areas of Cheltenham borough which fall outside the Cheltenham constituency, and local government reform provides the perfect opportunity to address that, taking account of place-based identity;
- there are two main reasons why a two-unitary model suits us best: localism - Gloucestershire is a huge county and people want their services delivered in an efficient, effective and easy-to-access way – and identity - Cheltenham and Gloucester are both great urban centres but deliver very different things, which should not be diluted in any way; Cheltenham has many links and history with Tewkesbury and the Cotswolds, making them more natural bedfellows;
- devolution doesn't feel like the right way forward for local government, making it less accessible at a time when people already feel disengaged, but opting out is clearly not an option. CBC's leadership have drafted proposals to the very short government deadline, which may be ignoring other pressing national problems in order to crowd out smaller parties from participation in democratic decision making. This has resulted in no cohesive plan between the areas and districts of Gloucestershire, and it is important that we are all on the same page when going forward. It would be a fantastic chance for proportional representation, to create a more accurate representation of what residents actually want – this was supported by Liberal Democrats in 2022. Wards such as St Paul's are likely to be neglected in a larger unitary authority and accounting for nuanced local needs should be a priority. To reflect Cheltenham Green Group's disapproval of the seismic management changes being introduced too rapidly for a proper

response, and their desire to find longer-term mechanisms for effective democratic representation, they will abstain from supporting devolution, acknowledging that we must move forward but concerned by the lack of knowledge about what is best for our communities;

- those responsible for bringing this report forward are our engineers, taking something which they feel won't work – a single unitary authority where local voices will not be heard – and breaking it into two parts which are both functional and workable in our communities. They are engineering a new future for our county and our town, and hope that everyone will engage to ensure residents across the county have a voice;
- although local government reorganisation is not welcome, removing accessibility and adding hurdles, the council is ready to fight for the right result for Cheltenham residents. The two-unitary model is right for many reasons, not least keeping decision-making as close to residents as possible, with local knowledge to understand the impact of those decisions, whether positive or negative. The government has stated that unitary authorities should be the right size to achieve efficiencies, meet local needs, and be informed by local views, but a whole-county unitary authority would not achieve those goals. The two-unitary proposal allows for meaningful reorganisation, and innovative ways of working and finding local solutions, without excluding current cross-council ways of working, such as Ubico. This can continue across two unitary authorities, collaborating and sharing workstreams while focussing locally on meeting the day-to-day needs of residents;
- the smaller areas also allow greater focus on economic growth, with the two-unitary proposal clearly setting out its plans for cyber and green energy, and the opportunity to look at new ways to address issues faced by public services. This interim proposal sets out clear and achievable gains and provides a brighter future;
- in addition, joining WECA is the right way forward, in view of Cheltenham's strong cultural and working links with Bristol, Bath and South Gloucestershire;
- the two unitary proposal neatly parcels the county into two homogenous groups, but Gloucestershire is a lot more diverse than this suggests – there are at least six different county regions, each including diverse and unequal districts. Maybe having a single combined authority would be a chance to level up the inequalities and heal divisions, in addition to the obvious financial and administrative benefits;
- it was unrealistic to be sent a 92-page paper on Friday afternoon and be expected to full digest this by Monday. The Leader is to be thanked for bringing the report to Full Council, but the short notice seems undemocratic, regardless of what other councils have done;
- a reluctance to embrace unitary councils comes from CBC's record for balancing its books every single year, keeping non-mandatory operations going, rarely losing any front-line services and still managing to invest. This cannot be said of other councils, including to county which has balanced its budget by selling off its rural estate. There is a concern that a single unitary council might start selling off Cheltenham's much-prized investments and assets; a smaller authority, with Tewkesbury and the Cotswolds, would have a bigger say in the running of its local finances;

- county councillors are particularly aware of the size and differences across the country, and if all power were to be centralised in Gloucester, Cheltenham may be left playing second fiddle, with other large conurbations of Cirencester, Tewkesbury and Stroud all left out, as well as the Forest of Dean. Two unitaries is better in general for all the people of Gloucestershire, though not without challenges, with areas of severe deprivation across the county, and even areas of the Cotswolds deprived through lack of access to services;
- putting too much power into the hands of one person – such as the Mayor of Bristol and the Police and Crime Commissioner – can have catastrophic consequences, but we should definitely look to join WECA and fight for the best we can get for the people of Cheltenham and Gloucestershire;
- there is a lot to be gained if both parties at CBC acknowledge their commonalities and work together, recognising the different regional identities and districts and looking to find the pragmatic in the policy. In view of the levels of deprivation in the county, the economic arguments for two unitaries cannot be stressed enough, and there is a great case to be made for managing efficiencies and costs and at the same having parity between the two areas. Supporters of a single authority suggest that the two-unitary situation will create economic inequality, but reference to the report shows that this is likely to be relatively minimal, with deprived areas in Cheltenham and Gloucester, and also the ageing population that will come with an East Gloucestershire unitary, bringing its own problems around employment and resourcing;
- there is a strong case for working towards something that identifies districts and a common sense of purpose, at the end of the day recognising that all districts are constructions – different areas with different identities which have formed one identity – and a Cheltenham and Cotswolds authority can be based on a shared common identity that may have different parts but at the same time coheres into one. Ultimately, we are trying to build something that works for the broadest range of people and identities without stretching to the limits where it becomes untenable. It would be good if the Green Group can join the Liberal Democrats to work on this deal.

The Leader thanked Members for their excellent contributions, and addressed some of the points made:

- in an ideal world, we would have much smaller districts, but this is no longer a reality; the population target of under 500k is addressed in this interim proposal, and as a Member said, we want proportionality and balance, with none more powerful than the other;
- there is no need to abandon the Teckal companies already in existence and working well across all the Gloucestershire authorities, such as adult health and social care – we have locality-based services which won't need massive desegregation;
- there is a good argument for boundary changes and this will need further discussion between now and November;
- the county council's report was only published last week, and it was only when CBC knew what the county was proposing and who was writing its report that it was clear that this would not provide the answers CBC was looking for - much

more than a straight comparison between district councils and a single unitary model;

- it has been said that there isn't enough clarity in the white paper, but this is being taken as an opportunity to tell the government what we want for our residents, focussing on the art of the possible. We are not embracing CBC's abolition, but must do all in our power to safeguard and protect as much as possible, such as carrying on with the Golden Valley Development and all the cultural, leisure and community services delivered by districts across Gloucestershire;
- it is clear that the county council is being dissolved and its services redistributed, so there is no reason why the centre of power should have to be Shire Hall, which may not be fit for purpose any more than the Municipal Offices are;
- we will have no choice about having a Mayor, but should look at this as an opportunity – it comes with a big price ticket which can be used collectively across the region;
- it is true to say that the report has been put together in a short timeline, but CBC's proposal has been shared with other districts. The main issue is that we cannot passively wait for something to be done to us; the government has not provided very much clarity, but the report shows them what could be done. Other councils around the country have simply expressed a simple preference for reorganisation in their areas, but the government wants a proper assessment that covers the priorities set out in the white paper – we have had the boldness to do that and can feel proud;
- it is unfortunate that Members only received the report on Friday, but unreasonable to say the process has been undemocratic. Many conversations have taken place, councillors have been briefed, and this is a good proposal which covers a lot. Stroud leaders prefer this direction of travel and all but one of the district councils have signed the letter to the minister confirming WECA as the preferred option. It is disappointing that the Green Group do not feel able to support the submission but their decision is respected.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. following Cabinet approval of the following recommendations (below), the content of this report and the council's preference for two unitary councils for Gloucestershire and the submission included at Appendix 5 are noted.**

RECOMMENDATIONS approved by Cabinet:

RESOLVED THAT:

- 1. the joint letter to be submitted to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government found at Appendix 4 is approved;**

2. a preference is expressed for two unitary councils to be created in Gloucestershire and the interim submission included at Appendix 5 is approved, setting out an outline case to be appended separately to the joint letter alongside other interim proposals submitted by respective Gloucestershire councils;
3. authority is delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to work with the other six Gloucestershire councils to submit the joint letter and any associated separate appendices submitted by councils individually;
4. that there is not alignment on the shape of local government in Gloucestershire is recognised by Cabinet, but a commitment to ongoing collaboration with other Gloucestershire Councils, stakeholders and MHCLG as the devolution and reorganisation process progresses is agreed, to ensure that we deliver the best outcomes for residents and businesses.

12 Notice of Motions

There were none.

13 Any other item the Mayor determines as urgent and which requires a decision

There was no other business on this occasion.

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Cheltenham Borough Council

Council – 12 May 2025

Community Governance Review

Accountable member:

Councillor Rowena Hay, Leader of the Council

Accountable officer:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities

Ward(s) affected:

All

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

In light of the government's announcement on the reorganisation of Local Government, the council is keen to ensure the retention and improvement of community engagement and cohesion, local democracy and the delivery of effective local services.

The council therefore proposes to carry out a community governance review with the purpose of establishing whether there is support for the establishment of any new Town or Parish Councils within the administrative areas of Cheltenham or whether any of the existing parish councils of Charlton Kings, Leckhampton with Warden Hill, Prestbury, Swindon Village or Up Hatherley wish to amend their existing boundaries.

This report seeks approval of the Terms of Reference for the review and the commencement of the first stage of public consultation.

Recommendations: That Council:

- 1. agrees the Terms of Reference for the Community Governance Review, signifying the formal start of the Review and commencement of the first stage consultation**
-

2. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

There are no direct finance and property implications of the decision in this report. The consultation will be undertaken using existing systems and software which already have approved budget. The implications from any recommendations from the review may have finance or property implications which will be considered as part of any reporting of the review conclusions.

Signed off by: Gemma Bell, Director of Finance and Assets

gemma.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

The Council, as principal council, has authority to take decisions about parish electoral governance arrangements under Sections 79 and 102(2) the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

A Borough Council that is undertaking a review, must notify the County Council that the review for its area is to be undertaken and the terms of reference (including any modifications to those Terms), as per section 79(3).

Sections 81 – 84 of the said Act cover relevant aspect of the Terms of reference for the review. These are to be the Terms under which the review is to be undertaken and approved by the Council. The Terms must specify the area under review and any modifications to make to them, for example, following any petition that may be received during the course of the review. As per the Guidance, there is no 'one size fits all' approach, nevertheless on general principles, the Terms of reference should set out clearly the matters on which a community governance review is to focus. As soon as practicable after deciding the Terms, they must be published.

A petition may still be received and there is a duty under section 84 or power to respond under section 85 of the Act, dependent on the Terms of reference approved.

Section 102(6) provides the Terms of reference of a community governance review "allow for a community governance petition or community governance application to be considered" if the terms of reference of the review are such that—(a) the area under review includes the whole of the petition area or application area; and (b) the recommendations to be considered by the review include all of the petition's or application's specified recommendations.

Council Functions states that functions relating to Community governance are reserved to Council as referred in the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000.

Signed off by: One Legal

Tel: 01684 272012 Email: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

The benefits associated with this report such as the retention and improvement of community engagement and cohesion, local democracy and the delivery of effective local services have positive environmental implications. Local community parishes play a crucial role in communicating the impacts of climate change, raising awareness, and promoting sustainable practices.

Signed off by: Maizy McCann, Climate Officer maizy.mccann@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Ensuring residents, communities and businesses benefit from Cheltenham's future growth and prosperity
- Being a more modern, efficient and financially sustainable council

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

A review of community governance will not impact on the requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Parish and Town Councils are the most local tier of government in England and play an important role in terms of community empowerment at a local level. A CGR offers an opportunity for both existing parishes and local people to feed into this process and offer proposals for any changes

2 Background

2.1 In light of the government's announcement on the reorganisation of Local Government, the council is keen to ensure the retention and improvement of community engagement and cohesion, local democracy and the delivery of effective local services. The council therefore proposes to carry out a community governance review with the purpose of establishing whether there is support for the establishment of any new Town or Parish Councils within the administrative areas of Cheltenham or whether any of the existing parish councils of Charlton Kings, Leckhampton with Warden Hill, Prestbury, Swindon Village or Up Hatherley wish to amend their existing boundaries.

2.2 The Council has authority to take decisions about parish electoral governance arrangements under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The Council is required to monitor these arrangements, with good practice indicating a formal review should be undertaken every 10-15 years. This formal review process is

known as a Community Governance Review (CGR). A CGR reviews only parish-level electoral arrangements. It does not consider or amend borough ward-level governance arrangements.

2.3 A CGR is the process by which parish electoral arrangements are formally reviewed. The Council has considerable powers to review and amend governance arrangements without further referral to an external body, provided the statutory process is followed. Decisions are usually made by Full Council, unless appropriate delegations are in place, given the importance of parish governance arrangements across the local authority area. A CGR may review any aspect of community governance including, for example, the creation or naming of a parish, the establishment of a separate parish from an existing parish, alteration of parish boundaries, abolition or dissolution of a parish, changes to parish electoral arrangements (the number of councillors to be elected to the council; the year when the ordinary election of parish councillors are held, whether the parish should be divided into wards) or parish grouping.

2.4 Legislation and statutory guidance set out the requirements for a CGR. These include that the Council must;

- draw up Terms of Reference (ToR) for the review, specifying the area/s under review and any consequential matters that need to be considered.
- consult local government electors for the area under review and any other person or body (including a local authority) who appears to have an interest in the review.
- have regard to the need to secure that community governance within the area under review “reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area and is effective and convenient”.
- take into account any representations received in connection with the review.
- publish recommendations as soon as practicable after making them and take steps to ensure that those who may be interested in the review are informed of those recommendations

2.5 Subject to these duties, it is for the Council to decide how to undertake the review.

2.6 The Terms of Reference for a CGR set out the scope of the review and the timetable for the work. Once agreed by Council, the Terms of Reference must be published and they form one of the foundations for the CGR.

2.7 The draft Terms of Reference, including the timetable for the review, are set out in Appendix 3. Members are invited to consider and agree these Terms of Reference. Once approved, the Terms of Reference shall be published, signifying the formal start of the CGR, and a public consultation shall commence.

2.8 Once the first stage of consultation has been concluded the results will be analysed by the CGR Cabinet Working Group, following which draft recommendations will be

developed by officers, discussed by the CGR Cabinet Working Group and agreed by Full Council. These will set out specific recommendations for each area. In some cases, the draft recommendation may be for no change; in others boundary changes may be recommended; in others the number of parish councillors may be adjusted; or new parish councils created. There is no assumption or expectation that any given area will be changed.

2.9 Once approved by Council, the draft recommendations will be subject to a further period of more focussed consultation.

2.10 Following the consultation, officers will review all responses received and take these into account in developing the Final Recommendations. These will be presented, along with the submissions received, to the CGR Cabinet Working Group before presentation to and discussion by Council, with the final decisions due to be made in early 2026.

2.11 The Final Recommendations, once approved, become enacted by a formal reorganisation Order. Any changes to governance arrangements (including boundaries, parish names, and numbers of Councillors) take effect from the next scheduled elections in May 2026.

2.12 Timetable for the Review – it is intended to complete the CGR within 12 months. However, the indicative timetable for the Review below may change depending on local circumstances, although implementation ahead of May 2026 is anticipated

Date	Action
12 May 2025	Full Council approves the Terms of Reference, signifying the start of the review
19 May – 18 July 2025	First period of public consultation
August – September 2025	Review by Officers and Working Group and development of Draft Recommendations.
13 October 2025	Draft Recommendations to be considered by Council and approved for second round of consultation.
20 October – 19 December 2025	Second public consultation
January – February 2026	Review by Officers and Working Group and development of Final Recommendations.
27 February 2026	Full Council discuss and agree Final Recommendations
February 2026	Reorganisation Order made

2.13 At this stage no assumptions are made as to what the Draft or Final Recommendations may be. The Terms of Reference are broad, enabling submissions about any aspects of local governance. However, some communities within unparished areas have already expressed an interest in forming a new Town or Parish council, and they are invited to submit a response to the first stage consultation. Any community that does not have a parish council at present may request to have a parish council. There are implications of this, including local council tax precepts, which will be explained more fully at the second stage of consultation as appropriate.

3 Reasons for recommendations

3.1 In light of the government's announcement on the reorganisation of Local Government, the council is keen to ensure the retention and improvement of community engagement and cohesion, local democracy and the delivery of effective local services.

3.2 In addition the Council is required to keep parish electoral arrangements under review to ensure they remain fit for purpose, and to ensure they continue to reflect local needs

4 Alternative options considered

4.1 Council may decide not to proceed with the CGR or make amendments to the proposed Terms of Reference.

5 Consultation and feedback

5.1 The CGR will be subject to two rounds of public consultation.

6 Key risks

6.1 See Appendix 1

Report author:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities
claire.hughes@cheltenham.gov.uk

Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Equality Impact Assessment – Screening
- iii. Terms of Reference for Community Governance Review

Background information:

N/A

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
1.	If the Council chooses not to undertake a CGR, local people and/or parish councils may submit a petition requiring the council to undertake a CGR which must be completed within a year	Claire Hughes	3	2	6	Accept	CGR Cabinet Working Group established to develop TOR and ensure councillor support for review	Claire Hughes	Complete
2.	There may be changes in the indicative timetable provided for the review	Claire Hughes	2	2	4	Accept	Actively monitor progress via the CGR Cabinet Working Group	Claire Hughes	Ongoing

Appendix 2: Equality Impact Assessment Screening

Page 48

1. Identify the policy, project, function or service change

a. Person responsible for this Equality Impact Assessment

Officer responsible: Claire Hughes	Service Area: Governance, Housing and Communities
Title: Director of Governance, Housing and Communities	Date of assessment: 11 April 2025
Signature: C. Hughes	

b. Is this a policy, function, strategy, service change or project?

Project

If other, please specify:

c. Name of the policy, function, strategy, service change or project

Community Governance Review

Is this new or existing?

New or proposed

Please specify reason for change or development of policy, function, strategy, service change or project

Community Governance Review in accordance with [Part 4, Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#).

d. What are the aims, objectives and intended outcomes and who is likely to benefit from it?

Aims:	In light of the government's announcement on the reorganisation of Local Government, the council is keen to ensure the retention and improvement of community engagement and cohesion, local democracy and the delivery of effective local services.
Objectives:	The main purpose of this review is therefore to establish whether there is support for the establishment of any new Town or Parish Councils within the administrative areas of Cheltenham or whether any of the existing parish councils of Charlton Kings, Leckhampton with Warden Hill, Prestbury, Swindon Village or Up Hatherley wish to amend their existing boundaries.

Outcomes:	Parish areas which reflect the needs of Cheltenham
Benefits:	Retention and improvement of community engagement and cohesion, local democracy and the delivery of effective local services.

e. What are the expected impacts?

Are there any aspects, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could have an impact on the lives of people, including employees and customers.

Yes

Do you expect the impacts to be positive or negative?

Positive

Please provide an explanation for your answer:

The outcome of the review should see an improvement of community engagement and cohesion, local democracy and the delivery of effective local services.

If your answer to question e identified potential positive or negative impacts, or you are unsure about the impact, then you should carry out a Stage Two Equality Impact Assessment.

f. Identify next steps as appropriate

Stage Two required

No - a stage 2 impact assessment is not required at this stage but may be required once draft recommendations have been developed.

Owner of Stage Two assessment

Completion date for Stage Two assessment

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW TERMS OF REFERENCE

Introduction

Cheltenham Borough Council is carrying out a full Community Governance Review in accordance with [Part 4, Chapter 3 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007](#).

The council is required to have regard for the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. This guidance has been considered in drawing up these terms of reference.

Why is Cheltenham Borough Council undertaking the review?

In light of the government's announcement on the reorganisation of Local Government, the council is keen to ensure the retention and improvement of community engagement and cohesion, local democracy and the delivery of effective local services. The main purpose of this review is therefore to establish whether there is support for the establishment of any new Town or Parish Councils within the administrative areas of Cheltenham or whether any of the existing parish councils of Charlton Kings, Leckhampton with Warden Hill, Prestbury, Swindon Village or Up Hatherley wish to amend their existing boundaries.

The council will take into account any other recommendations/representations that it receives as part of the review which fit with the parameters of a community governance review, as set out below.

What is a Community Governance Review?

A Community Governance Review is a review of the whole or part of the borough area to consider one or more of the following:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes;
- The naming of parishes and the style of new parishes;
- The electoral arrangements for parishes (the ordinary year of election; council size);
- The number of councillors to be elected to the council, and any division of parishes;
- Grouping parishes under a common parish council or de-grouping parishes.

The recommendations made in a Community Governance Review have two main objectives:

- To improve community engagement and better local democracy;
- More effective and convenient delivery of local services.

The review must ensure that Community Governance within the area under review reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area and is effective and convenient. It must also take into account any existing arrangements such as community or residents' associations or neighbourhood councils.

There are two stages to the review: the first stage will gather opinions on current structure and any new proposals; the second stage will be Cheltenham Borough Council's recommendations on the way forward which the public will be able to comment upon.

Who undertakes the review?

The review is undertaken by Cheltenham Borough Council. The terms of reference for this review and all matters in connection with it, will be considered through recommendations to Full Council. It will be for Full Council to approve the making of any necessary Reorganisation Order.

The lead officer with regard to this review will be the Monitoring Officer.

How Cheltenham Borough Council proposes to conduct consultations during the review?

In coming to its recommendations in the review, the Council will need to take account of the views of local people.

The Act requires the Council to consult the local government electors and any other person or body who appears to have an interest in the review and to take the representations that are received into account by judging them against the criteria in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

Cheltenham Borough Council intends to consult with all households and interested parties in the area through inviting initial submissions and seeking views on the draft proposals.

The Council will also identify any other person or body whom it feels may have an interest in the review and will write to them inviting them to submit their views at both stages of consultation. This may include:

- Ward members
- Parish council members
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Groups and societies
- Schools and colleges
- Members of Parliament
- Local political parties
- The police
- Local charities and voluntary organisations

The Council will also be pleased to receive comments from any other person or body that wishes to make representations; any such person that makes representations during the initial invitation to submit proposals will be invited to make comments in respect of the draft proposals.

Cheltenham Borough Council intends to clearly publish all decisions taken in the review and the reasons for taking those decisions and will work towards the Government's view in undertaking the review that "Community Governance Reviews should be conducted transparently so that local people and other stakeholders who may have an interest are made aware of the outcome of the decisions taken on them and the reasons behind these decisions."

In accordance with the Act, representations received in connection with the review will be taken into account, and steps will be taken to notify consultees of the outcome of the review by publishing them on the Council's website at www.cheltenham.gov.uk, through general press releases, placing key documents on public deposit at the Council Offices and will communicate the final outcome of the review by March 2026.

Timetable for the review

Date	Action
12 May 2025	Full Council approves the Terms of Reference, signifying the start of the review
19 May – 18 July 2025	First period of public consultation
August – September 2025	Review by Officers and Working Group and development of Draft Recommendations.
13 October 2025	Draft Recommendations to be considered by Council and approved for second round of consultation.
20 October – 19 December 2025	Second public consultation
January – February 2026	Review by Officers and Working Group and development of Final Recommendations.
27 February 2026	Full Council discuss and agree Final Recommendations
February 2026	Reorganisation Order made

How to contact us:

Any queries regarding this review should be directed to: The Monitoring Officer, Cheltenham Borough Council, Municipal Offices, Promenade, Cheltenham GL50 9SA or via email to community.governance.review@cheltenham.gov.uk

Publication of these Terms of Reference formally begins the review, which must be completed within twelve months.

Consequential matters following a review:

A Reorganisation Order may be drafted which would cover any consequential matters that appear to Cheltenham Borough Council to be necessary as a result of the final agreed recommendations from the review that give effect to the Order.

These may include:

- The transfer and management or custody of property;
- The setting of precepts for new parishes; and
- Provision with respect to the transfer of any functions, property, rights and liabilities.

In these matters, the Council will be guided by Regulations that have been issued following the 2007 Act.

In particular, Cheltenham Borough Council notes that the Regulations regarding the transfer of property, rights and liabilities require that any apportionments shall use the population of the area as estimated by the proper officer of the Council as an appropriate proportion.

Furthermore, the Council notes that the regulations regarding the establishment of a precept for a new parish require Cheltenham Borough Council to calculate the first anticipated precept for a newly constituted town or parish council and for the amount of that precept to be included in the Reorganisation Order.

Date of publication of these Terms of Reference

Date of Publication: 19 May 2025

Any modifications (if any) will be published as soon as practicable after they have been made