

# Council

14 October 2024

## Public Questions

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

The government is looking for regional government authorities and councils to work together on planning, homes, economic development and transport, and in terms of sub-regional authorities, the close working relationship between Tewkesbury, Gloucester and Cheltenham shows that there is a need for more joint working or a unitary authority.

What discussions are taking place between Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, Tewkesbury, Gloucester City, Cotswolds, Stroud, Forest of Dean and South Gloucestershire councils on setting up unitary authorities within Gloucestershire and becoming part of a regional devolution deal with Western Gateway partnership and Western Gateway Transport Board?

What submission has Cheltenham Borough Council made to the Secretary of State for Transport or the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Housing and Local Government as part of the Western Gateway deal on a regional devolution?

### Leader's response:

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

There are no current conversations between Gloucestershire councils that Cheltenham Borough Council is involved in that are discussing local government reorganisation to become a unitary. Cheltenham Borough Council has always worked in partnership with local authorities. We are a joint owner of Ubico, who provide waste and recycling services, we are part of a shared legal service, and we take our full part in a range of cross Gloucestershire committees and forums such as the City Region Board and Climate Leadership Gloucestershire. Due to partnership working, Cheltenham Borough Council's view is that local government reorganisation is not necessary. This has been a view shared by other Gloucestershire authorities.

With regard to devolution, previously Cheltenham Borough Council supported a level 2 devolution deal being proposed to government but, as of yet, government have chosen not to progress it at this time. However, the government is expected to publish a new devolution framework in the coming months and we wait to see the content of that framework before having further discussions. We remain interested in exploring a further devolution deal and alongside all Gloucestershire councils we have submitted an expression of interest to simply register our interest in exploring a future deal.

**2. Question from Mr Tim Harman to Cabinet Member for Major Developments and Housing Delivery, Councillor Peter Jeffries**

It is good that the MX project has finally been completed. Can I ask the relevant Cabinet Member for the final cost of the project and how much this varies from the original budget for the project?

**Cabinet Member's response:**

The budget for the original scope of the MX project was £4,259,809 when it was first submitted for planning permission in 2019. This was part funded by a £3.5m Government grant and the design at this stage was based on the hub being built from 31 shipping containers.

However, since this date the design of the building has changed substantially, and the completed building is a permanent structure on a much bigger footprint and much better able to fuel business growth in Cheltenham than the original proposal.

The final approved cost of the delivery of the MX hub is £9.267m however given the changes in design over the past five years, this is not a like for like comparison with the original budget. Full Council were presented with annual updates on the project and any budget uplift was approved as part of the key decisions in the relevant reports.