

## Cabinet Briefing for Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 27<sup>th</sup> April 2015

The Forward Plan lists the reports expected to come to Cabinet in the next 3 or 4 months. This note supplements that with other issues that may be of interest to O&S.

### Devolution

The GEGJC meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> March discussed a paper by Shared Intelligence that looked at the national picture on devolution and what if anything Gloucestershire should be doing in response. There was a follow up discussion at the Leadership Gloucestershire meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> March which includes police and health representatives.

The draft minute of that discussion is:-

#### **(a) Devolution**

*Since the referendum on devolution in Scotland, the debate on devolution in England had gathered pace. The Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee had considered a report prepared by Shared Intelligence. During the debate it became clear that a wider discussion was needed. With the General Election approaching, it was not clear how devolution will advance. It was felt that Gloucestershire would need to establish its position by the summer. A process for agreeing the way forward and timescale was discussed.*

*A number of comments were made, including wider public sector interest in a debate, whether Gloucestershire should work with others, the “vision”, Leadership Gloucestershire’s role, the uncertainty created by the General Election, the relationship with the LEP, avoiding any “unitary” structures debate, integration between health and social care and devolved powers from Central Government.*

#### **Agreed Actions:**

- (1) To hold a debate in early June for all leaders of partner organisations with the intention of coming to a collective view by the summer. **Action: Mike Dawson and David Hagg.***

**NB:** *If a collective view is not feasible, organisations may take their own position.*

Clearly the national position is more fluid than at any time in recent decades and there is broad agreement that Gloucestershire needs to be ready to take

part in whatever devolution happens after the General Election. However there is not agreement on scope of devolution to be discussed.

The view of the Cheltenham cabinet is that there should be a wide debate to look at what the vision is for public services locally and how best they should therefore be organised to achieve that. While this includes devolving powers down from government nationally it should not exclude changes to improve service provision locally (eg highways where many people are concerned that the current arrangements are clearly not working). While this is not an easy discussion it is essential now if local residents are to get most benefit from the national mood to decentralise powers.

An alternative view seems to be to restrict any discussion to what changes may be needed to enable powers to be handed down from national government.

We would welcome views on this and how best to ensure this debate happens in Cheltenham given the complication of elections in May and suggested 'leaders' debate in June.