

The Creation of Greater Gloucester and Gloucestershire Unitary Councils

DRAFT

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1. Executive Summary

A New Future for Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire stands at a turning point. Government has invited proposals on replacing the current two-tier system with single, unitary structures. This is an opportunity to build a structure of Local Government that will deliver improved outcomes and services for residents over the next 50 years. It is also an opportunity to enable the historic City of Gloucester and the County of Gloucestershire to achieve their potential - an innovative economy, a world-class natural and cultural heritage and optimally leveraging the economic powerhouse of Gloucester, with its capacity for significant housing and economic growth.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to unlock growth, strengthen identity and improve outcomes.

This proposal offers a new model: two strong, complementary unitary councils designed around the real lives of our residents, Greater Gloucester (GG) and Gloucestershire Unitary (GU).

These councils will reflect the people and places they serve, making them able to tackle Gloucestershire's deepest challenges. They will reset failing services, address entrenched health inequalities and unlock sustainable growth. They will be simpler and fairer; they will improve outcomes for the vulnerable and protect our ancient heritage and identity. In addition, they will give a stronger voice to the people of Gloucestershire.

Rooted in Identity & Economy: Two Councils meeting the Needs of the Population

This proposal will replace the current system of one county council and six district councils with two strong, complementary unitary authorities. These authorities will reflect the true identities and heritage of the places they serve.

Greater Gloucester (GG) - comprising Gloucester City (and, subject to Ministerial direction to expand geographies beyond the existing boundary into neighbouring parishes within the existing Districts of Stroud, Tewkesbury and Forest of Dean, totalling a current population of some 178,000).

This urban authority will drive economic growth in the sub-region, built on the boundaries of the real lives of the residents who live and work in its geography. Most importantly, as a place with a significantly different demographic and deeper-rooted urban social challenges to the rest of the county, it will be able to relentlessly focus on the issues that matter to its population without the diversion of the challenges faced by rural Gloucestershire: in particular addressing higher social needs, tackling homelessness and improving children's services, along with protecting its heritage.

Building on the heritage of Gloucester as one of England's significant and largest cathedral cities, this proposal recognises its historic and current status as a regional centre.

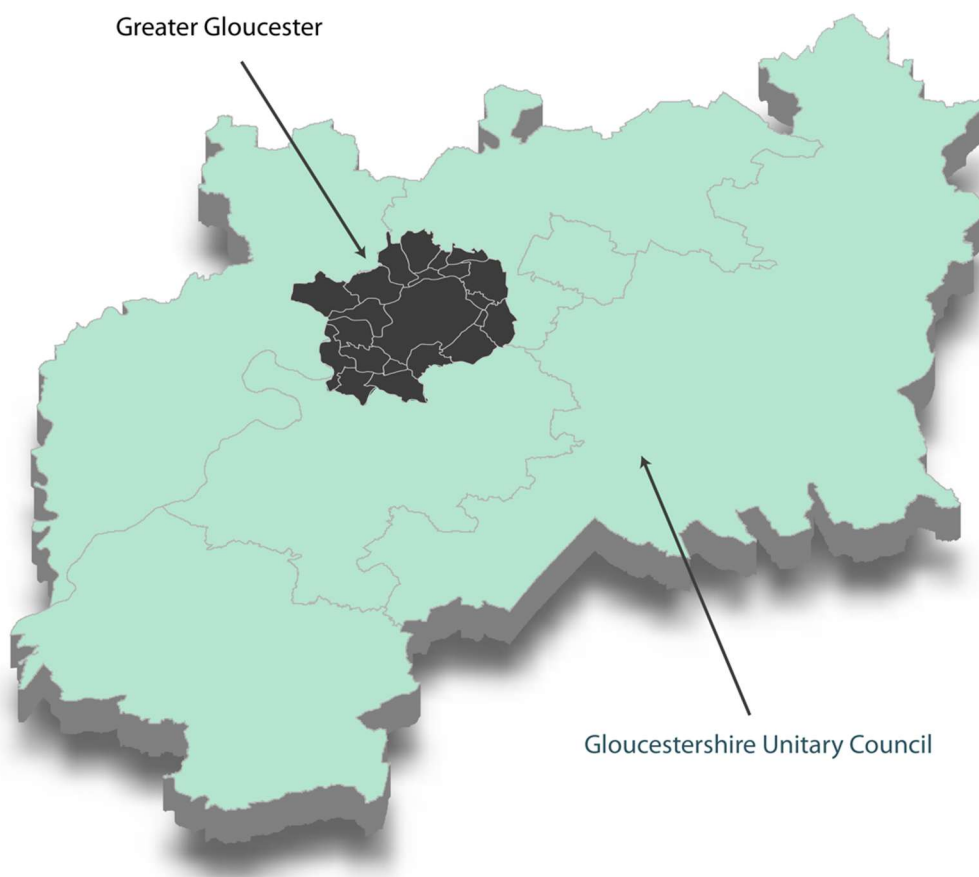
Gloucestershire Unitary (GU) - population c.470,000 - covering Cheltenham, the Cotswolds and (subject to a Ministerial direction to change boundaries, the remaining parts of) Stroud, Tewkesbury and Forest of Dean.

This authority will represent its very different demographic and need: it will be able to combine the economic strengths of Cheltenham, the country's leading cyber super-cluster, along with a strong focus on scale, stability and rural heritage and natural environmental assets, and ensuring the economic vibrancy of key

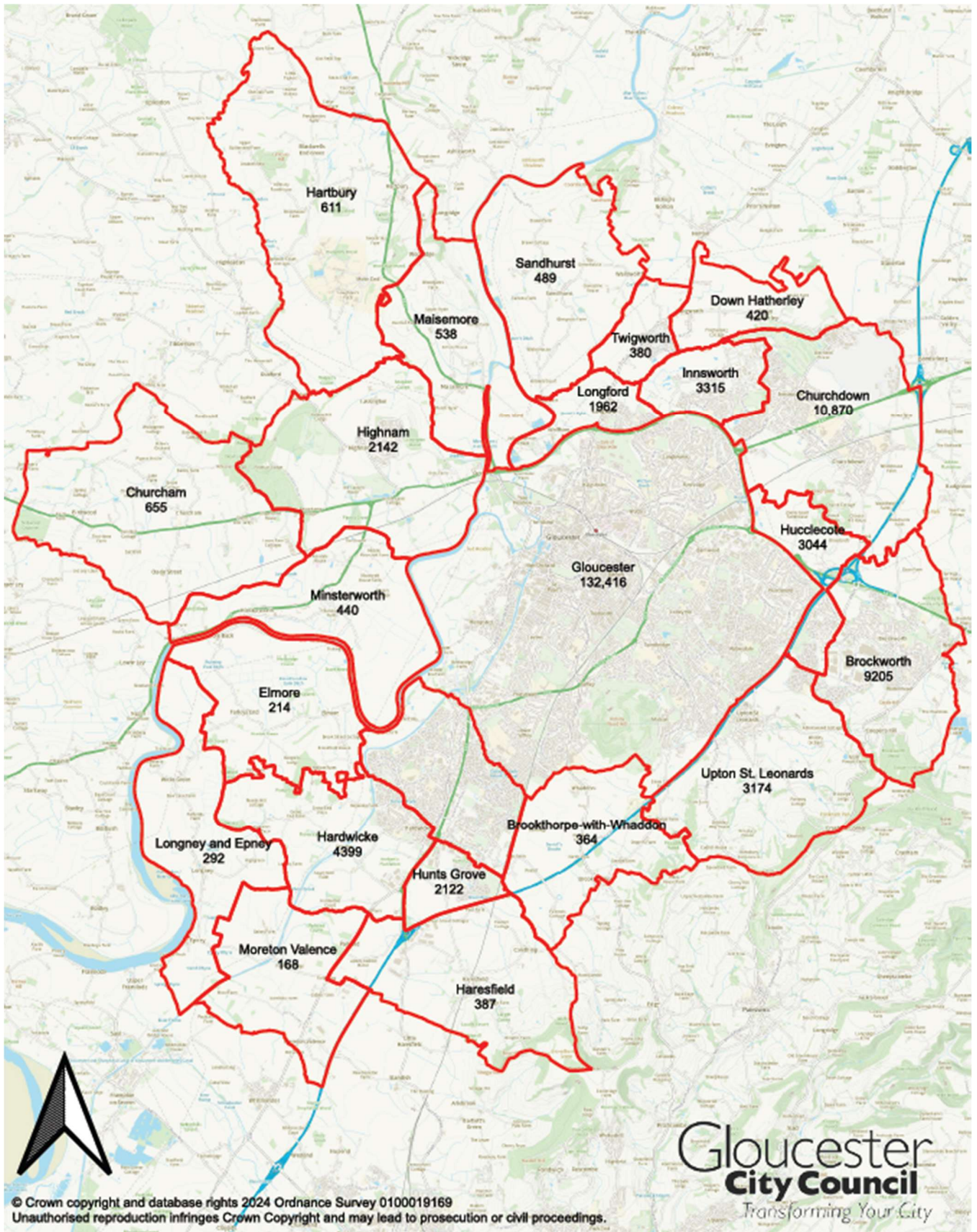
market towns. This council will have the ambition to deliver growth in market towns, secure rural transport connectivity and sustain prevention in adult care.

Together, these councils will simplify governance, end duplication and deliver services that are easier for residents to understand, outcomes that are better for all and local government that is truly rooted in the place it serves.

Proposed Unitaries*



* subject to Ministerial direction to expand the Greater Gloucester Council boundaries as set out in this proposal. The baseline unmodified proposal comprises a unitary for the Gloucester district and a unitary for the five other districts.



* Proposed boundary expansion for Greater Gloucester set out in this proposal. Numbers show 2021 population estimates.

Why We Need Change

The current system restricts growth, creates duplication and delays progress. City boundaries are outdated, services are split across seven councils, and government have said it is time for change. People deserve services that are easier to access, governance that is easier to understand and a system that works for them seamlessly, enabling economic growth, for the good of its residents.

Key services are ready for improvement: Adults and SEND have been rated as requiring improvement for over a decade, and many services are struggling to meet local need. The recent positive OFSTED report for Children's Services shows progress, but follows a decade of mixed performance.

Gloucestershire as a county has clear geographic division in need and these disparities have led to an inefficient and fragmented approach to support and service delivery. A single approach for the whole county that fails to recognise the differences in its population and places is bound to fail. Gloucester City has much higher demand for social care than the rest of the county, including in the area of homelessness and children's services. While it makes up 27% of the county's population, it accounts for over 35% of its demand for children's services.

The known demographic distinctions are not reflected in the current structure. Urban needs are managed within a county structure designed around predominantly older, more rural communities leading to misaligned planning and priorities. The proportion of people over 65 is 25% lower in Gloucester than the County average. In Gloucester, there are 21 Super Output areas in the highest quintile as measured by the index of multiple deprivation (with only 10 for the rest of the County). A more localised model would create opportunity for significant improvement in outcomes and delivery by allowing a hyper-local 'total place'-type focus on each area.

Meanwhile, economic growth in Gloucester is constrained by outdated district boundaries which do not reflect the lives of those who live and work in the city. Existing city boundaries are misaligned with the needs of our population, reducing efficiency, stifling housing growth and fragmenting service delivery¹.

As a recent national report identifies, many boundaries "were [historically] drawn intentionally close to the original urban core in order to limit growth," a legacy that "undermines both local leadership and a locally led planning system which can only function well if it is considering a place as a whole – if it is right-sized, with the right boundaries aligned to their true footprint and function" ("A Case for Cities" – Inner Circle).

Councils in Gloucestershire are already doing their best to work and plan across organisational boundaries, demonstrating current boundaries no longer reflect the working limits of the population.

Without boundary change, the city's size will not have the scale necessary to be able to deliver desired outcomes, or foster the economic growth required to sustain today's population. **The county is in need of change.**

¹¹ Appendix B: Case for Cities Report

England's smaller cities are some of our nation's greatest assets. English cities are economically dynamic centres of innovation, creativity, and culture - places with long history, deep roots and bold ambitions. From cathedral cities to the once historic market towns turned modern hubs, they generate ideas, nurture talent, and power regional economies. Their scale gives them something unique: the ability to connect people, place, and opportunity in ways that can transform lives and strengthen whole regions. They deserve attention, to be recognised and celebrated.

Equally, we can't deny that cities face their own distinct challenges - the reality is that many of our cities embody both the UK's greatest potential and its starkest inequalities.

Across the UK, smaller and medium-sized cities drive regional economies and provide opportunity for surrounding towns and rural communities, they carry the weight of complex challenges without the powers to address them at the scale required - we need governance which reflects our challenges and opportunities across cities. Cities...have different profiles to their surrounding counties that risk being 'swallowed up' into them. Instead, governance should reflect the fact that local people want and need control over their own economic development, housing, education, transport, social care and other services.

This is why getting the governance right matters. Our country is highly centralised. That centralisation will not diminish if our smaller cities have less control over their development, with this ceded to counties. Instead, we need to enable and empower cities to realise their potential, building on successful metro mayor models by making them fit for our smaller and medium-sized cities.

So much of the potential in cities remains untapped. Getting this right means our cities could be doing even more to drive national prosperity, strengthen communities, and tackle the great challenges of our age, from the housing crisis to health inequalities, from decarbonisation to skills – yet too many are held back by governance systems designed for a different era.

...They must be recognised meaningfully in Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution through city-led unitaries which are right-sized, with commitment to a long-term cities strategy...If we want stronger public services, higher productivity, and thriving local economies, then we must give our cities the powers to act with clarity, coherence, and confidence.

*The Rt Hon. Annelise Dodds, Member of Parliament for Oxford East
The Case For Cities, 2025*

What Difference It Will Make

This proposal addresses Gloucestershire's challenges head-on. The new councils will:

- **Improve outcomes for residents:** by addressing imbalance in demand for services - through early intervention, local place-based delivery and simpler access to services. The Councils will continue to work together where it makes sense to do so.

- **Reform failing services:** with Greater Gloucester focused on a younger demographic to improve children's services outcomes, tackle homelessness and health inequalities, while the Gloucestershire Unitary focuses on the rising pressures of an ageing, more rural population with challenges around transport connectivity and access to services - each council tackling the issues most acute in their area
- **Unlock growth:** giving Gloucester the ability to match the economic and housing growth performance of peer cities, while the Gloucestershire unitary sustains prosperity across market towns, villages and the rural economy, fostering accelerated growth through the Cheltenham Golden Valley cyber super-cluster
- **Create financial sustainability:** simplifying governance, reducing duplication will unlock operational savings; while a prevention-first delivery approach will improve outcomes in children's and adults' services bringing long-term savings. While having two councils brings higher costs than a single unitary, the wider benefits of the right geography far outweigh any efficiency savings foregone. This proposal will generate ongoing savings of £13.48m, will pay back transition costs in four years and by year 10 have created savings of £89m.
- **Preserve historic identity:** with Greater Gloucester strengthening Gloucester's heritage as an ancient cathedral city, and Gloucestershire Unitary protecting the internationally recognised heritage of locations such as the Cotswolds, Forest of Dean, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and Stroud.

Together, the councils will tackle inequality, unlock city-led growth, improve essential services and preserve what people value most: local identity, heritage and accountability.

The size will enable the most efficient and targeted growth. Examples such as the former Cumbria County Council (Westmoreland and Furness Council and Cumberland Council) show how smaller, focused unitaries can drive improved performance in a short period of time and create systems that support sustainable, high quality services. The same can be achieved in Gloucestershire, with a place-based structure that tackles failing services, unlocks growth and strengthens identity.

Listening to Gloucestershire

This case is built with, not for, Gloucestershire - shaped by residents, councils and partners who see the logic of aligning governance to real places. The seven councils have worked hard to consult with a range of stakeholders about all aspects of the reorganisation process. The message that came through loud and clear in all the public engagement work undertaken is that people value their place and their local identity, and don't want to see this lost or diminished through any reorganisation. Gloucester residents, in particular, have a strong affinity with their distinct identity. Businesses and partners see the logic of aligning governance with real economic geographies and travel-to-work areas.

We will continue meaningful consultation with residents, councils, parishes, the VCSFE sector and businesses throughout the duration of this transition, ensuring local voices are heard and meaningfully reflected in the outworking of this case.

Devolution and the Wider Picture

Gloucestershire is actively exploring three strategic partnerships to the north, south, and east. Of these, we found each offer unique opportunities to accelerate growth and influence:

- West of England Combined Authority (WECA)
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Swindon and Oxford

Whichever partnership is finally chosen, our ambition is that both councils would sit as full partners within the Combined Authority (WECA), ensuring Gloucestershire has a strengthened voice in discussions around housing, skills, transport and economic growth in the sub-region. As two unitary authorities rather than one, our size would be more akin to those other partners around the table.

Key strengths of this proposal

Three proposals for the future organisation of local government are currently under development by the seven councils in Gloucestershire. Key points of differentiation between this proposal and either or both of the others are as follows:

1. The only proposal to retain principal local government structures for both the historic city of Gloucester and the historic county of Gloucestershire
2. The only proposal to address the historic under-bounding of the city's geography up-front, avoiding the complexity of a post-restructure review a few years after vesting day
3. Two unitary councils able to be more focused on the needs of different demographic populations than a single county-wide unitary
4. Each unitary will have a significant (100k+ population) town or city at its centre, to drive twin hubs of economic growth for the county
5. Fairer democratic representation for the residents of Gloucestershire (compared to the existing constituent authorities' population sizes) if joining the West of England Combined Authority than a single county-based unitary
6. Stronger voice for the neighbouring parishes and parish councils around Gloucester on the future development of the city than alternatives
7. Higher Councillor to Elector ratios than other proposals, giving increased democratic representation and accountability.
8. The only proposal that is not expected to lead to the future parishing of the City of Gloucester, with the associated increased precepting risk that that entails
9. Lower redundancy costs and job losses during transition than a single county unitary option, avoiding unhelpful waste of public funds and loss of technical expertise in the new unitary councils.
10. The only proposal to be based around two 'continuing' authorities, meaning that transformation costs will be lower, and maximising use of existing IT infrastructure.

Next Steps

- 28 November 2025 - Submission of the business case
- May 2027- Elections to shadow authorities
- April 2028 - Vesting Day: Greater Gloucester and Gloucestershire Unitary take full control of services
- May 2029 - Potential integration with existing/creation of new Strategic Mayoral Authority

This aligns Gloucestershire's governance with the national timetable for new unitary authorities and combined authorities.

A phased transition will protect vital services, give communities confidence and ensure delivery is stable throughout.

2. Rationale for Boundary Change

We are formally submitting the a 'Type B' submission (as set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) for two new Gloucestershire Unitary Councils which is set out in Appendix A.

However, we are clear that the 1974 boundaries of existing districts and boroughs no longer reflect the way in which people in Gloucestershire live their lives. Specifically, we believe that a major constraint on the growth of the city of Gloucester has been that the city is under bounded, restricting the potential of the City to drive the economy of the county. Therefore, in our proposal, whilst we are retaining the county boundary of Gloucestershire, we have submitted a modification request to expand the boundaries of the Gloucester City unitary to include surrounding Parishes which are in the existing districts of Tewkesbury, Stroud and Forest of Dean to create a Greater Gloucester unitary council. Appendix A outlines the rationale for this proposed modification.

3. Introduction and Context

Cities are where most of us make a home. They are the nation's engines of growth and innovation and critical to economic success at the regional level. They're also centres of cultural vibrancy and diversity and where most public services are centred.

Some 80% of us live in cities (70% in Gloucestershire). With economic growth the Government's declared number one priority, and local government reorganisation (LGR) now in motion across large parts of the country, there is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to connect policy thinking around cities' role in the life blood of the country.

Devolution and LGR offer a vital opportunity to unleash our cities' potential. It offers a chance, if we grasp it quickly, to grow a distinct and diverse network of cities.

There are well-documented agglomeration benefits from creating clusters of businesses in and around cities that drive innovation and economic growth.

The potential Gross Added Value generated through globally significant clusters of advanced manufacturing, cyber technology, AI and other technologies runs into the billions, and dwarfs the scale of savings that could be achieved alone by merging councils into larger units of local government.

Devolution and LGR offer a vital opportunity to unleash our cities' potential. We have a chance to grow a distinct and diverse network of cities that can support housing growth, tackle poverty and homelessness and drive a prevention revolution in public health that should keep many more people out of our NHS and care systems.

Cities also offer a more sustainable way of living, with a smaller land take and carbon footprint than rural-based communities; and a more immediate return on investment in public transport and active travel through the connectivity and public health benefits they provide.

To advance policy thinking around cities, we have to break through old boundaries – literally. Many of our small cities are under-bounded, which has constrained their growth. In order to achieve our future vision for cities, we need to redraw the boundaries to enable their expansion.

And we need to give them a clear voice and the opportunity to properly represent their potential, alongside London and the core cities, that already have an established place in the national growth agenda.

Of course, cities don't exist in a vacuum. They are interconnected with their local areas. In a new world of unitary councils and regional devolution, successful units of local government based on cities can champion their interests while working in partnership with neighbouring rural-based authorities. In this way the right levels of growth can be achieved in the right places.

This thinking forms the basis for this proposal for LGR in Gloucestershire. It proposes the creation of **two new unitary councils** to replace the seven councils that currently exist:

- one based around the county capital **City of Gloucester** – an historic yet diverse, young and vibrant city with a quarter of the entire county's population and employment, driving economic growth through a significant programme of urban regeneration, and
- one based around the rest of the **county of Gloucestershire** – a largely rural county rich in heritage

but with key natural assets such as the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds, and nationally-leading strengths in green technologies and cyber resilience.

The needs, demands, challenges and opportunities faced by a largely young and urban population are very different to those of an older and more rural population. Form should follow function and Councils should be designed around the needs of the people they serve. This forms the rationale underpinning this LGR proposal. Together, they provide the best form of local government for Gloucestershire.

Creating a Greater Gloucester Unitary Authority, and a Unitary Authority for the rest of Gloucestershire, will:

- **Provide clarity and accountability** – one council for all residents and businesses, ending the two-tier confusion of who does what, making local democracy more transparent
- **Unlock inclusive growth and prosperity** – aligning housing, planning, transport and skills under one authority to deliver more homes, modern infrastructure and sustainable economic growth, ensuring the benefits are shared across all communities
- **Tackle inequalities through prevention** – integrating housing, health, social care and early help to support people earlier and more effectively, reducing crises, improving outcomes and delivering efficiencies
- **Drive efficiency and innovation** – consolidating functions to free up resources for frontline services, enabling more joined-up, digitally enabled and neighbourhood-based delivery tailored to local need
- **Strengthen place-based identity** – protecting historic, cultural and civic roles while creating a governance model that reflects lived community identities and ambitions
- **Secure Gloucester's seat at the devolution table** – ensuring that the influential city of Gloucester is properly represented in regional decision-making, closing the democratic deficit and giving residents the influence they deserve over investment and powers that shape their daily lives.

The proposal is ambitious but realistic, and rooted in evidence. It is not a detailed blueprint for how services will operate on day one. Those decisions will rightly rest with the new shadow councils and elected members during transition. However, the proposal does set out a compelling vision. By establishing these two new unitary authorities, Gloucestershire will gain the scale, financial resilience and democratic voice it needs to deliver better services, stronger local leadership, and a future-proof system of local government.

Joint working – two unitary Councils working for the benefit of the people of Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire already has a strong foundation for joint working, backed by a range of formal and informal governance arrangements. These reflect the close ties between different parts of the county and a shared commitment to collaboration.

Key structures include:

- **Leadership Gloucestershire:** a strategic alliance of senior public sector leaders - spanning councils, health, police, and key agencies - providing unified direction on cross-cutting issues to benefit communities countywide.
- **Gloucestershire City Region Board:** a joint committee of all seven councils, driving a shared vision for strategic growth and economic success, and championing Gloucestershire with partners to attract further investment and growth.
- **Health and Wellbeing Board and a Health and Wellbeing (Integrated Care) Partnership**
- **Strategic Local Plan:** when finalised, this will shape future housing and employment growth across

three local planning authority areas.

- **Climate Leadership Gloucestershire:** an innovative public sector partnership of councils, NHS, police and academic institutions, developing solutions to tackle the climate emergency.
- **Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool:** Gloucestershire boosts local growth by pooling business rates to keep more revenue circulating within the county.
- Other informal arrangements exist to enable joint working on other areas of shared responsibility, for example **Gloucestershire Resources and Waste Partnership, Gloucestershire Strategic Migration Partnership, Gloucestershire Housing Partnership**, and the **Gloucestershire Children and Young People's Coalition**.

Beyond formal governance, collaboration is also embedded in service delivery. For instance, **Ubico** is a local authority-owned company owned by all seven Gloucestershire Councils and others, delivering a range of environmental services across Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire, including waste, recycling, and street cleansing.

We see no reason why this excellent strategic intent to collaborate should not continue with the two proposed unitaries. In addition to keeping Ubico going for the benefit of the whole county, other services where there is agreement to continue to provide a single shared service include:

- **Fire and Rescue** – We will create a single standalone Fire and Rescue Authority for Gloucestershire, with democratic representation from both Councils.
- **Archives** – Splitting physical and digital collections would be costly, disruptive, and face significant legal challenges, with no benefit to residents. A single, shared archive service protects access, quality, and value. Indeed, this approach is already taken as Gloucestershire Archives provides those services and facilities to all councils in the historic county of Gloucestershire, including South Gloucestershire unitary council.
- **Coroners** – Gloucestershire's coroner area boundary is already set by the Ministry of Justice under the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. Keeping a countywide service avoids unnecessary boundary changes and preserves specialist expertise.
- **Registrars** – A shared approach is key to financial resilience - especially with demand varying so widely across the county. Pooling resources ensures a sustainable, high-quality service for all.

Public service reform & preventative services

Local Government Reorganisation will be costly and disruptive in the short-term. Thereafter there is a choice between consolidating the current operating models with marginal gains on operating costs or realising the profound opportunity of change in which not only the structures, but services themselves, can be restructured and redesigned to best serve local communities.

We believe that LGR in Gloucestershire can be a moment for public service reform where a prevention-focused model can be embedded across the distinct and different populations in our city, and across the rest of the county.

Our proposal has been designed with a view to how each organisation can be focused on prevention, building trust and delivering growth for each authority.

There are distinctive challenges across the county footprint, be that a 15-year life expectancy difference in adjacent parts of Gloucester city, or the high levels of demand for transport connectivity and access to employment and services in the Forest of Dean and Stroud.

An approach that simply assumes a continuation of the status quo is likely to further entrench deprivation,

inequality and demand for acute services – having a negative impact on both the financial sustainability of organisations and the long-term life experiences of residents. Our NHS is changing through the Government’s 10 Year Health Plan and our council services must too.

The Government set out the case for change clearly, saying “We can continue down our current path, making tweaks to an increasingly unsustainable model - or we can take a new course”. We agree, and our approach aligns with the Government’s view of how services can be reshaped and will work alongside the NHS’ move from hospital to community, analogue to digital and sickness to prevention.

Our proposed model is one that shapes organisations around the needs of residents, rather than one that expects residents to navigate around and between professionals. Services are focused on local root causes of demand, rather than simply treating needs as they arise, supported by meaningful community networks building upon existing collaboration and partnerships.

This is a model that places prevention at its heart, moving staff and resources from services currently dispersed across tiers of government into one cross-cutting department that can provide holistic support to residents, from children to older adults, to increase resilience and reduce demand for statutory services. This approach does not stop when a resident requires long-term support, with strengths-based, independence-focused service delivery.

We recognise that resilient communities also require resilient local economies – and core to our future model is a growth function that can deliver on the ambitions that the two unitaries have for their respective areas – from culture, digital and regeneration in Gloucester, to green and renewable technologies in Stroud, Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean, and cyber/defence services in Cheltenham and Tewkesbury.

Our model is more than just reorganising the way services are delivered – but one that commits to achieving long-term outcome improvement for residents no matter where in the county they live.

All of this depends on solid foundations for the transition and transformation to new operating models that work across public sector organisations with communities, empower neighbourhoods and meet the true potential of this moment of change, reform and renewal for our county.

Assessment against Government Criteria

LGR Criteria	How this proposal meets those criteria
A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.	Under this proposal, a single tier of local government for the whole of Gloucestershire is achieved as two new unitary authorities are created from the current two-tier, seven authority system.
Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area.	Each of the two unitary areas creates a sensible economic area with viable tax bases across both areas and each is designed to recognise the different economic roles, social needs, and service demands across Gloucestershire’s varied geographies.
Proposals should be for a	The proposed boundary modification will tackle Gloucester

sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.	<p>city's historic under-bounding which has inhibited its growth potential and will enable it to drive significant housing growth alongside the growth identified for the rest of the county.</p> <p>By bringing together the rest of Gloucestershire into a single unitary council, this proposal enables the county to take a holistic approach to housing delivery, given the significant constraints that exist in different parts of the area e.g. in the AONB.</p>
Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.	The development of the proposed service delivery models has been informed by a comprehensive engagement exercise including council leaders, and officers from across all seven councils. We have also assessed the financial implications of reorganisation and have estimated the costs, savings, and income implications of the proposal, using information from all councils as well as drawing on evidence and experience from other areas that have gone through reorganisation previously.
Proposals should clearly describe the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these areas expect to achieve the outcomes described.	<p>Our proposal sets out how the new unitary councils will have the powers, capacity and leadership at the optimum spatial scale and proximity to residents to respond to the challenges and opportunities of each place.</p> <p>This will allow people to live better lives of their choosing, reduce demand on services, and contribute to Government priorities around growth and housing.</p>
Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.	Our two unitary councils are the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks as they deliver the optimal balance between scale and responsiveness. Our model prioritises the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services above all else. It achieves efficiencies, strengthens organisational capacity, and creates financially resilient councils capable of withstanding shocks without importing the county's existing weaknesses into a single point of failure.
As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.	The current total population of Gloucestershire is estimated at 669,380. The district of Gloucester has an estimated population of 138,598, however the proposed boundary modification would take the estimated population of that unitary council up to around 180,000, with growth in the near future estimated to take this over 200,000. The rest of Gloucestershire has an estimated population of 530,782.
There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.	<p>While the populations of one of the proposed unitary councils is below the 500,000 figure, the economic, demographic, and service delivery distinctiveness for Gloucester City warrants a bespoke governance model. The case for unitarisation should not be built on strict adherence to population size, but on functional need and strategic opportunity, reflecting distinct opportunities and challenges faced by the two areas, and the imperative to align services with the real geography of people's lives.</p> <p>The (proposed modified) Greater Gloucester unitary council would be larger than or of a comparable size to nearly a quarter</p>

	of all unitary Councils in England and Wales, most of whom are financially stable and delivering good or outstanding services to their communities.
Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.	<p>Our proposal sets out how efficiencies can be achieved through public service reform and redesign, moving to a preventative model of service delivery which creates efficiencies through reducing cost and reducing demand. Our modelling suggests that £4.04m of annual savings will be made by year 1, rising to £12.13m by Year 4, at which point the cumulative savings will outweigh any upfront investment.</p> <p>Uniquely, this is the only proposal being worked on for Gloucestershire which would not require the creation of a new parish council or councils for the city of Gloucester, with all of the associated risk of additional costs and precepting risk that that might incur.</p>
Proposals should set out how we will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.	<p>Reorganisation creates upfront transition and disaggregation costs, but we believe these are outweighed by the scale of recurrent savings. Our modelling demonstrates that by Year 6 there is projected to be £14.5m recurring annual savings and a cumulative net impact of around £35.1m across the two unitaries.</p> <p>Considering the efficiencies that are possible through both reorganisation and public service reform, we expect that we will be able to meet transition costs over time from existing budgets, including from flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.</p>
Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.	The proposal sets out an optimum way to provide high quality public services to citizens, as reorganisation into two new unitary councils provides the opportunity to design the new councils from first principles to address the distinct challenges and opportunities of each place, while providing a platform for deep transformation that can yield savings. This will allow people to live better lives of their choosing (and so reduce demand), as well as maximising the contribution of each area to Government priorities such as prevention, growth and housing.
Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.	The proposal shows how new structures will improve service delivery, as through developing delivery models for each new unitary we have sought to avoid unnecessary fragmentation or disaggregation of key services where a joined-up approach is the optimum solution.
Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.	This proposal offers a great opportunity to deliver real public service reform by addressing the distinct challenges and opportunities in each place and developing distinct operating models that provide a platform for deep transformation and reform as well as yielding savings.
Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care,	As part of our proposals, service delivery models have been scoped for each new unitary for a wide range of public services including adult social care, children's social care and SEND,

children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.	housing development and management, homelessness, and a community-based early intervention and prevention model. The proposals also consider a range of place-based and enabling services such as planning, economic development, asset management, building control and highways.
Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.	All seven Gloucestershire Councils have worked together across all the dimensions of these proposals, including co-commissioning a single collaborative approach on engagement. The engagement outputs have built an informed understanding of the community's wants and needs from a new form of local government, and this input has been used to shape the model set out in this proposal.
It is for councils to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way and this engagement activity should be evidenced in your proposal.	All seven Gloucestershire Councils worked together to co-commission a single collaborative approach on engagement. A number of engagement channels and strategies were adopted by the specialist communications consultant engaged by the councils to reflect different geographies, urban/rural areas, and different communities, including those without access to digital channels. As part of the development of this proposal, Gloucester City Council also began an engagement with parish and town councils in the proposed area of Greater Gloucester, in addition to a collective engagement process that was undertaken with all parish and town councils across the wider county area.
Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.	This is the only proposal being put forward for Gloucestershire that truly respects and maintains the historic importance of the City of Gloucester <u>and</u> the county of Gloucestershire. Gloucester City has had a principal council overseeing the interests of its citizens for over 500 years, and this is the only proposal being put forward which maintains that dedicated governance. Equally, it does this in conjunction with a council for the rest of Gloucestershire, ensuring that the historic county boundary and identity is also retained.
Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.	The proposal includes evidence derived from the collaborative engagement process undertaken by and for all seven Councils through a specialist consultancy. Additionally, it contains information derived from specific engagement undertaken by Gloucester City Council with neighbouring parish and town councils relating to the Greater Gloucester unitary council.
Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.	A base case proposal, using the district of Gloucester boundaries for one unitary and the boundaries of the other five district councils for the other, is included and considered in this proposal in appendix A. However, in developing this option, it became apparent that it has some critical limitations, in relation to the effectiveness resulting from the size of the Gloucester unitary council and also the disbenefit to public service delivery that citizens of the wider urban area of Gloucester would experience being continued to be locked out of the city where they live and work. The remainder of this proposal therefore seeks and is modelled on a proposed boundary modification to bring the real communities of Gloucester together into a single

	<p>unitary council.</p> <p>Whilst this would represent a one-off change of boundaries, this proposal argues that it represents the right long-term LGR decision for the people of Gloucester and Gloucestershire, given the scale and diversity of Gloucestershire and how and where our residents live their lives in 2025, compared to 1974.</p>
New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements	<p>This two unitary model for Gloucestershire, provides the perfect platform for moving to a Mayoral Strategic Authority, be it through joining an existing MSA such as the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), or through the creation of a new one, for instance alongside Herefordshire and Worcestershire.</p> <p>It enables balanced decision-making, supports shared priorities like infrastructure, skills, and housing, and ensures diverse voices inform regional governance. This structure fosters inclusive growth and operational resilience while maintaining local accountability and effective collaboration.</p>
Where no Mayoral Combined County Authority is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.	<p>The county's devolution direction is the subject of ongoing conversations with MHCLG officials and neighbouring areas, but this two unitary model for Gloucestershire provides the perfect platform for moving to a Mayoral Strategic Authority, be it through joining an existing MSA such as the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), or through the creation of a new one, for instance alongside Herefordshire and Worcestershire.</p>
Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.	<p>Whereas a single County unitary council for Gloucestershire would dwarf all other existing members of WECA by population size, this two unitary proposal for Gloucestershire would provide much more compatible and appropriate size ratios compared to the other WECA partner authorities.</p> <p>The Greater Gloucester unitary council would be of a comparable size to Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset Councils, and not far short of South Gloucestershire Council in size, providing an appropriate and democratically sympathetic counterbalance to those authorities. Equally, the Gloucestershire unitary council would be of an effective size and counterbalance to Bristol Council.</p> <p>Together, these two authorities would ensure that Gloucestershire residents as a whole would not be democratically, 'short-changed' should they be able to join WECA.</p>
New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.	<p>Specific structures for community engagement and neighbourhood empowerment have been developed for each unitary area, considering both existing town and parish councils and new democratic models and forms of community representation.</p> <p>In particular, there would be a much higher Councillor to Elector ratio in the Greater Gloucester unitary council than in other proposals being submitted for Gloucestershire, ensuring that residents are better represented and engaged and connected in democratic governance and their local government.</p>
Proposals will need to explain	<p>The engagement collectively undertaken by all seven</p>

plans to make sure that communities are engaged.	Gloucestershire councils has helped develop a strong understanding of how communities want to be engaged in and with the new local councils. The proposal sets out plans to ensure all communities see themselves as co-creators and partners in the governance of their areas going forward.
Where there already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.	The proposal does not propose the creation of any new town or parish councils, nor the abolition or merger of any existing ones. It does set out an exciting new model for parish and town engagement in the new unitaries, including the suggestion of a new committee of parish and town councils in the Greater Gloucester unitary council, and a new model of neighbourhood area management boards across the rest of Gloucestershire.

4. The Strategic Case

a. Our Vision and Ambitions for Gloucestershire

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to design local government around the way people live their lives.

The proposed model is sensitive to natural geography and is informed by economic evidence, building on travel to work areas and enhancing housing growth. This structure protects those most in need, reforming essential services, such as Adults and SEND which need to make improvement in order to meet the needs of vulnerable adults, Children and Young People with SEND. and ensuring that Children's services are focused on meeting the needs of the people who rely on them most.

It is focused on delivering the best outcomes for people, through a localised approach, relevant to demographic and geographical needs, which will ultimately lead to reduced cost to the public purse.

This model protects our heritage and prepares Gloucestershire for a secure and stronger, future.

This is a chance to create councils that reflect how people live, work and travel today - councils that are closer to their communities, financially sustainable and capable of delivering better outcomes.

The proposed two new unitary authorities are the following:

Greater Gloucester (GG) Unitary Council (population 178k)

Comprising of the current Gloucester City Council (132k) expanding into parishes that form part of the existing Districts of:

- Tewkesbury (34,000 in GG)
- Stroud (11,730 in GG)
- Forest of Dean (660 in GG)

GG will be a city-focused authority, but driving growth across the sub-region, with target housing growth likely to take its population over 200,000 by 2031. Gloucester is younger, more deprived and carries disproportionate need compared to the rest of the county, and this is the primary factor in its needing its own political leadership and council strategy, separate to that of the rest of the county. Though it has only 27% of the county's population, it accounts for over 35% of children's services demand. Gloucester has not achieved the same level of growth as South West cities like Bristol and Exeter (who make up 4 of the top 6 in the "Good Growth For Cities" report), in part due to its under-bounding caused by the constrained boundaries imposed on it since 1974.

This new expanded city focuses on the true lives of residents, reflecting the wider travel to work area than the current city boundaries and will allow the city to economically grow and fulfil its potential as the county's primary city hub. The expanded boundaries will allow those many thousand residents of the wider urban area to have a fully democratic influence over the city where they live and work, for the first time in decades.

Gloucester as an ancient Roman and cathedral city has a unique heritage in the County, this is an opportunity to build on, enrich and enhance that heritage, creating an authority that reflects both its history, its present

and builds for the future.

2. Gloucestershire Unitary Council (GU) (population c470k)

Comprising of the entire populations of:

- Cheltenham Borough Council (119k)
- Cotswold District Council (91K)

and part of the populations of:

- Tewkesbury Borough Council (61k in GU)
- Stroud District Council (109k in GU)
- Forest of Dean District Council (89k in GU)

GU provides scale and stability, with its older and more rural communities facing different challenges to those of the city, particularly in adult social care and transport connectivity. GU also anchors nationally recognised heritage and a powerful tourism economy. It has a major and regionally important urban hub in Cheltenham, leading the UK's cyber sector, along with locally important market towns and more rural communities.

Together these two councils replace complexity with clarity. They align services to real communities, unlock Gloucester's growth potential and secure long-term financial resilience for the county.

What we will achieve:

- **Reset services and improve outcomes** - particularly in Children's Social Care, SEND and Adults. Gloucester's higher demand will be met through hyper-local, prevention-first, family and community-level reform, while GU provides focus and stability for adult care in a rapidly ageing population.
- **Unlock city-led growth** - enabling Gloucester to perform on par with City peers across the country, while GU sustains county-wide prosperity through Cheltenham and market towns, garden towns, the Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean.
- **Deliver value for money** - a frontline-first redesign that reduces duplication and creates two sustainable strong councils, with wider economic value over time.
- **Strengthen local identity** - GG protecting Gloucester's cathedral city heritage, GU preserving county identity - the only one of the three proposals that does this.
- **Enable devolution** - aligning Gloucestershire with the West of England Combined Authority (our preferred option), creating two strong voices at the devolution table for Gloucestershire, giving the county more proportionate voting rights in the governance of the Combined Authority. A strong City voice, alongside the County, to counterbalance the voices of Bristol and Bath in the sub-region and to drive growth more equitably across the sub-region, securing devolved powers for housing, skills, transport and growth, in line with national government policy. This proposal would equally deliver a successful and proportionate Strategic Mayoral Authority if the county were to create a new one with other partners, such as Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

How we will lead:

- **Closer to communities, strong enough to deliver:** both unitaries will embed co-production in the development of services; giving parents, children and young people a say in how their local services are improved and developed. GG will focus on city need and growth; whilst GU will provide the scale and resilience to support a more rural county with key town hubs - a balanced model that meets core government criteria and delivers on wider government objectives while reflecting Gloucestershire's real geography and economy.
- **Evidence-led and outcomes-driven:** we will use robust analysis and benchmarking to track improved outcomes for vulnerable children and adults, healthier places and stronger economic performance.
- **Partnerships first:** deepen collaboration across health, policing, schools, VCSFE and shared service platforms (e.g. Ubico) to integrate delivery and reduce duplication.

Our ambition is simple: creating councils that are easier to understand, quicker to help and better at delivering - creating healthier communities, stronger growth and greater value for every resident and business in Gloucestershire.

b. Better Services for Residents

At the heart of this proposal is a simple ambition: to make services better, more responsive and more straightforward for the people who use them.

Clearer Responsibilities

Residents say the current structure — with two tiers of local government in most of Gloucestershire — is confusing and inefficient. By replacing seven councils with two, it becomes much easier to understand who is responsible for what.

Each new unitary council will be responsible for the full range of local services in its area — giving residents a clear and consistent point of contact.

This proposal ensures that the Councils are both of a scale which are financially sustainable and will promote better access to services and drive economic growth.

A Better Experience

No more being passed between county and district councils. No more duplication or delay. Whether it's applying for housing, accessing support, or resolving an issue in their neighbourhood, residents will deal with one council that knows their place and understands their needs.

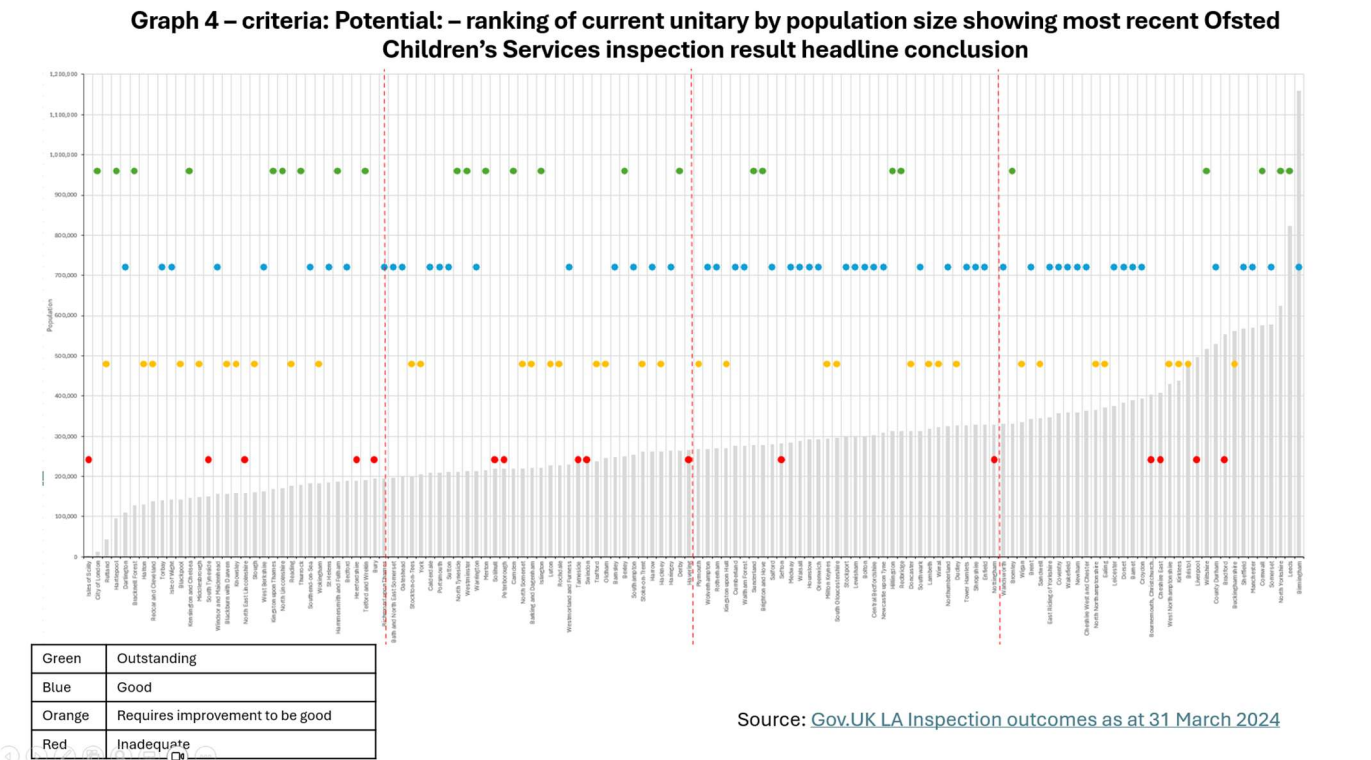
The two proposed unitary authorities will be able to operate at scale and aggregate existing best practice demonstrated across all of the authorities, as well as join up interrelated services to deliver improved outcomes and experiences to our residents. For example, bringing together services like parking — currently

split between different tiers of councils — will simplify everyday experiences, reduce administrative waste and improve customer satisfaction.

This model allows services to be designed around people and create appropriate, place-based solutions to real need. It avoids the fragmentation of multiple districts, while tailoring delivery to the urban and rural needs. This will provide the opportunity to deliver better services, closer to the people it serves; leading to better outcomes for people and lower cost to the Councils and other public services.

Learning from elsewhere shows the value of this approach:

- County-wide footprints (including Gloucestershire’s current structure) consistently fail to meet required standards.



- The former Cumbria County Council (Westmorland and Furness Council and Cumberland Council) demonstrates the benefits of disaggregation well - Ofsted inspection has moved from ‘Requires Improvement’ in Cumbria in 2022 to ‘Good’ in both new Councils by 2024.
- Ubico and other shared service platforms already provide tested vehicles to deliver great and well-regarded services and operational efficiencies without undermining local responsiveness. The intention would be to continue with these shared service arrangements across the county wherever they make practical sense to do so.

For residents, this proposal will bring:

- A genuine reset of failing services
- Simpler, more responsive access to services
- Stronger local accountability - residents know who is responsible and how to hold them to account

The GG + GU proposal ensures services are closer, better and fairer - designed around real communities and delivered with a frontline-first approach.

Enabling Better Partnerships

One crucial foundation of this model is stronger partnership working that suits the place it serves. The two unitaries will work with the NHS, schools, policing, VCSFE organisations and parish councils to integrate delivery. This will reduce duplication, build trust and strengthen the culture of collaboration that is needed across the county. Most of the VCSFE organisations in Gloucestershire are hyper-local and are built and run bottom-up from the areas and communities in which people live. For too long, they have, through a lack of scale, been denied the opportunity to deliver valued services in their locality as commissioners have sought county-wide approaches. Why would a local community group based in Kingsholm in Gloucester be interested in working with the Council to provide a Meals On Wheels service in rural Forest of Dean? A more nuanced and localised approach to partnership working will enable a greater civil partnership and engagement in service delivery, which has been proven to deliver better and more sustainable outcomes.

Clearer and simpler strategic leadership across the full range of local services will better enable us to improve and manage the health and care of our local populations. There will be stronger links between leisure services, public health and local communities, to ensure there is a more joined-up and preventative approach between planning, housing, social care and education, enabling the delivery of better outcomes for all.

Accessible and Inclusive

Our new councils will combine the best of modern digital delivery with a strong local presence. Residents will be able to access services online - but also through local hubs, face-to-face support and outreach, especially for those facing homelessness or vulnerability.

Simplicity, inclusion and user-focus will be at the heart of service design - making it easier for everyone to get the help they need, when they need it.

Examples of frontline services that could be transformed include:

Area	Current Context & Pressures	Opportunity through this LGR Proposal
Adult Social Care	Adult Social Care faces rising and uneven demand: with high numbers of complex supported-living cases in Gloucester and the West of the county, and growing older people's residential and nursing care needs across the whole county. The 85+ population is projected to rise by 84% by 2043. Services remain fragile - rated "Requires Improvement" by CQC in 2025 — with workforce shortages and a £13.9m savings programme struggling to keep pace with demand.	LGR enables services to strategically restructure, to reflect place and to focus on prevention and promoting independence. GG will focus on complex supported living, safeguarding, and prevention where demand is most acute. GU will provide stability and scale, building Extra Care housing, strengthening domiciliary care, and investing in prevention to manage long-term demand. Together, the two councils will build an improved, integrated, place-based approach to commissioning for vulnerable adults. The new councils will reduce reliance on high-cost placements, improve resilience, and support adults to live independently.
SEND	Gloucestershire is on a focussed	LGR allows a needed reset in SEND delivery.

	<p>improvement journey. It is one of the least well-funded counties in England, a member of the F40.</p> <p>The Area SEND inspection in Dec 2023 identified challenges, with the area achieving judgment 2. There is a Local Area SEND and Inclusion Improvement Plan in place, recognised as having impact by the DfE and NHS England.</p> <p>The white paper coming in late 2025/early 2026 will detail national SEND reforms and changes to the schools national Funding Formula which will impact future plans and working.</p>	<p>GG will focus on intensive SEND support and inclusion in areas of highest demand, while GU will expand county-wide sufficiency through new specialist places and workforce planning.</p> <p>Together, the councils can implement place-based models, which will simplify the process for children and families.</p> <p>Local working will enable stronger partnerships with VCSFE groups, education providers and parent/child representative committees. A focus on co-production will enable children, young people and families – those most affected by these services – to have a voice in how they function.</p> <p>This partnership model will enable improved place-based working which will reduce delays, strengthen inclusion, improve outcomes and deliver sustainable SEND provision.</p>
Children's Services	<p>Children's Services were previously rated inadequate in 2017, and have improved since, with the 2025 Ofsted report citing 'Significant progress' and highlighting a more confident and child-focused service, with better outcomes for children and families.</p> <p>The latest inspection has delivered a positive outcome, but still comes on the back of years of rising referrals, significant capacity pressures, and fragile workforce capacity. Since 2015, there has been a 63% increase in children in care and around 8,000 referrals annually, with the highest safeguarding demand in Gloucester and the Forest of Dean. Education services face a £78m high needs deficit, long waits for EHCPs, and shortages in specialist provision. Progress is recognised but capacity challenges remain under the current county-wide model.</p>	<p>LGR enables services to reflect local needs, and the new unitaries will be able to build on recent positive results with more tailored localised approaches, in order to achieve consistently outstanding ratings.</p> <p>GG will focus on safeguarding, youth services and Alternative Provision, with Family Hubs embedded as local prevention gateways.</p> <p>GU will sustain statutory education and children's services across the county, ensuring school place sufficiency, fostering and adoption capacity.</p> <p>Together, the councils will deliver earlier intervention, reduce out-of-area placements, contain costs, and improve outcomes for children and families.</p>
Homelessness & Housing	<p>Rising homelessness concentrated in Gloucester where most support services are concentrated, severe pressures in temporary accommodation, fragmented responsibilities between county and districts, future funding cuts and limited affordable housing supply.</p>	<p>Localised accountability for homelessness and Private Rented Sector enforcement in Gloucester; county-wide leadership on housing strategy, land use and affordable supply; prevention-first model to contain costs and improve outcomes.</p>
Economic Development	<p>Economic development functions are currently fragmented across county and district councils, with overlapping responsibilities for growth hubs, inward investment, regeneration and skills. Demand for business support, inward investment and decarbonisation funding is high, but capacity and resources are</p>	<p>Moving from seven councils to two unitaries will create clearer leadership and reduce duplication in strategy, governance and business support. GG can focus on regeneration, inclusive growth and inward investment in Gloucester City, while GU provides county-wide scale for business support, skills and sector</p>

	stretched. Pressures include reliance on short-term funding streams (UKSPF, REPF), grid and infrastructure constraints and limited capacity in local teams. Delivery varies widely between districts, creating inequality of access.	development. A unitary model strengthens resilience, improves access for SMEs and enables coherent delivery of transport, climate and economic strategies together. This ensures both local responsiveness and county-wide consistency.
Waste collection, disposal and recycling	Waste services are split: the county manages disposal while districts lead on collection. Ubico creates a successful foundation and has created efficiencies and savings. All county and districts commission Ubico, creating shared resilience and continuity. The system faces rising costs from decarbonisation and fleet replacement, pressures on HRC capacity, variation in local policies and new legislative duties. Recruitment, retention and inconsistent resident experience add further strain.	LGR can unify waste and environmental services further under a more consistent larger scale model. Maintaining Ubico's broad footprint ensures smooth transition and operational resilience. A single framework enables harmonised policies, reduced duplication and stronger investment in decarbonisation. This creates a more efficient, integrated service aligned to countywide climate and sustainability goals while still allowing local flexibility.
Development and Regeneration	Delivery is fragmented across county and districts, with a mix of in-house, arms-length and external models. The remit spans highways and transport, housing, regeneration, economic development and strategic infrastructure planning. Pressures include rising build costs, housing demand, viability challenges and limited officer capacity. Statutory consultee functions (e.g. highways, flood, heritage) are stretched, while regeneration and housing projects face resource and financial constraints.	Moving from seven councils to two creates the chance to simplify planning, regeneration and infrastructure. A single strategic approach can streamline developer contributions, align policies and strengthen capacity to deliver complex regeneration and housing programmes. Integration reduces duplication, embeds consistent consultee roles and supports investment attraction through a strong county-wide identity.
Public protection, licensing & environmental health	Public protection services (environmental health, licensing, food safety, health & safety and pollution control) are delivered at district level, with the county providing oversight on specific areas (e.g. Trading Standards, Fire & Rescue). Councils face high demand for regulatory services, increasing complexity in licensing and enforcement pressures from issues such as food hygiene, private rented housing standards and community safety. Recruitment and retention of qualified staff (EHOs, licensing officers) remains a challenge, with workloads often reactive and shaped by legislative changes.	Moving from 7 councils to 2 new unitaries offers the chance to consolidate environmental health and licensing functions, creating stronger, more resilient teams. It reduces duplication, builds consistency in enforcement and licensing and allows specialist expertise to be shared across wider areas. The two-unitary model provides the scale to modernise digital systems and improve customer access, while keeping services close enough to communities to remain responsive to local issues.
Arts, culture and heritage	Arts, culture and heritage are split across county and districts. The county leads cultural education, while districts run museums, theatres, festivals and heritage assets. Provision is vibrant but uneven: major centres carry most of the infrastructure and visitor economy, while smaller districts struggle with capacity.	LGR can create a more resilient system for culture and heritage, rightly aligned to place. GG and GU can each create a unified framework to align arts with health, education and economic growth, reduce duplication and secure long-term investment. This will help sustain venues, protect historic assets, expand access in rural and urban areas and use heritage as a driver of

	Venues face financial fragility, reliance on short-term funding and high maintenance costs for historic buildings.	inclusion, prevention and growth.
Sport, physical activity and wellbeing	Leisure and wellbeing services are fragmented across districts, with ageing facilities, high maintenance costs and inconsistent investment models. Funding pressures and rising demand for health and wellbeing services add strain.	LGR enables a unified leisure and wellbeing framework, aligning with public health, reducing duplication and supporting sustainable facilities. Integration offers clearer accountability, stronger prevention focus and better use of resources.
Digital, Data & Technology	Digital services are fragmented across seven councils with multiple systems, contracts and suppliers. Duplication in platforms (Microsoft 365, planning systems, ServiceNow, CRM/ERP) creates inefficiency, high costs and inconsistency for residents. Shared service models (e.g. Publica) add complexity. Cyber resilience is uneven, contract end dates misaligned and recruitment of skilled staff is difficult.	Moving to 2 unitaries allows consolidation of contracts and systems, cutting duplication and costs. GG and GU can each build modern, resilient digital estates, with standardised platforms for finance, HR, planning and customer services, collaborating where it makes sense to do so. For instance, a unified model strengthens cyber security, data sharing and digital inclusion, while giving scale for investment and supplier leverage. Residents benefit from consistent, accessible digital services, while local priorities are still reflected through flexible delivery.
Planning	Planning is split across county and district councils, with the county handling minerals, waste and transport and infrastructure planning, while districts deliver development management, local plans and building control. Services face recruitment shortages, housing delivery pressures, multiple statutory deadlines (e.g. Local Plans, Building Safety Levy) and fragmented IT/planning systems. Transition experience elsewhere shows challenges around harmonising policy frameworks, staff retention and avoiding duplication.	LGR offers a chance to integrate planning under two coherent units (GG and GU), streamlining local plan production, policy frameworks and building control functions. This would reduce duplication, enable stronger workforce resilience, align IT and digital planning systems and deliver consistent enforcement. It also strengthens the link between planning, housing and infrastructure delivery, while still maintaining local identity and responsiveness through area-based committees or boards.

Case Study: Ubico Ltd

Ubico is a local authority owned company (Teckal) operating across Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire. It delivers high quality, front line environmental services to over 300,000 households, which support and improve our local communities to remain clean, green and pleasant places to live and work.

The company was founded in 2011, by shareholder partners Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) and Cotswold District Council (CDC). The company achieved strong growth in its first ten years and now provides environmental services to all councils in Gloucestershire, and West Oxfordshire, with eight local authority shareholders since 2021.

Ubico works closely with its shareholder councils to realise environmental services that align with their objectives. Each service is designed around the council and communities it serves, while also offering our partners the benefit of learned experience that leads to realising synergies through greater standardisation. The individual character and requirements of local geographies are embraced and respected, meaning services are genuinely flexible in the face of evolving local authority needs.

The governance model associated with the teckal model ensures that explicit agreements on how services are run are in place; the councils as shareholders are in charge.

Ubico also adapts its approach to respect partners' appetite for delegated authority, and actively looks for partner benefits, as it is not motivated by driving company profit; as a teckal organisation, it is local authority owned and shareholder councils only pay the cost of operation, any savings being directly invested in improving frontline services for residents.

The growth in the number of local authorities partnering with Ubico since the company began service delivery in 2012 has consolidated its position as a resilient provider of environmental services, with a clear focus on long-term improvements. It means Ubico is able to leverage the full buying power of the network when sourcing products and services; improving the negotiating position for each local authority. It also provides a shared test-bed for investments in industry leading technology, equipment and working practices which raises standards across the region, influencing the scope of shared resources and service delivery.

c. Delivering Value for Money

Creating two councils, in the place of seven, will save money, reduce duplication and ensure more of every pound is spent where it matters and spent well.

The GG + GU model is financially sustainable for the long term. Within a few years, GG would be larger in size than nearly a quarter of existing unitary councils across England, the vast majority of whom are successful and financially stable. GU will provide stability, with a population that will likely soon exceed 500,000

Baseline data – current unitary by population quartile

Council	Population	Council	Population	Council	Population	Council	Population
Isles of Scilly	2,281	Bath and North East Somerset	195,618	Plymouth	266,862	Wandsworth	329,035
City of London	10,847	Gateshead	197,722	Wolverhampton	267,651	Bromley	329,578
Rutland	41,151	Stockton-on-Tees	199,966	Rotherham	268,354	Wigan	334,110
Hartlepool	93,861	York	204,551	Kingston upon Hull	268,852	Brent	341,221
Darlington	109,469	Calderdale	207,699	Cumberland	275,390	Sandwell	344,210
Bracknell Forest	126,881	Portsmouth	208,420	Waltham Forest	275,887	East Riding of Yorkshire	346,309
Halton	128,964	Sutton	210,053	Sunderland	277,354	Coventry	355,600
Redcar and Cleveland	137,175	North Tyneside	210,487	Brighton and Hove	277,965	Wakefield	357,729
Torbay	139,479	Westminster	211,365	Salford	278,064	Newham	358,645
Isle of Wight	140,794	Warrington	211,580	Sefton	281,027	Cheshire West and Chester	361,694
Blackpool	141,574	Merton	214,709	Medway	282,702	North Northamptonshire	363,408
Kensington and Chelsea	146,154	Solihull	217,678	Walsall	286,105	Ealing	369,937
Middlesbrough	148,285	Peterborough	217,705	Hounslow	290,488	Leicester	373,399
South Tyneside	148,667	Camden	218,049	Greenwich	291,080	Dorset	383,274
Windsor and Maidenhead	154,738	North Somerset	219,145	Milton Keynes	292,180	Barnet	389,101
Blackburn with Darwen	155,762	Barking and Dagenham	219,992	South Gloucestershire	294,765	Croydon	392,224
Knowsley	157,103	Islington	220,373	Stockport	297,107	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	401,898
North East Lincolnshire	157,754	Luton	226,973	Lewisham	298,653	Cheshire East	406,527
Slough	159,182	Rochdale	226,992	Bolton	298,903	West Northamptonshire	429,013
West Berkshire	162,215	Westmorland and Furness	227,643	Central Bedfordshire	301,501	Kirklees	437,593
Kingston upon Thames	168,302	Tameside	232,753	Newcastle upon Tyne	307,565	Bristol	479,024
North Lincolnshire	170,042	Swindon	235,657	Hillingdon	310,681	Liverpool	496,770
Reading	174,820	Trafford	236,301	Redbridge	310,911	Wiltshire	515,885
Thurrock	176,877	Oldham	243,912	Doncaster	311,027	County Durham	528,127
Southend-on-Sea	180,915	Barnsley	246,482	Southwark	311,913	Bradford	552,644
Wokingham	180,967	Bexley	247,835	Lambeth	316,812	Buckinghamshire	560,409
St Helens	184,728	Southampton	252,689	Wirral	322,453	Sheffield	566,242
Hammersmith and Fulham	185,238	Stoke-on-Trent	259,965	Northumberland	324,362	Manchester	568,996
Bedford	187,466	Harrow	261,185	Dudley	324,969	Cornwall	575,413
Herefordshire	188,719	Hackney	261,491	Tower Hamlets	325,789	Somerset	576,852
Telford and Wrekin	188,871	Haringey	261,811	Shropshire	327,178	North Yorkshire	623,501
Bury	194,606	Derby	263,490	Enfield	327,224	Leeds	822,483
Richmond upon Thames	194,894	Havering	264,703	Nottingham	328,513	Birmingham	1,157,603

Efficiencies will come from:

- Streamlining management and back-office functions, creating leaner organisations
- Reducing duplication across layers of governance
- Maintaining and drawing greater efficiencies from existing and proven shared service models like Ubico
- Unlocking savings from earlier intervention and prevention - to reduce high-cost demand in children's and adults services.

Transition costs will be carefully managed:

- We expect there to be lower transition costs than a single-county model, due to lower redundancy levels more than offsetting and disaggregation costs
- A frontline-first approach will enable transition to be achieved without over-reliance on expensive consultants

Evidence from elsewhere supports this model:

- Single-county unitary authority proposals have consistently under-estimated transition costs, over-promised efficiency and successor authorities have struggle to sustain improved outcomes
- Multi-unitary models like Dorset and Cumbria have achieved better outcomes in high-cost services such as children's and adults, alongside reduced costs

- The creation of two unitaries in Northamptonshire demonstrates that splitting responsibility can lead to more sustainable finances and improved focus on services

The result is councils that are simpler and financially sustainable, protecting frontline services, reducing bureaucracy and enabling reinvestment into priorities such as vulnerable children, healthier communities and unlocking growth.

d. A Stronger Voice for Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire's current two-tier system, with seven councils, brings inefficiencies and restricts growth. Services are duplicated, accountability is blurred and decisions are slowed by competing priorities. The result is a county which is not able to have a clear and confident voice in regional and national forums.

The proposed model replaces seven competing voices with two strong, complementary councils that are clear, accountable and representative. Together, they will amplify Gloucestershire's influence locally, regionally and nationally.

- Greater Gloucester will give this ancient cathedral city the leadership role and growth capacity it has lacked. Today Gloucester is restricted compared to South West peers such as Bristol, Exeter and Swindon. A dedicated urban authority will ensure Gloucester has the same standing as other leading cities, able to advocate directly for housing, infrastructure, jobs and investment.
- A Gloucestershire Unitary Council will provide balance, scale and stability for the county's towns and rural areas. It will sustain prosperity and amplify the county's economic and cultural voice, while protecting nationally recognised heritage and assets, such as the Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean.

This balance ensures that both the urban and rural strengths of Gloucestershire are represented clearly and ends the duplication and inefficiency caused by the current two-tier system.

Joining a Mayoral Strategic Authority

Gloucestershire is actively exploring three strategic partnerships to the north, south, and east. Of these, we found each offer unique opportunities to accelerate growth and influence:

- West of England Combined Authority (WECA)
- Herefordshire and Worcestershire
- Swindon and Oxford

1. West of England Combined Authority (WECA)

- **Why:** Existing governance, metro mayor, statutory compliance, strong sectoral fit (advanced manufacturing, cyber, green tech), and clear commuting / economic flows; existing regional partnerships across arts, culture, health, and the broadest range of services of all options; similar urban / rural profile, reflecting shared challenges in housing and transport planning.
- **Risk:** Gloucestershire risks becoming a junior partner unless it defines a distinctive role (e.g. agri-tech leader completing a 'whole of tech' future economy).

WECA provides the high-growth innovation engine, Gloucestershire complements the ecosystem with agri-tech and natural capital.

2. Herefordshire and Worcestershire

- **Why:** Close match in rural economy, heritage, and agri-tech; natural cultural legacy fit; scope for Gloucestershire to play a leading role in innovation and scaling up; slightly under population threshold, but culturally congruent and offers Gloucestershire leadership space.
- **Risk:** Limited digital / tech capacity in partners and weaker alignment with national reform priorities. Rooted in shared rural economy and heritage, with Gloucestershire as a natural partner to inject innovation and scale.

3. Swindon and Oxfordshire

- **Why:** Strong in R&D, life sciences, AI, and clean tech; good synergies in advanced manufacturing and cyber, but requires completely new governance; has weaker cultural alignment, and less short-term integration with Gloucestershire's rural and health economies.
- **Risk:** Longer-time horizon to deliver; innovation is research-led and urban, less aligned with Gloucestershire's wider economic identity; very few established regional partnerships.

Offers long-term potential in global-facing R&D and science but less immediate and less place-congruent.

Gloucestershire has the assets and ambition to contribute strongly within any of the potential partnerships. WECA provides the most immediately deliverable and policy-aligned option, while the Herefordshire and Worcestershire option offers an alternative in which Gloucestershire could play a leading role. The partnership with Swindon and Oxfordshire remains a credible longer-term prospect, particularly for research-led collaboration, but is less immediately aligned to Gloucestershire's wider economic and governance priorities.

Why this matters:

Through LGR and further devolution, Gloucestershire can unlock the tools to drive a high-growth, resilience-focused economy and smarter services for residents.

- The government's clear policy direction is to extend deeper devolution deals through Mayoral Combined Authorities
- By joining a Mayoral Strategic Authority, Gloucestershire will access devolved powers over housing, skills, transport and economic growth - aligning with national priorities. This will provide the scale and credibility needed to secure investment and give Gloucestershire a stronger representation on the issues that matter to its residents
- A two-unitary model strengthens Gloucestershire's voice in these partnerships: coherent, financially sustainable councils with clear leadership. A single County unitary would potentially reduce the county's vote and voice in the Strategic Authority and would also mean that Gloucestershire was the largest constituent Council, which has the potential to unbalance existing or future relationships.
- Devolution would allow Gloucestershire to power growth through innovation: using devolved economic powers to create the Severn Resilience Corridor, bringing together cyber, advanced manufacturing, agri-tech, and clean energy. This will attract major private investment, generate high-value jobs, and cement Gloucestershire's role as a national growth engine.
- Devolution would allow Gloucestershire to strengthen resilience for the 21st century: with greater control over housing, health, skills, and transport, Gloucestershire can deliver joined-up solutions

for climate resilience, energy security, and sustainable food systems.

- Devolution would allow Gloucestershire to put data to work for residents: allowing us to integrate transport, housing, health, and utilities in real time. This will reduce duplication, cut costs, and provide residents with more personalised, responsive services, from flood alerts to smart mobility and integrated healthcare.

With two councils, Gloucestershire will be stronger in its representation. GG will lead as a confident, ambitious city authority, sitting alongside Bristol and Bath; GU will sustain county-wide prosperity and protect heritage. Together they will give Gloucestershire the stronger, clearer and more confident voice it needs, ensuring that the county is not a bystander, but a leader with an equal say in shaping the future of the region.

e. Unlocking Growth & Innovation

Gloucestershire has huge economic potential - but it is not yet being realised. Gloucester, in particular, is younger, more diverse and faces higher levels of need than the county average, yet has the greatest potential to drive inclusive growth. With the right leadership, geographic boundaries and tools, it can perform on a par with peer cities like Exeter and Bristol.

This model will unlock that potential:

- Greater Gloucester will act as a growth hub for the county. Its assets - a cathedral city with world-class heritage, a strong cultural and sporting identity, regenerated docks and quays, its increasing prominence as a University City and a growing service economy - will be matched with governance able to deliver investment and growth at scale. Gloucester City Council has a reputation for being one of the most innovative areas in stimulating and delivering commercial and residential growth and regeneration.
- Hi-tech businesses such as Safran will be headquartered within the new Greater Gloucester area, whilst medical science research and opportunities being pioneered by the University of Gloucestershire will cover across both councils.
- A Gloucestershire Unitary Council will sustain and strengthen the wider economy: market towns, rural industries, green and visitor economy in the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean, bolstered by the UK's centre of cyber technology in Cheltenham. It will ensure balanced prosperity across the whole county.

This model aligns economic strategy with how people actually live and work. It connects housing, transport, planning and skills to business needs, removing duplication and enabling joined-up leadership.

Gloucestershire's track record of innovation shows what's possible:

INNOVATION AT OUR HEART

Gloucestershire has a rich history of innovation and a strong foundation in a range of strategic business sectors. Located at the cusp of the South West and just two hours from London, Gloucestershire provides access to the whole of the UK via road, rail and air.



Agri-tech

Gloucestershire proudly houses the UK's largest network of agri-tech SMEs and features two agriculturally focused universities, making us the first choice for prominent agri-tech businesses.

The county is home to two agri-tech incubators – Farm491 and Hartpury Tech Box Park – and businesses have the opportunity to test their products on a working farm. As members of The Gloucestershire Agri-Tech Partnership, we have a strong focus on helping businesses to commercialise new products and services in the sector.



Advanced engineering and manufacturing

Gloucestershire has a long heritage in engineering, with a welcoming environment for companies in precision engineering, aerospace, green tech, and advanced materials.

More than 70% of our AEM businesses are actively engaged in innovation – that's 25% more than the national average, making our county the perfect breeding ground for new ideas and concepts.

ZeroAvia, the zero emission aviation disruptor, opened their facility at Cotswold Airport and have seen rapid growth and significant investment since relocating to Gloucestershire.

We're also pleased to have world-leaders like GE Aviation, Moog and Safran as long-term residents in the county, as well as numerous homegrown precision engineering firms like Spirax-Sarco, Severn Glocon Group and Renishaw headquartered in the county.



Cyber

A true digital powerhouse, Gloucestershire has long been a cradle of cyber innovation, thanks to our longstanding relationship with GCHQ – the country's national cyber security and communications centre.

We have the largest cyber business community in the UK outside of London, and the most concentrated. In the last five years, we've seen cyber job growth of 48% in Gloucestershire, and that's only set to rise.

CyNam, our Department for Science, Innovation and Technology recognised cyber cluster, is helping our rapidly expanding cyber ecosystem to connect and grow. And, with a new angel investment network focused on cyber, defence and national security, along with the upcoming Golden Valley development, we're perfectly placed to ensure cyber businesses flourish.



Life sciences

The University of Gloucestershire is making significant investment into its healthcare and bioscience schools, with facilities that are enabling vital research into human diseases and illnesses, with 'bench to bedside' trials with local hospitals.

Their ambitious Health Innovation Lab project, which will be launched in partnership with the NHS, seeks to deliver cutting-edge digital research and development to improve patient care and drive transformation in the industry. With over 300 life sciences companies currently in the county, Gloucestershire is making huge advances in the sector.



Green energy

Our ambition is to build a better future for generations to come by making Gloucestershire a net zero emissions economy. To do this, we're attracting new investment into the county and supporting existing businesses to focus on greener, more sustainable products and services.

We're coordinating with Western Gateway to develop the infrastructure for alternative and renewable energy businesses, as well as small, modular nuclear reactors.

The voluntary and community sector is also a growth partner. With over 4,000 organisations and strong networks like Know Your Patch, Gloucestershire's VCSFE sector connects communities and builds resilience and will play a central role in inclusive growth.

Evidence backs this approach. The Case for Cities report (In Appendix B) highlights the potential for Gloucester to achieve the same growth as its peers, while wider analysis shows that city-led growth drives regeneration, improved social outcomes and stronger local economies.

With two councils that are simpler, accountable and strategically aligned, Gloucestershire will be positioned to unlock innovation, attract investment and deliver growth that is both sustainable and inclusive.

f. Building Healthy Communities

Why Change is Needed

LGR is not only about fixing fragile services but about enabling healthier, fairer communities. Today responsibility for housing, leisure, culture and public health is split across seven councils, leaving no single body accountable for wellbeing outcomes and preventing a joined-up, localised response which facilitates true change.

Adults' and SEND services are struggling nationally, with rising demand and costs. Locally in Gloucestershire, an ageing population, rural isolation and workforce shortages stretch adult services, with

demand set to overwhelm budgets and capacity.

The pressures are place-specific. Gloucester has a quarter of the county's population but over a third of children's social care demand. Its younger, more deprived communities drive high levels of safeguarding need and homelessness. Rural Gloucestershire faces a different challenge: an accelerating ageing population, fragile care markets and entrenched health inequalities. The current county-wide structure is not designed around the very different needs of Gloucester City and the wider county.

Without reform, demand and costs will continue to rise, while families will continue to face poor outcomes and delays, health inequalities will widen and accountability will remain blurred. A reset and fundamentally different approach is needed.

The Opportunity with Two Councils

Two new councils create the opportunity to integrate many of the wider determinants of health - from housing and planning to leisure, culture and environment - within a single local framework, alongside children's and adults services.

The proposed two councils, with the right size and focus, will build around the true needs of people and place. Unlike the current county-wide system, they can design services around fundamentally different communities, embed support locally and act earlier to stop problems before they escalate.

- Greater Gloucester with its younger demographic will have a great focus on children's and youth services, SEND, homelessness, health inequalities and regeneration - tailored to a younger, more deprived, high-growth urban population.
- Gloucestershire Unitary Council with its older and more rural demographic can have a real focus on adult social care and rural services, ensuring stability, resilience and sustainable care for an ageing population.

Both will embed prevention-first approaches in partnership with the NHS and ICS, ensuring that better health and wellbeing are designed into every service, not left as an afterthought.

Together, they will deliver:

- **Prevention-first mindset** - services embedded at family and neighbourhood level, reducing crisis demand.
 - **Family and community-level delivery** - shaped around distinct local needs, with support provided through schools, GPs, neighbourhood teams and local partners, reducing reliance on high-cost crisis interventions.
 - **Earlier help for children and families** - more effective early intervention will reduce the number of children entering care, improve SEND support and strengthen family resilience.
 - **Independence for adults** - closer links between housing, social care and health will expand supported living and Extra Care options, helping older and disabled people live

independently for longer.

- **Local accountability** - smaller councils are more responsive and residents know who is responsible for services in their area, strengthening trust and oversight.
- **Faster responsiveness** - councils able to react quickly to local issues and emergencies.
- **Integrated partnerships** - working with NHS partners, policing, schools, VCSFE organisations and parish councils ensures services are designed around people's lives and communities rather than institutional boundaries.

A Prevention-First Model

A prevention-first approach is the only sustainable way to improve outcomes and protect resources. Without a shift to prevention, rising demand in both children's and adults' services will overwhelm budgets and workforce capacity.

Evidence from other reorganisations, or where district councils' functions have been used in a prevention-first approach, demonstrates this model can succeed.

CUMBRIA: TWO SEPARATE CHILDREN'S SERVICES FROM DAY ONE



In 2023, six district councils and Cumbria County Council were reorganised into two unitary councils, **Cumberland Council** and **Westmorland and Furness Council**. Both councils are sparsely populated, covering very large areas.

Westmorland and Furness is the third largest authority in England and Wales by geographic area. It has a small population of whom 15% are children aged 0 to 15 across a rural geography. Key aspects of its approach is:

- **Strong alignment** between the **Children's Plan** and council priorities
- Priorities are driven through **engagement with children and families**
- Adoption of an **early intervention and prevention Family Help locality offer** implementing a **partnership model of delivery**, which includes Health partners, Police, Education, Local Authority, Voluntary and Community sectors working together to identify needs within families as early as possible.
- **Clear governance arrangements** through a Family Help programme Board, Safeguarding partnership, Strategic Education Alliance and a SEND partnership Board.

LEARNING FROM THIS APPROACH IS:

- **Common purpose for children and families** across the council and with partners is essential

- Build in **engagement with children and families** from initial planning onwards.
- **Respond to what you're hearing** from them.
- Understanding **constancy, focus and determination to drive forwards improved outcomes for children is critical**
- Using **community and partnership support** to help deliver coordinated, connected and integrated family help through **place-based family help hubs** which include both a physical and virtual offer.
- **Communicate** constantly and effectively about plans and priorities.

A year after inception, Ofsted highlighted the effectiveness of its approach to delivery, with a particular emphasis on the:

- Firm establishment of **a unique identity** for the new unitary children's services.
- Council's **relentless drive for improvement**
- **Shared vision for children across the workforce and with partners** which is supporting service improvements.
- Ways in which it **listens and acts on what children say matters to them and their families**
- Swift action to **recruit to and stabilise the workforce**

Close, connected communities, coupled with strong, passionate and ambitious leadership, will give children the best possible start in life and provide good support and services to them and their families.

Source: Building The Best Places For Children And Families: Children's Services In New Unitary Councils, Staff College/DCN report, 2025

CASE STUDY: Leeds and hyper local ASC approach

Leeds City Council, in collaboration with residents and partners, is implementing a 'hyperlocal' approach to social care work by focusing on community engagement, personalised services, and co-design with local partners. This approach aims to create more effective, equitable and sustainable social care services that meet the unique circumstances of users and their locality. Key features of this approach are:

Community-led support	Strengths-based working	Thriving communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Leeds, ASC has adopted the principles of community-led support, where local communities are actively involved in shaping and delivering services. This involves co-production, where people who use services, their families, and community members work together with professionals to develop and improve services. The focus is on building trust, empowering individuals, and focusing on their abilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leeds emphasises strengths-based working, which focuses on building on people's existing strengths and abilities, rather than primarily focusing on their needs or deficits. This approach is aligned with the principles of community-led support and co-production. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leeds' approach emphasises the importance of thriving communities, which are characterised by good health, wellbeing, and strong social connections. This involves investing in community building, social infrastructure, and supporting people to access opportunities for education, employment and leisure. The goal is to create environments where people can live healthy and happy lives.

The hyperlocal approach has also been adopted by the Local Care Partnership (LCP) with a strong focus on bringing together health and social care providers, community organisations, and local people to work collaboratively on shared goals. The partnerships aim to improve outcomes, reduce inequalities, and respond to the unique needs of each locality. The programme is using local recruitment as a lever to engage local residents in working in the health and social care sector as a vital part of the local economy.

- The Leeds Health and Social Care Hub aims to make the region a natural destination for people seeking careers in health and social care, and for organisations looking to establish or expand.
- It focuses on making health and social care a career of choice for local residents, creating employment opportunities, and addressing health inequalities.
- The hub promotes collaboration between public, private and third sector organisations to achieve these goals.
- Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust has successfully recruited staff from local communities by directly engaging with them, rather than relying solely on online job postings.
- This approach has led to a more diverse workforce, including people who may not have previously considered joining the NHS.
- The trust has worked with local organisations and charities to reach individuals who may have barriers to accessing online job applications, such as digital poverty.

Source: *The power of prevention and place in new unitary councils, Impower, 2025*

This model will put prevention at the heart of service design - creating councils that are not only more responsive, but also more resilient and financially sustainable in the long term.

Designing Services Around People, Not Structures

This reorganisation is not about centralisation - it is about resetting failing services and reshaping them around the realities of people's lives in Gloucestershire. Families need earlier support, young people with SEND need inclusion and older residents in rural areas need care that prevents isolation. The new councils will be built to meet those needs directly - not to preserve outdated 'at scale' structures.

This means:

- **Lifelong support designed as one system** - aligning children's and adults' services across life stages so that young people in care, SEND, or transition to adulthood do not fall through gaps
- **Clearer access to help** – providing a single front door for access, reducing duplication at key contact points, so residents know who to turn to and get faster support; enabling SEND, education and social care to work effectively together, leading to quicker and fairer outcomes for those most in need
- **Prevention in practice** - linking housing, early help and leisure/physical activity with social care, tackling the drivers of crisis before they escalate; as well as introducing innovative data use, to enable streamlined working, and improved outcomes for the vulnerable.
- **Independent lives for older and disabled people** - enabling housing, planning and adult care to work together on the right homes for everyone, with supported living, particularly important for rural Gloucestershire, where extra care is limited.
- **Healthier, connected communities** - joining up cultural, leisure and public health services to promote wellbeing, reduce loneliness and strengthen Gloucester's identity as a proud, diverse city.
- **Safer local environments** - coordinating public protection (Trading Standards, Licensing, Environmental Health) and other regulatory services to tackle issues such as unsafe housing conditions that disproportionately affect vulnerable communities.
- **Leadership rooted in place** - ensuring decision-making is close to communities, empowering parish and town councils, VCSE groups and neighbourhood partnerships to shape local delivery.

Children's Services & Education

Children's services have made much needed progress on their improvement journey, with a welcome recent "Good" Ofsted judgement following many years of the service requiring improvement. However, SEND services are still in need of focus and improvement and the county-wide model struggles to respond to the very different needs of Gloucester and the wider county as well as a more bespoke structure would.

In Children's Social Care

- High and complex demand: 63% rise in children in care since 2015, with roughly 8,000 referrals annually and sharp rise in Child Protection Plans, particularly in Gloucester and the Forest of Dean.
- Placement capacity constraints: 69% of children are placed in-house, with the remainder dependent on high-cost external fostering and residential provision.
- Workforce fragility: Staffing stabilised since the 2017 inadequate rating, but Ofsted (2025) warns progress remains fragile, particularly in rural and complex case areas.

In Education Services

- Ofsted's 2023 SEND Area Inspection judged provision as "Requires improvement"
- SEND pressures: Over 350 new EHCP requests monthly, a 140% increase since 2015, with long waiting times for assessment and support
- Increasing Demand: growing need for Alternative Provision (AP) and increasing complexity of needs (autism, ADHD, trauma, mental health)
- Funding and infrastructure strain: A high needs budget deficit of £78m, compounded by workforce shortages (educational psychologists, specialist teachers) and schools constrained by physical capacity in growth areas.
- National policy shifts: Expanded early years entitlements, the forthcoming Schools and Wellbeing Bill and SEND reform create both new statutory duties and resourcing challenges.

This context highlights a system under intense strain, with significant geographic inequality (Gloucester carries a disproportionate share of safeguarding and education pressures) and persistent financial risk.

Progress has been made, with Family Hubs, a Social Work Academy, specialist school places, and a SEND Improvement Plan garnering national recognition. Yet these gains remain fragile because they are delivered through a county-wide model that cannot respond to the very different pressures in Gloucester and the wider county.

With a more localised structure, prevention and resource will be embedded where it is most needed.

Opportunity for Children's Services

Local Government Reorganisation is the opportunity to reset the system so that progress takes root, spreads consistently and delivers sustainable, evidence-led improvement. Partnership working will be key in all areas, and co-production of services will be a central principle of forming the new models.

- In Greater Gloucester: there will be local accountability where demand is greatest
 - GG will focus relentlessly on safeguarding, SEND, youth services and Alternative Provision. Family Hubs will be fully embedded as community gateways to prevention and support. Local leadership will ensure the voice of children and families directly shapes services
- In Gloucestershire Unitary Council: there will be stability and scale across the county
 - GU will sustain statutory education and children's services across rural areas, focusing on sufficiency: new school places, fostering and adoption capacity and SEND provision. County-wide workforce planning will provide resilience and specialist expertise

This means:

- Outcomes will improve: children will be safer, families better supported and young people given a fair chance to succeed

- Costs will be contained: fewer out-of-area placements, more early intervention and sustainable SEND provision
- Accountability will be clearer: leadership rooted in place, aligned to local priorities
- Transformation will be unlocked: prevention-first, workforce resilience, education inclusion and stronger multi-agency collaboration

Together, this resets services around real need, improves outcomes, contains costs, and embeds prevention.

Adult Services

The same approach applies in Adult Social Care, where fragile improvement cannot meet rising demand. Services are under intense strain, with rising demand, fragile improvement and persistent financial risk. At present, the county risks being locked into a cycle of reactive, high-cost provision that fails to deliver independence, dignity, or value for money.

Current Pressures:

- Rising and imbalanced demand: Over 6,400 adults are supported, with demand patterns sharply imbalanced, due to the demographic differences between city and rural areas
- Demographic pressures: The number of people aged 85+ is projected to rise by 84% by 2043 - placing unsustainable pressure on services
- Service fragility: In January 2025, CQC rated Gloucestershire's ASC service as *Requires Improvement* with a baseline score of 50/100, the lowest in England under the new regime.
- Financial challenge: A £13.9m savings programme is underway, focusing on shifting provision from residential care towards Extra Care and reablement, but current structures limit pace and sustainability
- Workforce fragility: Ongoing shortages across social work, mental health and occupational therapy constrain resilience
- Fragmented commissioning: Delegation of functions to NHS partners weakened strategic oversight. Although these functions are now being reclaimed, the system remains unstable

There are some signs of improvement, but services are still struggling to meet localised need. A £57m capital programme has expanded extra care housing, prevention pilots are underway and the workforce is stabilising after years of churn. However progress is insufficient, as the low CQC rating demonstrates. Adult Social Care will not be sustainable without a structure that supports prevention and resilience at scale.

Opportunity for Adults Services

The creation of Greater Gloucester (GG) and Gloucestershire Unitary (GU) provides the platform to deliver a system designed around people, communities and place, rather than structures.

- In GG: local accountability where demand is greatest
 - Focus on complex supported living, residential care, safeguarding and prevention.
 - Local leadership accountable to communities facing the highest demand and most complex needs.

- In GU: stability and scale across the county
 - Sustaining statutory responsibilities across the rural areas
 - Expanding Extra Care capacity, strengthening domiciliary provision and investing in prevention to reduce long-term demand

This means:

- Outcomes will improve: more prevention, better safeguarding and support closer to home
- Costs will be contained: fewer high-cost placements, more community-based solutions, sustainable provision
- Accountability will be clearer: leadership rooted in place, aligned to local priorities.
- Transformation will be unlocked: prevention-first, workforce resilience, stronger commissioning and collaboration with NHS partners

Without reform, the pressures in Adults' Services will continue to drive unsustainable costs. A more localised model, driven by strategic and prevention orientated decisions, is the only option. Better care cannot come at ever-higher cost - reform must deliver both.

This is our opportunity to ensure that every adult in Gloucestershire - whether living with complex needs, older age, or long-term conditions - can live safely, independently and with dignity.

By embedding prevention locally, GG and GU can protect lives and protect budgets.

Partnership Working and Integration

These reforms will only succeed with stronger partnerships and inclusive delivery. We will build on existing collaboration and invest in deep, meaningful partnerships. Partnerships are critical; statutory and non-statutory partnerships will be streamlined and strengthened, including, for each new unitary authority:

- New Safeguarding Children's Board
- New Safeguarding Adults Board
- Integrated Care Board and Place-based Commissioning Arrangements
- Youth Justice Strategic Partnerships
- Domestic Abuse Partnership
- SEND Strategy Partnership
- Community Safety Partnership
- Health & Wellbeing Board
- Schools Forum Board

These partnerships will form the fabric of a joined-up system of care and support that spans health, education, justice and community services - and ensure no one falls through the gaps.

Workforce, Safeguarding and Governance

The future of services depends on investing in our people. We will:

- Retain and grow a permanent, skilled workforce, reducing reliance on agency staff
- Recruit high-quality leaders for the new directorates for Adults and Children's Services
- Establish the statutory Director roles for each council, including:
 - Director of Children's Services (DCS)
 - Director of Adult Social Services (DASS)
 - Principal Social Worker - Children's Services
 - Principal Social Worker - Adults' Services
- Appoint Independent Scrutineers for each Safeguarding Partnership
- Establish Safeguarding Adults Boards and Safeguarding Children Partnerships for both councils
- Develop a workforce strategy focused on recruitment, retention, wellbeing and continuous professional development
- Embed robust governance through local scrutiny and strengthened member roles

These appointments will ensure that services are safe, resilient and built to last - with professional leadership at the heart of every new system.

A Broader View of Health and Wellbeing

The case for reform is not only about formal health and care provision, but also about tackling the wider determinants of health and enabling people to thrive in their communities.

In Gloucestershire:

- Physical inactivity is around 22%, slightly better than the England average
- Access to sports, green spaces and active travel options varies significantly between communities, contributing to long-term inequality
- Bringing housing, planning and care together will help us create more supported housing options that allow people to live independently for longer
- Integrated leisure, culture and public health strategies will enable more people to live active, connected lives - reducing loneliness and improving physical and mental wellbeing
- Community safety will be strengthened by aligning teams and partnerships, tackling shared priorities like domestic abuse, child exploitation and anti-social behaviour
- There is a disconnect between health, housing, leisure and planning - leaving untapped potential to design healthier places and systems

The new councils will be well-positioned to embed public health in everything they do - aligning planning, transport, housing, leisure and social care into a cohesive approach to wellbeing.

Managing Risk, Realising Benefits

Disaggregating existing services will be complex, but it is manageable. Lessons from other areas, such as Cumbria, show it is possible to deliver the change safely, protecting services, while building for a stronger future.

We are committed to managing this process transparently and responsibly, with a focus on:

- Transitioning safely with minimal disruption to service users
- Protecting frontline delivery throughout the change process
- Realising financial efficiencies through leadership consolidation and service redesign
- Engaging our workforce and service users throughout the change
- Building a new vision collaboratively with staff, partners and communities

Our Commitment to Children, Families and Adults

We're not simply carrying over what already exists. This is our opportunity to build something better - designed from the ground up to work for every resident, every community and every part of Gloucestershire.

We are committed to:

- Protecting and improving essential services - keeping children, families and adults supported, safe and well during and beyond transition
- Listening to local voices - involving communities, service users and frontline staff in shaping the future of care and support
- Looking after our people - investing in the workforce who care for our residents every day and ensuring their skills and wellbeing are valued
- Providing better access for all - making it simpler to get the help you need, with clear contact points, joined-up teams and support closer to home
- Using public money wisely - ensuring every pound makes a difference, with savings reinvested into the services that matter most
- Putting children and families at the heart - improving opportunities, inclusion and support for every child, whatever their starting point
- Delivering in partnership - working side-by-side with health, education, police, voluntary groups and others to create joined-up solutions that work
- Keeping decisions local - ensuring services reflect the needs of each place, with accountability rooted in our communities

This is more than just structural reform. It's a commitment to fairness, quality and care - and to ensuring that no matter where you live, you can expect the same high standards of support and opportunity.

Every resident, in every part of Gloucestershire, deserves services they can trust - and a council that puts people first.

g. Councils that Work for All

The current two-tier system is complex and confusing. With seven different councils, responsibilities are split, decisions are duplicated and accountability is blurred. Residents often do not know who to contact and too many decisions feel remote from the communities they affect.

This model makes local government simpler, clearer and closer to the people it serves. With only two councils, every resident will know who is responsible and how to hold them to account. Services will be designed around lived reality, not historic, complex or multi-layered boundaries.

Closer to Communities

Both councils will embed a locality-based model that brings decision-making and services closer to neighbourhoods, families and places. The proposal will build on the existing strong relationship between the District Councils and Parish and Town Councils in rural areas and use them for effective engagement, supported by partnerships with voluntary and community groups and new neighbourhood forums. This will ensure local voices drive local priorities and services can be tailored to the distinct needs of urban and rural communities.

Accessible and Inclusive

Services will be designed around residents, using customer insight and evidence to improve outcomes. Modern digital access will sit alongside local hubs and face-to-face support, ensuring that nobody is excluded. The focus will be on simplicity and inclusion - making it easier for everyone to get help when they need it. There will be a single phone number for all council services in each unitary, and a single website for each enabling people to access services without complication.

Empowering Residents

The new councils will actively encourage co-design with communities, building trust and participation. Neighbourhood empowerment will give residents a stronger voice in shaping the services that matter to them. This will strengthen democratic engagement, accountability and transparency.

It is anticipated that in Greater Gloucester, relationships with parish Councils will be strengthened by establishing a formal committee of Parish Council Chairs. This innovative community engagement model will ensure that those residents who live in the wider urban area surrounding the city have, for the first time in decades, democratic representation and influence and a second voice, alongside their unitary Councillors, to ensure that their particular voices and needs are heard.

Simple, Clear, Accountable

With two councils, local government in Gloucestershire will be easier to understand, simpler to navigate and stronger in its representation. This simplicity will cut bureaucracy, save money and deliver councils that genuinely work for all: accessible, responsive and accountable to every resident and business.

5. Future Devolution

Local Government Reorganisation presents a pivotal moment to unlock Gloucestershire's full potential, both within its borders and in respect of its offer to the wider United Kingdom. As Government implements England-wide Strategic Authority coverage, Gloucestershire offers a significant contribution to a regional 'at scale' economy, whether it joins an existing Strategic Authority or forms a new one.

Gloucestershire is a rare economy, as it is notably resilient to national and global economic shocks². It has existing significant strengths in Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering and Food Security innovation (a combined 23.7% GVA)³ and is exceptional in the high-growth sectors with a focus on the securing of emerging technologies⁴. Our sectors of strength almost completely align with the priority sectors of the 2025 Industrial Strategy. Building on a strong industrial heritage particularly in Gloucester, carried through into aerospace and engineering, and an evident culture of innovation catalysed by the presence of GCHQ in Cheltenham, we outperform our neighbours on productivity, business start-ups and entrepreneurship.

Where innovation is so evident in our culture, it follows that it must originate in our people. We host a skilled population, supported by strong universities, colleges and research networks that have proactively reached out into regional networks.

Inherent to Gloucestershire is our natural capital. From the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean to the Severn Vale, Gloucestershire's landscapes give us the space and resources to lead on the challenges of the 21st century. As part of the Severn Estuary corridor, we can offer clean energy, sustainable food, water management and climate adaptation. Few places can match the combination of the industrial heritage of Gloucester, the high tech growth around the urban centres, and the natural assets that define Gloucestershire's offer.

Gloucestershire blends its landscapes, cultures and economy into a unique identity that draws on west country heritage and lifestyle to inform future thinking. From the invention of the jet engine near Gloucester to pioneering hydrogen flights at Cotswold Airport⁵; from the Wheatstone Bridge to the Golden Valley; from being home to the invention of the lawnmower to hosting one of the deepest water research sites in the world in Tidenham⁶, Gloucestershire's regional positioning under new devolution offers an at scale future economy that constitutes an offer to the UK, and indeed the wider world.

Devolution is key to realising this potential. With greater funding flexibility, joined up services and empowered local decision-making, Gloucestershire can play its full role as a regional engine of growth at the crossroads of the south-west, midlands, south-east and Wales.

Gloucestershire is actively exploring strategic partnership to the north, south and east. It should be emphasised that these three options are not an exhaustive list, rather three were selected according to the shared length of boundary with Gloucestershire and consideration of whether agreements had been made for bordering counties to join alternative partners. Of these three, we found each offer unique opportunities to accelerate growth and influence:

- West of England Combined Authority (WECA) – Offers alignment with high growth sectors like cyber,

² [Economic Strategy Evidence Base](#).

³ Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry, ONS

⁴ [Gloucestershire's Economic Strategy 2024–2034 Summary](#)

⁵ [ZeroAvia completes initial Dornier 228 flight test campaign - Pilot](#)

⁶ [DEEP - Engineering Wonder](#)

green tech and advanced manufacturing. Existing formal and informal regional partnerships suggest high ease of implementation. Strongest alignment against ‘areas of competence’ outlined in the Devolution & Community Empowerment Bill.

- Herefordshire & Worcestershire – Shares cultural and rural economic strengths with potential for innovation and scale up, also a strong cultural connection in respect of heritage.
- Swindon & Oxford – Opens doors to long term collaboration in R&D, clean tech and AI.

Gloucestershire is at an important juncture. By pursuing reform and deeper devolution, the county can strengthen its contribution to regional prosperity and national growth, while remaining grounded in the communities and landscapes that define its character.

Options Considered

Based on the above, Gloucestershire is able to offer significant capacity for growth in a regional economy. This is underpinned by its economic strengths, strategic location and alignment with Government/public sector reform. A range of metrics were therefore assessed against economic, legislative, cultural and implementation criteria to identify which partnership could deliver the greatest impact in line with national devolution goals. The full details of these assessments can be found in the annexed reports to this document. What follows is a summary of those findings. These metrics were assessed against three options:

Option 1 – West of England Combined Authority (WECA)

Geography & Governance:

- Existing combined authority with metro mayor which is fully compliant with the Devolution & Community Empowerment Bill 2025 and December 2024 Devolution White Paper.
- Combined population (Gloucestershire + WECA *with North Somerset* rises above the minimum 1.5 million threshold guidance for Strategic Authority formation).

Strategic Authority Alignment:

- Highest degree of alignment across the Bill’s seven statutory areas of competence – particularly health & care integration, transport and infrastructure, economic development, environment and public safety.
- Pre-existing governance, transport corridors, NHS integration, and multi-agency delivery capacity provide a rapid implementation route.

Economic Geography Alignment:

- Strong alignment in advanced manufacturing, digital/cyber, green technologies and creative industries. Strong worker migration pattern across the borders.
- Potential to position Gloucestershire as an agri-tech leader within a wider innovation economy, offsetting WECA’s urban focus.
- Gloucestershire however may become a junior partner in the highest growth R&D sectors without a clearly defined role in bringing forward its strengths (e.g. agri-tech)

In essence, WECA holds the path to the most immediately deliverable option with high policy readiness, strong sectoral synergy and cultural compatibility. WECA offers the broadest alignment with national reform priorities and fastest route to full Strategic Authority status.

Option 2 – Swindon & Oxfordshire

Geography & Governance

- No current Combined Authority membership so would require Local Government Reorganisation

and Mayoral Combined authority formation.

- Joint population threshold met with 1.6 million combined.

Strategic Authority Alignment:

- High capability in economic development, skills and net zero, but weaker in health, care and integrated public service reform.
- Existing regional partnerships are largely informal or nascent.

Economic Alignment:

- Significant longer-term potential in R&D partnerships (AI, life sciences, clean tech).
- Synergy in advanced manufacturing and cyber, but less alignment with agri-tech and rural economy. Greater focus on life sciences than securing emerging technologies in the innovation sectors.
- Lower short-term economic integration due to weaker commuting links and business interdependencies.

Swindon and Oxford offers a strong innovation and research collaboration potential for the long term, but slower to establish full statutory competencies with less immediate integration in health (WECA) and rural (Herefordshire & Worcestershire) sectors.

Option 3 – Herefordshire & Worcestershire

Geography & Governance:

- No current combined authority and therefore would require Local Government Reorganisation and Mayoral Combined Authority formation.
- Population slightly below the threshold so may require additional partners or special consideration.

Strategic & Policy Alignment:

- Medium alignment across statutory competencies with strengths in environment, rural transport and agri-tech but limited in digital innovation and large-scale economic growth.
- Less alignment with national reform agendas' focus on integrated care and high-growth sectors.

Economic Alignment:

- Closest match in current rural economic strengths and historical cultural context.
- Gloucestershire would likely lead on scale and innovation, but partners offer limited capacity in high-growth digital and tech sectors.

Summary

1. West of England Combined Authority (WECA)

- Why: Existing governance, metro mayor, statutory compliance, strong sectoral fit (advanced manufacturing, cyber, green tech) and clear commuting/economic flows. Existing regional partnerships across arts, culture, health and the broadest range of services of all options. A key similarity is shared in urban/rural splits, reflecting shared challenges along housing and transport planning.
- Risk: Gloucestershire risks becoming a junior partner unless it defines a distinctive role (e.g. agri-tech leader completing a 'whole of tech' future economy).
- WECA provides the high-growth innovation engine, Gloucestershire complements and then completes the ecosystem with agri-tech and natural capital.

2. Herefordshire & Worcestershire

- Why: Close match in rural economy, heritage, and agri-tech. Natural cultural legacy fit and scope for Gloucestershire to play a leading role in innovation and scaling up. Slightly under population threshold, but culturally congruent and offers Gloucestershire leadership space.
- Risk: Limited digital/tech capacity in partners and weaker alignment with national reform priorities.
- Rooted in shared rural economy and heritage, with Gloucestershire as a natural partner to inject innovation and scale.

3. Swindon & Oxfordshire

- Why: Strong in R&D, life sciences, AI, clean tech. Good synergies in advanced manufacturing and cyber, but requires completely new governance, has weaker cultural alignment and less short-term integration with Gloucestershire's rural and health economies.
- Risk: Longer time horizon to deliver; innovation is research-led and urban, less aligned with Gloucestershire's wider economic identity and very few established regional partnerships.
- Offers long-term potential in global-facing R&D and science but less immediate and less place-congruent.

Gloucestershire has the assets and ambition to contribute strongly within any of the potential partnerships. However, the assessment indicates that **the West of England Combined Authority provides the most immediately deliverable and policy-aligned option**, while Herefordshire & Worcestershire offers a culturally and economically resonant alternative in which Gloucestershire could play a leading role. Swindon & Oxfordshire remains a credible longer-term prospect, particularly for research-led collaboration, but is less immediately aligned to Gloucestershire's wider economic and governance priorities.

Gloucestershire's aims for devolution

Through Local Government Reorganisation and further devolution, Gloucestershire can unlock the tools to drive a high growth, resilience-focused economy and smarter services for residents.

Devolution would allow Gloucestershire to:

- **Power growth through innovation.** Using devolved economic powers to create the Severn Resilience Corridor, bringing together cyber, advanced manufacturing, agri-tech and clean energy. This will attract major private investment, generate high-value jobs, and cement Gloucestershire's role as a national growth engine.
- **Strengthen resilience for the 21st century.** With greater control over housing, health, skills and transport, Gloucestershire can deliver joined-up solutions for climate resilience, energy security and sustainable food systems. Tackling the challenges of the future head on.
- **Put data to work for residents.** A county-wide Data Trust, anchored in Golden Valley's cyber infrastructure would integrate transport, housing, health and utilities in real time. This will reduce duplication, cut costs and provide residents with more personalised, responsive services from flood alerts to smart mobility and integrated healthcare.

Gloucestershire's full vision and ambition sets out a comprehensive programme for inclusive, innovation led growth, drawing on the county's industrial heritage, highly skilled population and rich natural capital. With the right devolved powers and resources, Gloucestershire is well positioned to act as a national testbed for high-growth sectors, resilient communities and data driven public services. Delivering benefits

not only for local residents, but for the wider UK economy.

Conclusion

Gloucestershire is well placed to play its full part in the next phase of English devolution. Our strengths in advanced manufacturing, securing emerging technologies, agri-tech and clean energy, combined with our strategic location and cultural identity, position us as a valuable partner in building a balanced and high-growth regional economy. To achieve this, we seek objective input and active cooperation from Government that both align with the interests of our residents and ensure that the region's innovation potential is fully realised. In partnership, we can demonstrate how devolution unlocks local potential for the benefit of communities here and for the United Kingdom as a whole.

6. Options Appraisal

Summary of Options Considered

A full appraisal of options was carried out to determine the best model for Gloucestershire. Each was tested not only against Government criteria, but also against what matters most to our people: clear, local accountability, value for money and councils that reflect local identity and needs.

The GG/GU model scores strongly on service improvement, identity and devolution potential. While a single county model scores higher on size/efficiency, evidence from Cumbria and Dorset shows multi-unitary models can deliver better outcomes in high-cost services.

The Options Appraisal is undertaken by assessing each of the following options against the Government criteria:

- Single County Unitary (Single Unitary)
- East/West Split (East/West)
- Greater Gloucester and Gloucestershire Unitary Councils (GG& GU)

The scoring on each sub criteria is as follows:

Score	Definition
3	Fully Meets Government Criteria
2	Largely Meets Government Criteria (or strong rationale as to why not)
1	Partially Meets Government Criteria
0	Does Not Meet Government Criteria

The scores are then totalled up for each sub-criteria and a theme score is calculated (which forms part of the final options table). The overall scores are an accumulation of all theme scores.

Options Appraisal against Published Criteria

Criteria 1

1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.

- a) Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base
- b) Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply
- c) Proposals should be supported by robust evidence
- d) Proposals should describe clearly the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area

Options Appraisal - Criteria 1

	Single Unitary	East/ West	GG + GU	Commentary and rationale for scoring
Council Tax Base	3	3	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council Tax base in both the Single Unitary and East and West option are balanced and robust The Greater Gloucester proposal has greater disparity in Council Tax base All proposals provide an ability to improve planning criteria, support regeneration and deliver the Governments housing growth objectives The Greater Gloucester proposal involves amending existing District boundaries, but this is underpinned by strong evidence to enable the City to drive growth in the region.
Sensible boundaries supporting housing supply	3	3	3	
Robust evidence base	3	3	3	
Clearly describe the proposal for the whole area	3	3	3	
TOTAL	12	12	11	

Criteria 2

Unitary Local Government must be of the right size to achieve efficiencies

- Population of around 500,000 or above
- Strong rationale as to why 500,000 is not appropriate if it does not make sense for an area
- Focus on understanding how the new model will drive efficiencies
- The proposal will manage transition costs

Options Appraisal - Criteria 2

	Single Unitary	East/ West	GG + GU	Commentary and rationale for scoring
500k or more population	3	2	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The single unitary is the only option to meet 500,000 or greater population There is a strong rationale for both the East/West and Greater Gloucester proposals and how the geography will support the local area Financial modelling demonstrates the greatest level of
Clear rationale if not	3	3	3	
Drive efficiencies	3	2	2	
Managed transition costs	3	2	2	
TOTAL	12	9	8	

				<p>savings are available through the single unitary model, with transition costs of £20.8m, ongoing savings of £20.7m by yr3 and a payback period of 3 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The East/West model has transition costs of £26.9m, ongoing savings of £11.2m by yr3 and a payback period of 4 years. • The Greater Gloucester model involves greater transition costs of £26.9m, will deliver annual savings of £10.8m by yr3 and demonstrates a payback period of 4 years
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Criteria 3

Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.

- Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.
- Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.
- Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness and for wider public services including for public safety.

Options Appraisal - Criteria 3

	Single Unitary	East/ West	GG + GU	Commentary and rationale for scoring
Improve Service Delivery	3	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The context in Gloucestershire is that crucial social care services have historically been rated requires improvement or inadequate • The recent (June 2025) Ofsted inspection rating Children's Services as "good" demonstrates welcomed improvements in the trajectory of social care services • However other crucial services are still not at the required level, with the most recent inspections of Adults Services by the CQC (July 2024) rating as inadequate and OFSTED SEND inspection demonstrating "inconsistent experiences" • It is noted that there is a cost and risk in breaking up Social Care services, but there is demonstrable evidence of focused, place-based models enabling authorities to deliver
Public Service Reform	3	3	3	
Crucial Services	2	3	3	
TOTAL	8	9	9	

				<p>improvement to crucial services e. g. in areas such as the former Cheshire, Cumbria, Dorset and Northamptonshire. Given the disparity of need across Gloucestershire there is a particular opportunity to improve outcomes through more localised working</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are significant opportunities across all models to align the existing two-tiered services and secure ongoing service improvements
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Criteria 4

Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.

- It is for councils to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way and this engagement activity should be evidenced in your proposal.
- Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.
- Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.

Options Appraisal - Criteria 4

	Single Unitary	East/ West	GG + GU	Commentary and rationale for scoring
Meaningful engagement	3	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Greater Gloucester proposal is the only proposal that fully embraces the heritage and culture of both Gloucester and Gloucestershire The GG unitary authority embraces the heritage of the City and will provide it with the tools to build on that heritage to secure ongoing growth All proposals have utilised engagement with residents, partners and other stakeholders and that engagement has helped shape their proposals
Heritage and culture	2	2	3	
Address concerns from engagement	3	3	3	
TOTAL	8	8	9	

Criteria 5

New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

- Proposals will need to consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established or a decision has been taken by Government to work with the area to establish one, how that institution and its governance arrangements will need to change to continue to function effectively; and set out clearly (where

applicable) whether this proposal is supported by the CA/CCA / Mayor. Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.

b. Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.

c. Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.

Options Appraisal - Criteria 5

	Single Unitary	East/ West	GG + GU	Commentary and rationale for scoring
Combined Authority Governance	2	3	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All proposals offer the opportunity to unlock devolution, with the current favoured model joining the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Should WECA be the preferred model then there are a number of issues of democratic balance to consider in the different options The single unitary would create the largest imbalance in if the county were to join WECA as the population is nearly 200,000 more than the next largest authority and a multiple of 3.5 of the smallest. This disparity could lead to issues of governance in the Combined Authority The East/West model is in the middle of the range for population sizes within the existing WECA model and would support the easiest and most balanced governance position The Greater Gloucester model is within the range of the population sizes within the authority but does create one authority at the top end of population and the other would be the smallest
Unlocking devolution	3	3	3	
Population sizes	1	3	2	
TOTAL	6	9	7	

Criteria 6

New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

a. Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged

b. Where there are already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.

Options Appraisal - Criteria 6

	Single Unitary	East/ West	GG + GU	Commentary and rationale for scoring
Explain how communities are engaged	2	2	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A multi unitary model for Gloucestershire will enable greater levels of democratic

Explain any existing arrangements	3	3	3	accountability and support communities in being engaged with decision making <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of Neighbourhood Area Committees will mitigate the loss of a number of local Councillors in all options and provide a forum for communities to engage in democratic process The Greater Gloucester model will provide the optimal opportunity to engage communities, with elected Members in the City focused on the local area, and opportunities for engagement via forums such as the Committee of Parishes
TOTAL	5	5	6	

Options Appraisal - ALL SCORES

	Single Unitary	East/ West	GG + GU
Theme 1	12	12	11
Theme 2	12	9	8
Theme 3	8	9	9
Theme 4	8	8	9
Theme 5	6	9	7
Theme 6	5	5	6
TOTAL	51	52	51

The options appraisal demonstrates that there is not one clear option that meets the published government criteria, but that all three options are viable choices for a strong future for local government in Gloucestershire.

Single Unitary - Assessment

The single unitary authority for Gloucestershire demonstrates the lowest cost and shortest pay-back period. However, this option is the most challenging to unlock Government's crucial priority of devolution for every area of England and risks resulting in an imbalanced combined authority.

The options appraisal notes the welcomed improvement in Children's Services, but there remains a strong rationale for a more place based, focused approach to the delivery of other crucial services such as Adult's social care and SEND.

East/West Alignment - Assessment

The East/West split scores marginally the highest across the options appraisal and presents the lowest risk path to devolution - particularly if WECA is the preferred combined authority. However devolution is the only theme where the East/West alignment scores the highest outright, reflecting its position as it scores in second place across many of the themes. This model is the hardest to justify in terms of heritage and identity, as Gloucester and Stroud do not even share a land border with the Forest of Dean, and their identities as places are all quite different.

The Greater Gloucester model - Assessment

The Greater Gloucester model is supported by evidence sources of cities as the driver for economic growth, meaning that while it does not align with Government criteria around population size and does create a population imbalance within the County, it is the only option that puts the historic City of Gloucester at the heart of the region's growth plans. The options appraisal demonstrates that this option scores highest against the heritage and local place and community engagement criteria, reflecting the place-based focus of this proposal.

7. The New Councils

a. Future Operating Model

Creating Strong Councils that Deliver

Creating two new councils is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to design modern, effective organisations - built around local needs, guided by best practice and powered by insight and collaboration.

Each council will operate at scale, but with place-based teams embedded in the communities they serve. Their purpose will be to deliver excellent, responsive services and work with partners to improve outcomes across health, housing, skills, care and more.

To support decisions made by the new councils we have designed a Target Operating Model (TOM) for the two councils. The TOM will:

1. Enable us to deliver on our vision for Gloucestershire
2. Define how the organisations support the place as well as the resident experience
3. Make it real for residents, by getting the supporting structures right

We are proposing a clear set of operating model principles.

Operating Model Design Principles

- These design principles are **grounded in best practice** - both within Gloucestershire and across other previously successful LGR areas - and reflect our shared ambition for high-quality, sustainable services across the county.
- **Focus on outcomes** - Services will be designed around the outcomes that matter for individuals, families and communities, measured through evidence-based, family and community-level impact.
- **Shift to prevention** - We will act earlier to prevent issues, improve lives and reduce long-term pressures on public services.
- **Balance scale with local responsiveness** - Services will be consistent and efficient across the county, while engaging closely with local needs and priorities.
- **Join up experiences** - By connecting access points and data, we'll design services around people, not bureaucratic boundaries. Services will be easier to use, quicker to respond and better at supporting whole-person needs.
- **Grow stronger partnerships** - Councils will work closely with the Mayoral Strategic Authority, NHS, police, voluntary sector and communities - not just delivering services, but coordinating, enabling and

empowering.

- **Embed high performance cultures** - The councils will support a skilled, motivated workforce, focused on collaboration, values-based practice and career progression.
- **Strengthen commissioning** - Strategic, insight-driven commissioning will ensure services are efficient, co-designed and tailored to local realities.
- **Leverage data and digital** - Digital technology will be used to enhance services, improve efficiency and support inclusive engagement.
- **Optimise land and assets** - A smarter approach to public estate will support access, sustainability and regeneration.
- **Ensure financial sustainability** - Robust governance and sound financial management will underpin every decision and every service.

Although the operating models will be a decision to be made by the new shadow authorities, appendix F sets out the assumed service delivery model for each key service area, where these will be aggregated or disaggregated or both.

b. Democratic Arrangements

We're creating two strong, focused councils, each with a clear vision for their area, championing local priorities while working together in Gloucestershire's wider interest.

Local members will be strong representatives and true community leaders, deeply connected to local priorities and aspirations, clearly accountable for services, and powerful convenors who bring people and partners together to deliver real impact.

Merging the county and district councils into two new unitary authorities will simplify local government, making it easier for residents to engage with the council, with local members at the heart of that relationship.

While some services will be shared, members on each council will ensure **services are tailored to local needs** and will hold services to account.

Right now, electoral arrangements across seven councils mean that every year sees a council election in at least one part of the county. **This new model brings coherence, clarity, and a stronger voice for every part of Gloucestershire.**

Council	Number of Councillors	Electoral cycle	Next election
Gloucestershire County Council	55	All out every 4 years	May 2029
Cheltenham Borough	40	Elected in halves every 2 years	May 2026 May 2028

Cotswold District	34	All out every 4 years	May 2027
Forest of Dean District	38	All out every 4 years	May 2027
Gloucester City	39	All out every 4 years	May 2028
Stroud District	51	All out every 4 years	May 2028
Tewkesbury Borough	38	All out every 4 years	May 2027
Total	295		

Current electoral arrangements

Creating two unitary councils will streamline local democracy, reduce councillor numbers, and create a more stable political landscape for Gloucestershire. But this isn't just about efficiency, it's about strengthening local voices.

We're committed to **enhancing democracy**, not diluting it. Both new councils will be built around a culture that empowers local members to lead, listen, and act on what matters most to their communities.

To ensure **representation that reflects our communities** from day one, having determined the areas that identify with an enlarged Gloucester Council, the new councils' wards will be formed using a mixture of existing boundaries.

Recognising that electoral arrangements should reflect local circumstances, rather than striving for a 'one size fits all' approach, council size in each of the two unitary authorities will reflect the balance of need in each area to ensure that democratic representation meets the requirements of its constituents and enables strong and accountable local government.

The result? **A simpler, stronger, and more accountable system, that reflects the makeup and needs of communities across Gloucestershire.**

The Greater Gloucester Council will meet the needs of its residents by looking to existing boundaries at local level to form wards that maintain natural communities, with council and ward sizes that reflect the circumstances and need. Benefiting from the recent boundary review for Gloucestershire County Council, the Gloucestershire Unitary Council will largely make use of existing division boundaries and, in every ward but one, will elect two Councillors.

This approach delivers:

- A **Gloucester council with 52 members** and a **Gloucestershire council with 81** - a total reduction of **162 councillors**.
- Elector ratios of **1:2,478 in Gloucester** and **1:4,489 in Gloucestershire** – reflecting the difference in need across the two council geographies.

Our councillor-to-elector ratio ensures:

- **Capacity to lead through transition** while staying closely connected to communities.

- Both **representation across large, rural divisions** with multiple parishes and **representation for urban settlements** that delivers based on what these diverse communities need.
- **Clear democratic accountability from day one**, with councillors who are visible, accessible, and responsive.

In time, a boundary review could help **streamline representation further**, reducing electoral inequality across the two councils in a manner that truly reflects local circumstances and isn't based solely on numbers.

Council governance will be built on four core principles:

- A clear, unified voice for Gloucestershire
- Seamless collaboration across the public sector
- Strong transparency and accountability
- Community needs at the heart of every decision.

We'll deliver strong, responsive governance through clear leadership, local empowerment, and deep community connection.

We'll deliver this through:

- **Bold, visible leadership** from a Leader and Cabinet in each council - driving collaboration and playing a leading role in the future Combined Authority.
- **Engaged, flexible scrutiny** that brings together all political groups - and where needed, external voices - to shape policy and hold decisions to account. We will use creative, constructive approaches to scrutiny, working at both a strategic and a local level to make sure we're meeting the needs of our communities.
- **Proud civic leadership**, preserving the heritage of Gloucester and Cheltenham while elevating their roles at the heart of each new unitary council. At the countywide level, the Chair of the Gloucestershire Unitary Council will lead the relationship and strong ties with the Lord Lieutenancy to uphold county-wide identity and tradition. For the historic City of Gloucester, maintaining the roles of Mayor and Sheriff that have existed for many centuries, and the relationship with the Cathedral, will be led by the Greater Gloucester Council.
- **Local decision-making power** through area planning committees - handling planning and other place-based matters where local knowledge matters most.
- **Neighbourhood partnerships** that reflect real communities and local priorities - shaping services, guiding funding, and driving community-led development.
- **A stronger role for existing Town and Parish Councils**, backed by a jointly owned charter, new opportunities to take on devolved powers, tailored to each council's appetite and capacity. The Greater Gloucester Council is committed to establishing a committee of Town and Parish Council chairs to engage directly with unitary council decision-makers, but would not seek to parish the rest of the City of Gloucester, making it the only option that does not include a financial risk in relation to the establishment of new precepting authorities, not to mention the additional administration and complications associated with an even higher number of Town and Parish Councils than already exists.
- **A culture of participation**, with co-production and engagement embedded in how we work - reaching every community, including those in non-parished areas.

c. Locality Arrangements

Bringing Power Closer to Home

Gloucestershire is a county defined by its heritage and diversity - thriving market towns, renowned natural beauty, agricultural landscape and rural villages, as well as proud local identities, distinct community priorities and deep civic pride.

The new councils will reflect this reality - building on the strengths of existing relationships and shaping decisions around the places people call home. Local engagement will be central to how services are delivered, decisions are made and public resources are prioritised.

This proposal is not about replicating existing structures - it's about designing a system that works for the future. It takes the best of what already works in Gloucestershire - from parish council leadership to district-level community teams - and gives it a platform to grow.

Since the publication of the English Devolution White Paper, the seven councils in Gloucestershire have worked together with community partners to reimagine how the system can be changed, with our local places at the centre. The result is a proposal to vest much greater power and agency in neighbourhoods, to reset our culture towards co-production with residents, to liberate our strengths in our dynamic community organisations, and to exploit the preventive potential of empowered communities.

The step-change we are seeking resonates across Gloucestershire's public sector and civil society, and amongst Gloucestershire councillors, from all parties and councils. Leaders are united in a view that unitary status offers a significant opportunity to shift the scale and extent of community empowerment in the county. The smaller scale, localised good practices already delivered by our current councils and key partners like Police and Health can now develop into a more systematic focus on place and empowerment, which will be central to 'how we work' as new councils.

Assessing what works

Throughout 2025 to date, the seven Gloucestershire councils have worked intensively, with key local associations and organisations, to understand what works in empowering communities, and the assets inherent in our current system. We have researched and spoken to over 20 unitary councils which have experimented with area-based arrangements. In addition, we have conducted a review of key literature and thinking in the field. Our early conclusion was that an area-based approach would be essential given the size and scope of unitary GG and GU Councils. This conclusion anticipated almost precisely the guidance recently received from MHCLG on the creation of area-based committees. Our research strongly suggests that establishing a structure is no guarantee of delivering the participation outcomes intended, but it provides a framework within which change can be achieved.

Among many learning points, the following have been most prominent:

- **The value of long-term trust and consistency.** Many new unitary councils have found it challenging to deliver the promises as set out in their proposals or business case. The result has sometimes been a loss of trust, particularly with local councils and the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector (VCFSE), and the need to rebuild key relationships with local organisations where priorities have changed and resources diverted elsewhere.
- **The extent to which community empowerment is truly understood, embodied and visibly acted upon by the new council councils.** We have been clear that area-based arrangements are not an

‘add-on’. For value in prevention, participation, and cohesion to be delivered, co-production cannot be confined to a neighbourhood model. The way in which the council is councils are organised, lead, and delivers deliver services needs to be based on the same values and approaches. Without this authentic joining-up, trust and credibility will be quickly eroded.

- **Focus on community development.** Our analysis suggests that unitary councils have often used area-based arrangements well in acting on visible economic and environmental issues in localities. A harder challenge in other parts of England has been to tackle health, inequalities, and social factors with communities. We believe strongly that resources and focus applied to community development, working with the VCFSE, is a means of managing this risk. Equally we have seen elsewhere that the crucial relationships between local government and the health system are less developed than needed to deliver on well-being, health, and social outcomes. In our model, the role of Public Health is central; in part to help bridge priorities and capacities of the health and local government systems.
- **An area-based approach can be powerful in strengthening communities.** The evidence is clear that this approach can act to both to represent the council’s responsibilities and also to work across sectors and issues. We have seen risks elsewhere of an overly prescribed approach from the centre of the council, with insufficient emphasis on test and learn, and on shaping the agenda for areas based on communities having the agency and resources to develop local solutions to the issues they face. We have also learned that to maximise inclusivity, we need to be careful about use of formal language and structure such as ‘committee’. The task of empowering communities requires the council councils to engage in ways that maximise inclusion of all our residents and is not perceived to be miniaturisation of the council councils in a locality.

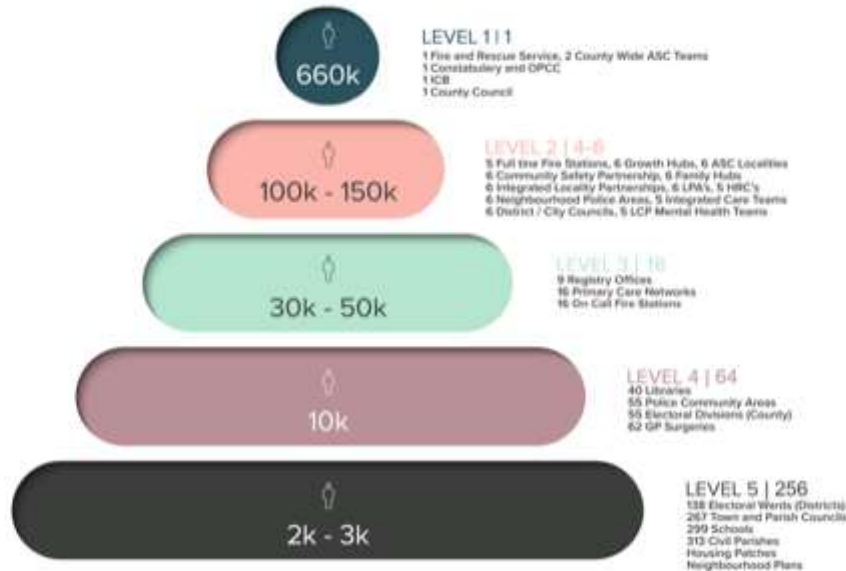
These learning points have been crucial in shaping our model and associated proposals.

Building on local structures and good practices

Our mapping of neighbourhood approaches has revealed a range of geographic scales where services are provided by councils and partners. It is noticeable that many services already deploy some form of area-based working. As the footprint of current district boundaries disappears for most purposes, the focus of organisation will shift from populations of around 100k to smaller populations of under 50k. This shift offers a new potential for Gloucestershire’s ambitions for community empowerment, organised around natural communities, which feel more local to residents

The Gloucestershire PYRAMID

👤 = population



There is significant diversity in approaches to current place-based working across the seven councils and partners. Examples of positive difference include:

- The community hub approach developed in Stroud District during the pandemic which has endured and developed subsequently, working with local voluntary organisations, parishes, and housing providers to address social isolation and health and wellbeing
- The integrated locality partnerships led by the NHS that have brought together health and other partners at a local level, currently based on district footprints
- The wealth of community-centred regeneration and economic initiatives, including the award-winning Gloucester Forum and the Golden Valley development in Cheltenham
- The innovative partnership between the Forest of Dean District Council and the Forest Voluntary Action Forum which has developed a dynamic approach to a range of needs, including youth services.
- The recent successful launch of Gloucestershire's Family Hubs and associated Family Hub Networks. These are organised in five locations across the county but with an emphasis on wider outreach. Partners include the Gloucestershire Gateway Trust which has developed a whole neighbourhood and community led approach to supporting children and families in Gloucester and the Forest of Dean.
- The area-based community development approach pioneered in Tewkesbury and closely tied to the rapid housing and business growth in the area
- The active approach taken by Cotswold District Council in its unique geography to supporting its 115 parish and town councils, including the showcase annual 'Cotswold Parish and Town Summit'

Our proposals for neighbourhood working aim to strengthen this diversity where local needs are different, while recognising that much of our good practice has yet to be exploited or scaled beyond current boundaries.

Neighbourhood Area Committees: A new focal point for communities

Another defining feature of this proposal is the creation of Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs) - partnership-led groups aligned to local geographies and priorities.

The scope of each partnership will be widely framed but allowing sufficient room for our diverse places to set agendas and priorities which are locally meaningful. The five key roles each partnership will perform are set out below:



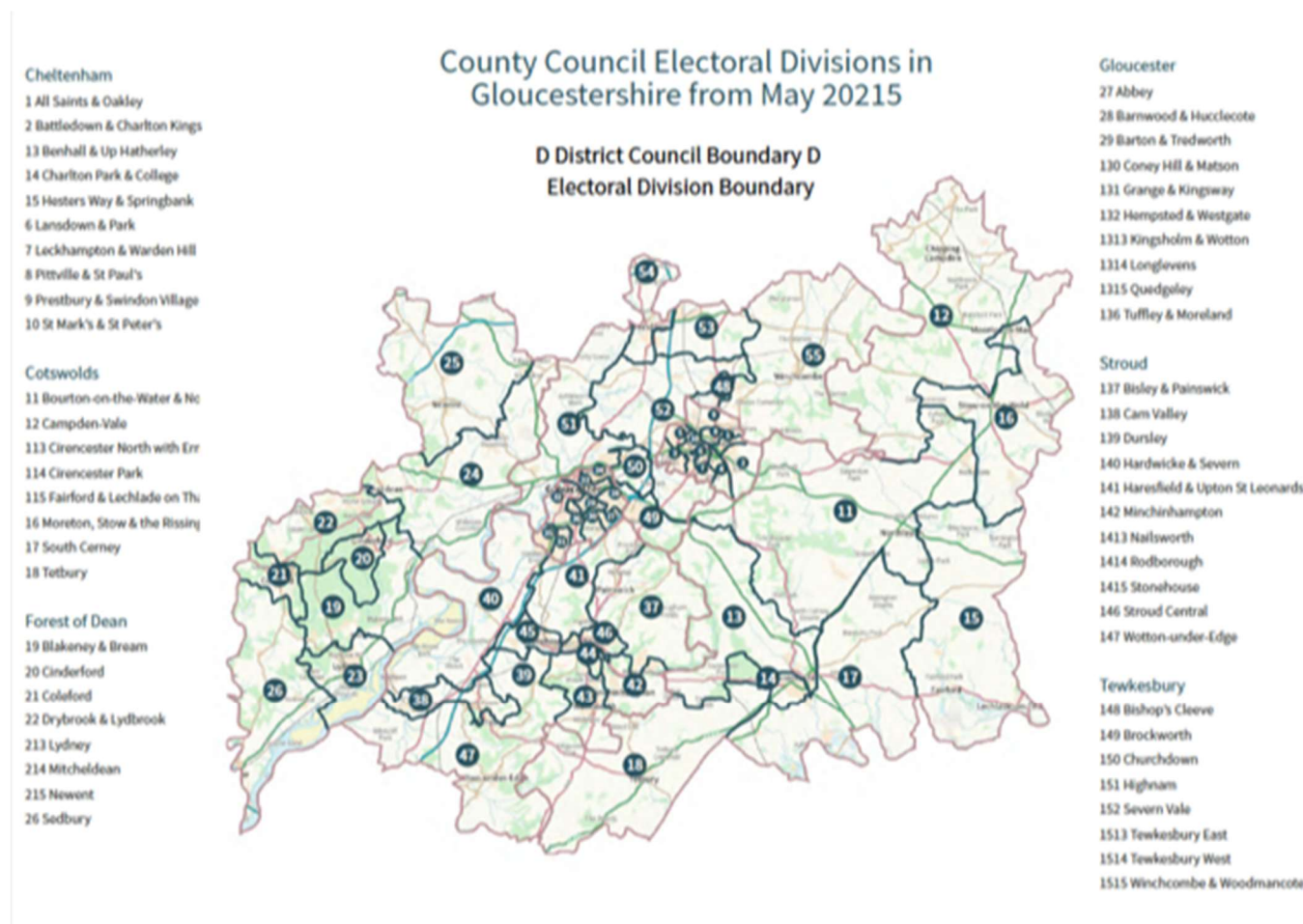
These are not administrative overlays, but locally embedded governance units built on the footprint of Primary Care Networks (PCNs), creating sensible, data-informed boundaries that reflect real communities. Neighbourhood Area Committees will partner with and provide a voice for Gloucestershire's existing strong communities, such as Gloucestershire's 4,000 voluntary and community organisations and the Know Your Patch networks.

Decisions will be shaped by robust local data and customer insight, ensuring NACs focus on real community priorities. Powers and budgets may vary between committees, reflecting local population, deprivation, opportunities and growth - but all will operate within a clear, consistent framework set by the new councils.

This structure recognises that different areas have different needs. The size and boundaries of each neighbourhood will be subject to thorough consultation, but our research suggests populations will need to be big enough to allow the councils and partners to work with and for the neighbourhoods. However the partnerships will also need to be small enough to reflect natural communities, typically comprised of a main town and surrounding villages or a recognisable neighbourhood of a major town. Populations of between 30k and 50k will be guided, and options set out within the consultation process. The result will be between 15-20

Neighbourhood Partnerships for the Gloucestershire Unitary Council

The map below sets out the current county electoral divisions which we propose are the main ‘building blocks’ of neighbourhoods for the Gloucestershire Unitary Council, although there might be some boundaries where a precise use of these divisions would not fully reflect natural communities. The consultation would therefore be open to adaptation where evidence suggests it is necessary. Based on our governance proposals, each area would comprise a committee of between five and seven unitary councillors, in addition to co-optees.



Neighbourhood Partnerships for the Greater Gloucester Council

As an interconnected urban centre, where the ward geography creates a strong sense of neighbourhood, the role of neighbourhood partnerships is harder to define, and conversations with communities will be needed as part of the transition process to clarify what geographies make sense, and how people would like to see them operating alongside their democratic representatives.

Using other local geographies and representative approaches

Not everything the councils do will fit neatly into our structure of Neighbourhood Partnerships. For example, we would expect the shadow authorities to consider the case for area-based development control committees. The number of proposed Neighbourhood Partnerships, however, would be too many to be practical and democratically accountable for this purpose, and so the new councils will be cognisant of existing Local Plan structures until such time as they are revised.

Working in place is a major part of our plans, but co-production is not confined to geographic affinity. Communities of interest and experience, including vulnerable groups such as care leavers, deserve councils that can enable and support their voices. Working with services which have been recognised for their good practice (such as children's social care) will enable the offer to residents and organisations to be consistently strong, and for the new councils to continue to innovate in shifting the balance of power towards communities of interest, identity and experience. The new councils will take the opportunity to make a step change in the quantity and quality of citizen participation. They will invest in consultation technologies and tools that strengthen citizen engagement both locally and across the authorities' footprints. Policies and strategies will be developed which mandate co-production or other forms of meaningful engagement, and enabling of all voices to be heard.

To further strengthen our 'contract' with residents and the c.4,600 VCFSE organisations in Gloucestershire that work on their behalf, we intend to develop a Civil Society Covenant which will be developed in partnership with the Gloucestershire VCS Alliance. A Covenant, accompanied by an action plan, will set out the way in which local government will work with the VCFSE, and the underpinning principles which will guide action on both sides. The Covenant could continue as a shared project for both new councils, with councillors from both councils represented on a joint governance body with VCFSE partners, to be established over the Shadow Authority period. An alternative option for the two authorities respectively would be to progress separately.

Equipping Neighbourhoods with the capacity and resources to deliver

Expert staff teams will be built around our Neighbourhoods. We anticipate the following roles:

- The Chair of the Neighbourhood Partnership: An elected councillor, nominated by councillors in the Neighbourhood
- Neighbourhood Partnership Manager: Together with the Chair, this role will form a crucial leadership partnership in making the neighbourhood work successfully.
- Council Neighbourhoods Teams: With officers assigned to each neighbourhood, these will be a mix of practically-focused managers, town, and parish liaison officers, and community development specialists
- Departmental council officers: Located in family hubs, housing patches, planning, public health, or social care, these officers will have a strong relationship / dependency with Neighbourhoods
- VCSFE: The VCFSE sector will play a crucial role in the grass roots work for each Neighbourhood, some potentially working with the councils in managing and facilitating a whole neighbourhood, or providing expert community development capability, building on existing VCSFE strengths in Gloucestershire
- Partner organisations: Organisations such as Health, Fire and Rescue, Police, Schools, and Housing Associations will be a vital part of work with Neighbourhoods. Over time we expect to see much stronger alignment of wider public sector boundaries with Neighbourhoods
- New Councils' Performance Teams: Evidence and data are needed to support Neighbourhoods in identifying needs and monitoring effectiveness. Allocated time and services from the new councils' performance teams will be assigned to the overall neighbourhood structure. It is expected that key data from different sources will be brought together to provide clear and actionable insight for each Neighbourhood Partnership.
- Public Health: In their communities role, Public Health will provide an important professional oversight and function in supporting Neighbourhoods to use data, policy, and evidence effectively.
- Director-Level Officer Champion: Each Neighbourhood will be assigned a director-level officer champion to provide problem-solving and opportunity identification support to Chairs and Neighbourhood Partnership Managers.
- External-facing services: To ensure the neighbourhood approach works across all council functions,

all external-facing service areas will be required to develop a neighbourhood offer as part of their service planning.

- **Budget:** We anticipate providing a budget for each Neighbourhood to fund projects and activities which contribute to the core roles of Neighbourhoods. In addition to this core funding, we envisage that Neighbourhoods will be able to strongly influence other funding, both from council departments such as Highways and Transport, and as part of bids for central government programmes.

The new role for councillors in Neighbourhoods

The shift from two-tier to unitary local government results in a significant reduction in the number of councillors from principal authorities, as our governance proposals set out. Fewer councillors will be covering more service areas, bigger geographies, and more electors.

A more significant role for councillors in Neighbourhoods is one way these challenges can be addressed. Neighbourhoods provide the crucial local member role with much needed structure, capacity, and convening authority. In practical terms, Neighbourhoods can bring partners, including parishes, around the table, helping councillors address issues collectively and with expert support, including for local casework. This joined-up approach will help reduce duplication and allow meaningful two-way engagement between elected members and local residents and organisations.

How we will work with local councils (parishes and towns) - A Stronger Role for Parish Councils

While not the direct subject of changes to the structure of principal councils, Gloucestershire's 267 parish and town councils will be significantly affected by reorganisation. For those unparished areas, notably major parts of Gloucester and Cheltenham, reorganisation raises important questions about their status and governance as the county's major urban settlements. Parish and town councils are an essential, vibrant part of our community fabric, and we see their development individually and as a sector as a vital part of our future civil society. We have seen elsewhere in England that, where trust and respect between principal councils and local councils is damaged, opportunities are missed and the achievement of outcomes is hampered.

We will therefore engage in a charter development process with the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC) and the Gloucestershire Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), to be made available to the shadow authorities for adoption and implementation. The charter will codify the working relationships expected between principal authorities and local councils, the rights and responsibilities of each, and the governance arrangements that help maximise collaboration and good two-way communications. We expect the charter to frame everything we do in terms of outcomes for people and places, and include best value and equality considerations.

Given the Neighbourhood Partnership model will be a new linchpin for locality working, we also expect to describe how local councils can play a valuable role in these structures. It is anticipated the charter process will be developed for Gloucestershire as a whole, and that the respective GG and GU shadow authorities will decide whether to maintain a joint arrangement, or move forward separately.

Uniquely among the Local Government Reorganisation proposals being worked on for Gloucestershire, this option is the only one which is unlikely to lead to the creation of a new Parish Council for Gloucester city, avoiding the associated precepting costs that this risks creating for residents of the City. Instead, with its much higher Councillor to Elector ratio across the City, democratic engagement and community empowerment in decision making will be driven at a more local level, with the additional input of Local Parish

and Town Councils engagement and involvement in decision-making through a Committee of Parish and Town Council Chairs.

There are many parishes in the county which have an appetite and good rationale to develop their offer. At this stage, and mindful of best value considerations, we propose to work positively with local councils to optimise the value delivered to local people and places. There will be equality of opportunity in terms of the scope of the potential services and assets to be devolved between the larger settlements and any other smaller town or parish.

As Ministers have made clear, we agree and support the differentiation between what towns and parishes can offer and the role of council-led neighbourhood arrangements. In no circumstances would a strong parish arrangement replace the need for a neighbourhood offer by the local authority. We have substantial and valuable local capacity in our towns and parishes, and we will therefore seek to maximise collaboration at the neighbourhood level.

Making it happen

Seven key activities will shape our work over the pre-shadow and shadow authority period:

1. We expect each council to deliver a formal consultation on Neighbourhood Partnerships in the shadow authority period, enabling implementation in Year 1 of the new unitary councils. We also hope to have tested much of our thinking through engagement in the pre-shadow period. Our engagement and consultation will include the following elements:

- The geographies and boundaries for Neighbourhood Partnerships
- The core roles for Neighbourhood Partnerships
- The services, issues, and needs of most importance in different parts of the authority areas
- Work with partner organisations to align approaches and geographies
- How Neighbourhoods may wish to develop their role over time (there is evidence from elsewhere that successful area-based working takes time to evolve and develop)
- How we propose to support, enable, and facilitate Neighbourhoods, including creating the capacity and resources most needed (bearing in mind constraints).

2. We will develop a Civil Society Covenant during the pre-shadow period (with the VCS Alliance and other partners). A draft covenant will be available for the shadow authorities to consider and consult on in readiness for Year 1 of the new councils.

3. A draft Local Councils Charter will be developed with GAPTC and SLCC and be made available to the shadow authorities for consultation. The GG and GU shadow authorities will have the option of progressing the Charter (and associated action plan) with a joint body of councillors and local council representatives, or separately. In addition, the seven principal councils will work together in the pre-shadow period to ensure common communications and policies are in place for working with local councils.

4. We will engage all county and district services in the pre-shadow period to identify options for working with Neighbourhoods. This work will feed into service planning for the new councils and help establish a 'services and assets offer' to each area.

6. A range of policy development work will be set in place to ensure:

- Neighbourhood approaches are supported by good evidence

- Frameworks and models are established for different types of activity (for example, community development, project funding, Neighbourhood Action Plans)
- The governance of each Neighbourhood is robustly framed
- Data and data insight tools are developed

7. We will continue to work closely with all our statutory partners to integrate our proposals with their frameworks and priorities. We believe our Neighbourhood structure will provide a powerful channel for partners to engage. For example, we share the excitement and interest in how the NHS 10 Year Plan will translate into action in Gloucestershire, particularly with reference to proposals for a 'Neighbourhood Health Service' and the attendant emphasis on prevention. We will continue to be working in close collaboration with our health partners and other statutory partners to ensure the local geographies and approaches we respectively utilise are as aligned as possible in the best interests of Gloucestershire's residents.

These seven key activities form part of our road map within this proposal.

d. Leadership Structure

The creation of two new councils for Gloucestershire presents a unique opportunity to establish leadership structures that are transparent, resilient and designed to serve residents well from day one.

These new arrangements will be grounded in democratic accountability, clear decision-making and a renewed focus on partnership. While final decisions on political and managerial leadership will be determined by the new authorities, this section sets out an indicative model, drawing on best practice from recent local government reorganisations.

A Model Shaped by Residents and Elected Members

Each council will be led by a democratically elected Leader and Cabinet, reflecting a model familiar to residents and used successfully in existing Gloucestershire authorities. This approach is consistent with recent local government reforms in areas such as North Yorkshire and Westmorland & Furness.

The proposed structure includes:

- A Leader elected by the full council
- A Cabinet of Executive Members appointed by the Leader
- Scrutiny and accountability arrangements through cross-party committees, including within the Greater Gloucester unitary, a Committee of Parish and Town Councils
- A Chief Executive providing overall organisational leadership
- A Corporate Leadership Team comprising statutory officers and directors of key service areas

These leaders will act as convenors across health, schools, police, voluntary and community partners - building the collaborative culture needed to deliver whole-system change. They will ensure the new councils are capable of leading transformational change while remaining closely connected to the needs and ambitions of Gloucestershire's diverse communities. They will also provide strong alignment with the Mayoral Strategic Authority, supporting joined-up leadership across the whole area.

Creating Capacity and Capability

To ensure both councils are well-equipped from day one, each will appoint:

- Statutory officers, including Directors of Children's Services, Adult Social Services and Public Health, along with a Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer
- Senior directors across functions such as housing, regeneration, community services, corporate operations and place-based delivery
- Programme leads responsible for managing the transition, organisational development and service integration

These appointments will provide the professional leadership required to support continuity, drive performance and uphold the highest standards of public service.

Supporting a Smooth and Secure Transition

Consistent with lessons from other areas, transition will be delivered frontline-first, minimising disruption, avoiding excessive consultancy costs and protecting continuity for residents. Leadership structures will be introduced in parallel with robust transitional arrangements, including:

- Shadow leadership roles established early in the implementation phase
- Interim programme and service leads drawn from existing organisations
- A phased and well-managed handover of responsibilities from current authorities to new leadership teams

To ensure service continuity, safety and public confidence, early appointments will be made to key statutory leadership roles - particularly the Directors of Children's Services, Adult Social Services and Public Health. This early recruitment will enable these statutory leads to shape operating models, oversee workforce planning and build strong professional teams to lead transition and delivery.

They will also maintain continuity of critical safeguarding and care responsibilities, with established relationships with regulators, partners and safeguarding boards remaining intact. These officers will work within robust governance frameworks, ensuring risk is effectively managed and services remain safe, stable and compliant throughout the transition period and beyond.

This approach reflects our commitment to deliver change responsibly - with residents' wellbeing, service integrity and public trust at the centre of everything we do.

e. Workforce

The New Councils: Workforce

The workforce approach builds directly on our vision and ambition and operating models (TOMs). The new councils' TOMs provide an opportunity to reimagine what it means to work for our councils and to invest in continuing to develop **diverse, valued and multi-skilled workforces**.

By reshaping how we attract, develop, and empower staff, we unlock **greater mobility, clearer career pathways, and the chance to embed a culture of innovation and continuous improvement** across services.

Gloucestershire's workforce challenges

Our workforce is talented and dedicated, but we're not immune to the pressures facing local government. LGR is our chance to tackle these challenges head-on and build a workforce that's resilient, inclusive, and future-ready.

- **Recruitment and retention:** Stability is impacted by competition for talent, especially in social care, education, and technical roles. To attract and keep the best, we need to offer more than just a job. Flexible working is increasingly expected, and career pathways could better reflect diverse progression routes.
- **Diversity and representation:** There are gaps in workforce diversity, with underrepresentation in some roles and areas. Promoting Gloucestershire's strengths more widely can help attract a broader range of talent.
- **Wellbeing and change fatigue:** Staff are under pressure, particularly in middle management and specialist roles. A stronger focus on wellbeing and open communication can help build a culture that embraces change and supports growth – ready for what comes next.
- **Skills for the future:** Rapid technological change means we must invest in digital and data skills across all roles. Updating job structures and expanding access to learning will help build a confident, adaptable workforce ready to lead transformation.

Unlocking new opportunities for our workforce

LGR creates a unique moment to reshape how councils engage, support, and develop their workforce. By aligning people strategies with the broader transformation agenda, councils can unlock new potential and build future-ready organisations.

Through LGR the councils can:

- **Reset organisational culture** by embedding inclusive values, energising teams, and empowering staff to shape services. This fresh start unites colleagues through adoption of new behaviours, attracts new talent, and creates real ownership and pride - across every corner of Gloucestershire. By putting wellbeing and resilience at the centre, we'll tackle change fatigue and build a workforce that's more connected, motivated, and driven by a shared mission.
- **Strengthen recruitment and retention** by reducing internal competition for talent, enabling more flexible resource sharing, and creating clearer pathways for retraining and upskilling. Structural changes, such as refining spans of control and smarter job design, can improve efficiency and clarity

- especially important in high-demand areas like social care, education, planning, and technical services. LGR allows councils to become more attractive employers, offering rewarding careers and development opportunities.

- **Build skills and capability** by investing in digital literacy, data competence, and shared training – raising standards and opening-up new career routes. We'll close skills gaps in areas like AI, development operations, data analysis, and data engineering – competing with the private sector and positioning the councils as forward-thinking employers, ready to meet future challenges with confidence. And by sharing these skills with wider partners and the community, we'll boost employment prospects and deliver real social value.
- **Support diverse career pathways** by recognising the value of both specialists and generalists and creating structures that reward horizontal and vertical progression equally. Through investing in specialist skills – like commissioning, contract management, market shaping, and quality assurance – we'll help staff feel more valued for their unique strengths and open up fulfilling career journeys within each organisation.
- **Promote workforce diversity and representation** by setting the standard for an inclusive workplace. Addressing persistent gaps in representation and removing cultural and structural barriers in recruitment and progression, we'll build a workforce that better reflects the communities it serves – and where everyone can thrive.

Gloucestershire's workforce priorities

Through collaboration across all seven councils, we've identified opportunities to shape workforces that can deliver on Gloucestershire's bold vision and ambitions in the two new unitary councils:

<p>1. Create a 'fresh start' for the new organisational cultures: Marks the opportunity to reset organisational identity and behaviours following reform, creating a more inclusive and energising environment.</p>
<p>LGR offers a valuable opportunity to reset organisational cultures. It's a chance to reaffirm shared values, refresh our identities, and foster more dynamic, inclusive workplaces. By moving beyond legacy behaviours and empowering staff to shape the new culture, we'll boost morale, strengthen engagement, and inspire pride in each council's future.</p>
<p>2. Accelerate digital confidence and capability: Reflects the commitment to equip staff with the digital skills and tools.</p>
<p>We're embedding digital, data and technology (DDaT) at the core of the new councils, backed by real investment in upskilling our people so that they have the tools and support they need to thrive. By expanding graduate schemes and digital apprenticeships, we'll build workforces that are digitally confident, ready to innovate, and equipped to deliver modern, responsive public services.</p>
<p>3. Design inclusive career pathways: Reflects the commitment to support both specialist and generalist progression by creating flexible, transparent career routes that value diverse skills and aspirations.</p>
<p>We're committed to clear, flexible career pathways that let both specialists and generalists thrive, without</p>

being pushed into unsuitable management roles. Current structures often lack the flexibility to support dual career tracks, which can limit the development of specialist expertise. By valuing every route equally, supporting career exploration, and being transparent about role expectations, we unlock talent at every level. And for regulated professions, we'll keep the depth and accreditation that excellence requires.

4. Championing diversity of thought and inclusive behaviours: The importance of embedding equity and inclusion in recruitment, leadership, and everyday practice.

LGR is our platform to embed inclusive practices and celebrate diversity of thought at every level. We're tackling underrepresentation head-on – making sure all staff feel seen, heard, and valued. Our priorities include inclusive recruitment, diverse leadership pipelines, and open dialogue across teams. By championing different perspectives and lived experiences, we'll strengthen decision-making, build community trust, and create workforces that truly reflect the population they serve. This is particularly important given the different demographics of the resident populations of Gloucester City and the rest of Gloucestershire.

5. Building leadership capability: Refers to the qualities, skills, and support needed for leaders to guide teams effectively through change and deliver high-quality services.

Strong leadership is key to navigating change and delivering high-quality services. LGR creates valuable opportunities to grow leadership at every level. Through shared training, mentoring, and clear development pathways, the councils can support leadership growth while defining the qualities needed for the future. By investing in our leaders, we'll boost confidence, enhance engagement, and equip managers to lead with clarity, empathy, and purpose – amplifying the strengths already thriving across our teams.

6. Creating anchor institutions for the wellbeing of our communities

The 2021 Gloucestershire Director of Public Health's Annual Report "Sources of Strength"¹ described how 'anchor organisations' can support community health and wellbeing and help tackle inequalities in their places. Anchor organisations like the new unitary councils will take direct action in areas like employment policies, procurement, buildings, the environment, and place-shaping – leveraging our assets and influence for local benefit. As two of Gloucestershire's largest employers, we'll lead by example.

7. Supporting staff who may not continue in the new unitary councils

LGR is also about looking after our people. For those not transitioning into new roles within the new organisations, we'll offer tailored support – including CV writing, interview preparation, and access to redeployment resources – so that everyone feels respected, empowered, and ready for their next step. This compassionate approach values individual contributions and helps maintain positive organisational cultures throughout the change.

f. Technology & Data

Designing a digitally-enabled organisations for Gloucestershire

Since the announcement of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), we have proactively engaged with the LGA and other councils that have already navigated this process, with a view to understand the realistic opportunities and learn from their experiences in Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) transformation. This collaborative approach has enabled us to identify opportunities, challenges, and best practices, ensuring that DDaT aspirations in Gloucestershire are informed by real-world experience and are also closely aligned with the [government's recently launched digital blueprint](#).

Putting residents and communities first is at the core of our DDaT approach. Our ambition is to design and deliver services that work for everyone – regardless of age, ability or access to technology. While we are investing in digital, data and technology to improve outcomes and experiences, we recognise that not everyone will choose or be able to access services online. That's why we will continue to offer alternative ways to get support and information, ensuring that no one is left behind. Supporting the proposed locality arrangements, our commitment is to deliver accessible, responsive and inclusive services, shaped by the needs of the people and communities we serve.

Our Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) vision is to transform the experience of local public services in Gloucestershire by designing organisations truly fit for the digital age: innovatively, but efficiently, meeting the expectations and needs of our local people, communities and staff.

Importantly, we would not be starting from scratch. Instead, we would have two continuing authorities: Gloucestershire Unitary Council and Greater Gloucester Council. This approach offers significant advantages from a technology perspective, as it allows us to expand and redefine existing IT infrastructure rather than create entirely new systems. For Gloucestershire Unitary Council, core IT services such as email and website will continue to operate on the County Council's platforms, absorbing data and services from the merging districts. For Greater Gloucester Council, existing City Council systems will be maintained and extended to cover the newly included areas, ensuring residents and businesses in those locations are seamlessly integrated.

Further to this, we can build on already sector-leading examples of digital approaches delivering great customer experience and innovative service delivery. By bringing together county and district services across two unitaries – Greater Gloucester Council and Gloucestershire Unitary Council – it gives us the chance to simplify and standardise how services are delivered so customers receive a consistently good experience – no matter where they live or which service they use. For residents, this means easier access to services, less confusion, and no need to repeat information or navigate multiple systems. It allows us to focus resources where they are needed most, respond more quickly to local issues, and deliver support that is joined-up and reliable. Ultimately, this approach will help us build councils that are more efficient, more responsive, and better able to meet the needs of our communities.

What do we mean by digital, data and technology?

Digital:

This is about creating empowering and user-centred organisational cultures across both Gloucestershire Council and Greater Gloucester Council. We will invest in the right skills and use the right tools to deliver end-to-end online services that meet our residents' and users' needs, regardless of which authority they interact with. The goal is to make these services so simple and effective that people choose to use them.

Data:

This covers how we strategically and ethically use data to better manage our services and understand our residents, communities and place, enabling evidence-based decisions and the delivery of more personalised support. At the heart of our data use will be secure and ethical data sharing, improving interoperability across systems—both within and between the two authorities—and using insights to redesign services around real need.

Technology:

This refers to our approach to robust, secure, and flexible technology, from cloud and low-code platforms to open-source tools and responsible use of AI. Our goal is to deliver resilient, scalable services that support innovation and feel seamless to the user, with systems, tools and platforms working together so smoothly that the experience feels joined-up and intuitive, whether delivered by Gloucestershire Council or Greater Gloucester Council.

What difference will designing digitally-enabled organisations make?

Our residents and businesses across Gloucestershire will be able to access services that are consistent, proactive, accessible and responsive - joined up across both councils and their partners. By using data (where it makes sense to rather than 'just because'), to understand needs, we can deliver the right support at the right time, removing the need for customers to repeat information or navigate multiple systems. Whether people contact us online, by phone, by email or face-to-face, they will receive the same reliable service. We recognise that digital exclusion remains a challenge, with an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 adults in the county effectively offline and a further 80,000 to 100,000 adults missing out on the full benefits of the internet. Our commitment is to ensure that everyone - regardless of how they choose to engage - can access the support and services they need.

We also recognise that the demographic profile varies significantly between the two authorities. Gloucester has a higher proportion of young people, while the wider county has more older residents. This presents distinct challenges and opportunities for service design. Our digital, data, and technology solutions must be flexible and inclusive - supporting younger people's expectations for digital-first services in Gloucester, while ensuring older residents in the wider county can access support in ways that suit their needs, including non-digital channels. Alongside this, we are acutely aware of the impact of digital poverty, which affects both younger and older residents. Our commitment to accessibility and inclusion means we will work to address barriers such as lack of access to devices, connectivity, or digital skills, so that everyone, regardless of age, background or circumstance, can benefit from the support and services they need.

Our communities will have more opportunities to tell us what they think and participate in shaping services—our digital-focussed approach to service delivery will enable fairness, empowerment, responsiveness and trust. Digital platforms will make it easier to access data, share views, respond to consultations, and work in partnership with us. Through this approach we will enable communities to respond to local issues themselves, as well as target support and resources where they are needed most, strengthening local resilience.

Our staff will be equipped with the right tools and connected systems, working in organisations with a clear culture that values learning and collaboration. Routine tasks will be automated where possible, freeing time to focus on more complex issues and collaborating within and outside the organisations. Staff will also be trusted to experiment, learn and adapt - as well as being supported to develop new skills.

Our leadership will have access to high-quality, real-time information that enables confident decision-making. The opportunities that Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) offers in enabling joined-up data will

make it easier to see across systems, anticipate future needs, and direct resources to where they will have the greatest impact.

Our new unitary authorities will be better equipped to manage demand, streamline processes, and evolve services in innovative ways. By harnessing digital and data capabilities, we can break away from traditional models of local government service delivery, enabling more targeted support and adaptive operating models. At the same time, we're committed to becoming an employer of choice, attracting and retaining talented people by fostering a modern, inclusive, and purpose-driven workplace where staff feel empowered to make a real difference.

Our partners will be able to benefit from shared platforms, ethically aligned data and collaborative delivery models, making it easier to work across organisational boundaries. We will reduce duplication, remove barriers, and create seamless experiences for people who use multiple services across different agencies.

Strategic components of our approach

DDaT is central to making a real difference for Gloucestershire. We've identified seven key areas that will help us turn our ambition into action, each focused on delivering better outcomes for residents, communities and businesses.

Transformative leadership

Leadership in the new councils will encourage innovation that boldly challenges traditional ways of delivering local government services. Leaders will champion joined-up services across teams, organisations and sectors, adopting an agile, user-centred mindset that meets the expectations of an increasingly online society. This includes encouraging experimentation, removing barriers, and using data to inform decision-making. Leaders will be comfortable with 'build, test, learn' approaches, embracing continuous improvement over perfection at the first iteration. They will ask the right questions, equip staff with the tools to answer them, and act confidently on what data reveals.

Adaptive operating model

Our DDaT operating models will be flexible and responsive to changing needs. We will adopt reusable common components wherever possible, ensuring data portability and a consistent user experience across services. All services will be online by default (with alternative channels available), underpinned by a single digital process regardless of contact channel. This will remove unnecessary hand-offs, reduce duplication, and allow residents to get what they need more quickly and easily. Services will also join up with partners in the public and voluntary sectors, providing a simple and consistent experience across the whole system.

Reflecting the two continuing authorities, Gloucestershire Council will build on the County's existing IT infrastructure, absorbing the five districts, while Greater Gloucester Council will expand its current systems to cover new areas. This approach allows us to avoid creating new technology instances and instead focus on expanding and redefining what already works. Importantly, Greater Gloucester's scale and agility present a unique opportunity to act as a proving ground for new digital solutions and ways of working. By testing and refining approaches in Greater Gloucester, we can accelerate innovation and share successful models across both councils.

Data-informed decisions

Traditionally, local government has faced challenges with fragmented datasets, both within and between organisations, which has often made early intervention difficult. LGR offers a real opportunity to break down these silos, joining up services and data to enable earlier intervention, faster responses, and more effective prevention. By embedding evidence-based decision making and investing in analytics, predictive modelling

and AI, we will be better equipped to anticipate demand and continually improve our services.

Alongside this, we will prioritise robust data governance to ensure that information is used safely, securely, and ethically. Data should only be joined up across services and with partners where consent is given and where there is a strong use-case to do so. Clear principles and accountability will guide how we use AI and data in public services, helping us build trust and deliver value responsibly.

The unitary authorities, for example, will enable the implementation of a joined-up predictive analytics platform across adult and children's services, education, housing, and health. By pooling data that used to be locked in districts and county silos, the system will help identify early warning signs of safeguarding risks, such as school absence, housing instability, or repeat A&E visits, and trigger coordinated interventions when needed. An example of this type of benefit could be within our Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, enabling real-time data sharing across agencies, standardised data formats and dashboards, predictive analytics to identify risk earlier, standardisation of risk thresholds and automation of routine processes (e.g. triage, referrals).

Our data approach will be underpinned by a clear blueprint for how we collect, store, transform, and analyse data, helping to embed a culture where decisions are consistently informed by data at every stage.

Customer-centred services

For the new organisations to effectively meet the needs of residents, businesses and communities, customer experience and our approach to digital must go hand-in-hand. Our aim is to deliver intuitive, accessible and consistently high-quality online services for all residents and customers; putting them at the heart of our service design will be essential. This will be facilitated by a single phone number, website and integrated digital services, incorporating tools like live chat and chatbots for 24/7 availability. With digital tools and AI capabilities, our customer services will be able to oversee cases and track progress more effectively across the organisations. By automating routine processes and communications wherever possible, we can free up staff to focus on supporting people with more complex needs, enhancing their impact and value. Whether online, by phone, or face-to-face, we're committed to delivering a consistent, joined-up experience for everyone, supported by a collaborative approach across all teams.

To build public trust in the councils, we will provide open access to our performance through dashboards, enabling residents to understand service levels and our reliability, and demonstrating our commitment to high standards. By connecting information across services, we can build a fuller picture of our residents' and communities' needs and respond in a more coordinated, thoughtful and person-centred way.

There will be an organisational-wide commitment to user-centred design principles and continuously improving the resident and customer experience. Testing will play a crucial role in this process: we will regularly test new services and features with real users, gathering feedback to ensure they are intuitive, accessible and genuinely meet people's needs. This approach will help us to identify and address issues early, refine our services, and make sure that what we deliver works well for everyone.

We also recognise that the population make-up varies between the two authorities, with Gloucester having a higher proportion of young people and the wider county more older residents. Our service design will reflect these differences, ensuring digital solutions are flexible and inclusive, and that digital poverty is addressed for all age groups.

Learning culture

To achieve our DDaT vision, we will need to create a culture that celebrates curiosity, is open to change, and encourages learning from others. We will retain the best of our existing organisational cultures while

fostering experimentation, collaboration and continuous learning.

We will work with national initiatives such as the Local Government Association and the Government Digital Service to improve digital consistency across the sector. We will think innovatively around how we learn from each other and others that have gone through LGR already (such as Innovation Greater Manchester, and Data Mill North) and look to launch a Gloucestershire innovation approach to pilot new ideas, bringing together the councils, the NHS, universities, technology start-ups and other partners.

We will also invest in organisation-wide digital skills and capabilities, including digital apprenticeships, to build a workforce that can deliver and sustain transformation.

Listening to our residents and stakeholders

To build online services that are truly inclusive and genuinely responsive to our residents' expectations and needs, it is important that we actively listen to them and recognise the challenges with digital exclusion across the county.

We plan to develop a digital engagement approach where Gloucestershire's residents and communities can easily provide feedback, join citizens' panels, and co-design services directly with us. Aligned to our proposed locality arrangements, we would make appropriate data and insights available so that our communities are empowered to design their own solutions to local concerns and issues. We would also look to collaborate with key partners, including the Gloucestershire VCSFE and parish councils, to deliver meaningful digital engagement and enhance digital skills within our communities.

We will use data and digital platforms to tailor engagement efforts based on factors such as location, interest, or demographics. Implementing robust feedback loops, embracing co-design practices, and openly sharing our approach will all contribute to improving inclusive service delivery and building trust with our residents. We are committed to ensuring those with limited or no digital access receive support through alternative channels that meet their needs, such as over the phone or through in-person appointments.

Regardless of the contact channel, the process and experience must feel consistent, joined up, and fair, ensuring that no one is left behind in our digital transformation.

Robust infrastructure

The success of the new councils will fundamentally rely on robust and dependable technology foundations. We will ensure that our infrastructure, devices, applications, and data are all up-to-date, secure, resilient, and dependable.

Where appropriate, we will migrate to cloud-based platforms to enhance resilience, but we will avoid simply replacing legacy systems in the cloud. Instead, we will look for opportunities to transform services using flexible, open-source technologies to promote transparency, efficiency and innovation.

New investment in technology infrastructure must be designed to be reliable, scalable, sustainable, and cyber-secure. Supporting this, we will develop clear design principles that will help to prioritise standardisation and interoperability. In addition, environmental sustainability will be a key consideration in all technology decisions, ensuring that our digital infrastructure supports the councils' broader climate and carbon reduction commitments.

Supporting our vision and the government's digital blueprint, we will invest in the right digital tools and capabilities to support agile service design, enabling teams to develop and iterate solutions more quickly,

consistently, and at a lower cost. Addressing 'shadow IT', where tools, software, apps or systems are procured without the approval of the central DDaT, will also be an important priority. Importantly, we will establish robust governance so that technology decisions are made centrally and are fully aligned with the councils' DDaT ambitions.

Our DDaT investments must go beyond devices and platforms to include connectivity. While 98.2% of properties in Gloucestershire now have access to superfast broadband, gaps remain, particularly in rural areas and among digitally excluded groups. As unitary councils, we will be better placed to coordinate infrastructure investment, work with national programmes, and ensure that all communities, regardless of geography, can benefit from modern, reliable and inclusive digital services.

Summary

The ambition to design digitally-enabled councils for Gloucestershire is both bold and necessary. By clearly defining what digital, data and technology mean in practice, and setting out a compelling vision supported by strategic components, we are laying the foundations for modern, responsive and inclusive organisations.

The risk of not embedding DDaT from the outset is significant. Without a clear digital strategy and robust DDaT foundations, the new councils risk building upon fragmented systems, inconsistent data, and outdated processes. This would not only increase costs and complexity—due to reliance on legacy infrastructure—but would also limit our ability to innovate, collaborate, and meet rising expectations.

Our approach is rooted in transformative leadership, adaptive operating models, and a culture of learning and collaboration, all underpinned by robust infrastructure and a commitment to understanding and delivering meaningful outcomes for Gloucestershire's residents and communities.

Case studies from across the county demonstrate the real-world impact of digital in improving outcomes, streamlining services, and supporting those who need us most. Yet we believe the true opportunity lies in working together across both councils to deliver consistent, high-quality outcomes for people living, working and visiting Gloucestershire.

As we move through the phases of LGR, our strategy will balance innovation with stability, ensuring that our customer focus is embedded from the outset with a clear roadmap for future transformation. The ability to test and iterate new approaches at pace in Greater Gloucester will support this ambition, helping us to refine solutions before scaling them across the wider system.

Ultimately, our DDaT focus will enable us to become proactive councils that deliver meaningful outcomes—making a real difference to our communities, to the people living and working in Gloucestershire, and to our own workforce. Our new councils will feel modern, human and trustworthy - designed around the people we serve and powered by the best of digital, technology and data insight.

8. The Overall Financial Case

Financial modelling and assumptions

Purpose - To summarise the assumptions and outputs from the financial modelling undertaken to inform the Local Government Reorganisation options appraisal.

Assumptions - All options were modelled on Revenue Outturns 2023/24, with all figures inflated so that the total Council Tax requirement for all councils was equal to the Council Tax requirements agreed by each council as part of the 2025/26 budget setting processes.

Within this report, 3 options are considered as follows:

- Option A - A single County-wide Unitary Council
- Option B - 2 Council model - split geographically East/West
- Option C - 2 Council model - split between an expanded Greater Gloucester City and Gloucestershire (the remainder of the County)

Throughout this options appraisal, all savings are considered against a 'stand-still' position. Savings are projected against current needs, current costs and current allocations of grants. None of the options considered include assumptions relating to changes in levels of reserves, levels of future needs or changes to resource allocation; these factors are assumed to have the same impact on each option. This approach is required to demonstrate the varying performance of each option to generate efficiencies and realise savings. Similarly, this options appraisal is focussed on appraising structural proposition, rather than appraising detailed system wide, organisational and service level designs. As such, broad but evidence-based assumptions have been used to inform the financial models for each option, including findings from previous LGR programmes, projections from successful recent LGR proposals and Interim LGR Plan proposals for other two-tier areas.

General efficiencies - Areas for savings were calculated as categories of service department expenditure where there is an overlap of spending between Districts councils and the County Council, split between staffing, other expenditure and fees and charges income and other income. There are no assumed efficiencies within Adults or Children's Social Care, nor in Education services. The following table sets out the modelled saving targets for each option:

	A	B	C
Staff saving	3.25%	2.50%	2.50%
Non-staff saving	3.25%	2.50%	2.50%
Fees & Charges Income	2.00%	1.50%	1.75%

The saving assumptions are based on there being greater efficiencies the more authorities that are combined (and potentially offsetting efficiencies with additional costs for splitting services for options including multiple councils). Fees and charges income can be increased through alignment of fees and charges across the county - the lower the number of councils, the greater the opportunity to rationalise these charges.

Ongoing additional costs / savings - The next consideration was to look at whether the specifics of any

individual option gives rise to ongoing additional costs (such as costs for more members) or leads to ongoing savings (for example through prevention). The following table sets out the net ongoing costs and savings (£m's) assumed in each option. These are taken to adjust the general level of savings as suggested above.

	A (£m)	B (£m)	C (£m)
Duplicated Management Teams	(4.734)	(4.734)	(4.734)
Additional Management Teams	0.00	1.750	1.750
Member savings	(1.850)	(1.850)	(1.850)
Additional Member's allowances	0.000	0.400	0.400
Savings from existing shared services	1.000	1.000	1.000
Ongoing service disaggregation costs	0.000	1.000	1.000
Enhancing local democracy	0.000	0.000	0.966
TOTAL additional costs / (savings)	(5.584)	(2.684)	(1.718)

Duplicated Management Teams savings are calculated on the basis that the number of senior posts for a single authority are likely to be comparable to the current County Council structure (albeit the responsibilities will be different with the combining of County and District services). Thus base savings are taken by combining the salaries of all District Councils in the county, based upon the latest Senior Officers' Pay Report or latest Pay Policy Statement) with an allowance for oncosts. Where options include more than one new council, costs are calculated based on costs of 1 Chief Executive, 4 Service Directors and 10 Assistant Directors for each new Council.

Members savings are based upon a base position of moving to a single Council with 100 Members (we understand that in both options A and B the current aggregate proposal is for 110 Councillors, which would result in an additional annual forecast cost of £0.12m per year in each option). Using the existing Gloucestershire County Council rates, allowances are given for 1 Leader, 3 Group Leaders, 9 Cabinet Members, 20 Committee Chairs and 67 Members without additional responsibilities. These costs (£1.20m) are compared against the total allowances for Members across all County and District Councils in Gloucestershire based upon the latest available published details (£3.05m) - the difference is the projected saving. For each additional Council, there will be the need duplication of all the responsibility roles (Leader, Group Leaders, Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs) totalling £0.40m.

For Option C there is an additional cost already built in to the model for Enhancing Local Democracy. These are costs associated with a policy approach to increase expenditure on democratic representation at a local level, through both additional Councillors and additional working and resourcing at a more local level.

Savings from existing shared services are savings that have already been achieved through partnership working between councils in the county. £1m is the projected savings already made by these joint arrangements, thus they are subtracted from the expected efficiency savings to avoid double counting, as they have already been achieved.

Service disaggregation costs are on-going additional costs based upon splitting services currently provided at a county-wide level, such as requiring duplicate ICT systems and licences for maintaining records and potentially additional staff due to inefficiencies in splitting these services.

Long-term impact of these savings combined - Combining the impact of these two sets of savings shows the potential long-term savings from each of these models, based upon these over the various categories of

income and expenditure - at this stage in the process, figures are presented for all new Councils combined; for the purposes of this analysis no attempt is made to apportion costs and savings to specific newly formed authorities.

Option A - Single Authority

Category	2023/4 Outturn inflated (£m)	General efficiency (£m)	Further specific costs / (savings) (£m)	Projected expenditure / (Income) (£m)	Ongoing saving (£m)
Employee Costs	502.100	(3.502)	(6.334)	492.264	9.836
Running Expenses	989.692	(8.341)	0.750	982.101	7.591
Fees & Charges	(165.837)	(3.317)	0.000	(169.154)	3.317
Other Income	(155.666)	(0.000)	0.000	(155.666)	0.000
Non-Dept (Inc) / Exp *	(704.051)	(0.000)	0.000	(704.051)	0.000
Council Tax Req	466.237	(15.160)	(5.584)	445.494	20.744

Option B - East / West split

Category	2023/4 Outturn inflated (£m)	General efficiency (£m)	Further specific costs / (savings) (£m)	Projected expenditure / (Income) (£m)	Ongoing saving (£m)
Employee Costs	502.100	(2.694)	(4.184)	495.222	6.878
Running Expenses	989.692	(6.416)	1.750	985.026	4.666
Fees & Charges	(165.837)	(2.488)	0.000	(168.325)	2.488
Other Income	(155.666)	(0.000)	0.000	(155.666)	0.000
Non-Dept (Inc) / Exp *	(704.051)	(0.000)	0.000	(704.051)	0.000
Council Tax Req	466.237	(11.597)	(2.434)	452.206	14.031

Option C - Greater Gloucester & Gloucestershire Unitary

Category	2023/4 Outturn inflated (£m)	General efficiency (£m)	Further specific costs / (savings) (£m)	Projected expenditure / (Income) (£m)	Ongoing saving (£m)
Employee Costs	502.100	(2.694)	(3.218)	496.188	5.912
Running Expenses	989.692	(6.416)	1.750	985.026	4.666
Fees & Charges	(165.837)	(2.902)	0.000	(168.740)	2.902
Other Income	(155.666)	(0.000)	0.000	(155.666)	0.000
Non-Dept (Inc) / Exp *	(704.051)	(0.000)	0.000	(704.051)	0.000
Council Tax Req	466.237	(12.012)	(1.468)	452.757	13.480

* This includes all other elements of Council Income and Expenditure, including Housing Benefits, Levies, Capital Financing, Non-service grants and appropriations / use of reserves (elements considered outside service reporting on Government - Revenue Outturn forms)

The following table sets out the ongoing savings as a percentage. This is calculated in three ways:

- As a percentage of gross service costs (ie employee costs and running expenses)
- As a percentage of net service costs (ie employee costs and running expenses less service income)
- As a percentage of Council Tax requirement (ie all costs including non-service specific grants, financing costs, precepts and use of reserves)

Category	A (£m)	B (£m)	C (£m)
Ongoing saving	20.744	14.031	13.480
Savings as a percentage of:			
Gross Service Cost (£1,491.792m)	1.4%	0.9%	0.9%
Net Service Cost (£1,170.289m)	1.8%	1.2%	1.2%
Council Tax Requirement (£466.237m)	4.4%	3.0%	2.9%

One-off costs and time to realise savings Each option was considered for one-off costs and how quickly savings could be achieved. The breakdown of these costs varies from option to option and can be seen within the model. For most costs these were given a direct cost. The exception was redundancy costs that were calculated as a percentage of employee costs saved (this forecast includes both the direct costs and any pension strain). A summary of these one-off costs per model are as follows.

	A	B	C
Redundancy (%age of employee costs saved)	120%	120%	120%
Other one-off cost (£m)	10.950	20.100	20.100

Although an indicative breakdown of transition costs is given, it is considered that the overall quantum is more important than the specific categories. Local decisions will determine how much of this work is carried out in-house compared to with external support, which in turn may adjust the allocation of these budgets. These costs are broken down as follows:

Category	A (£m)	B (£m)	C (£m)
Redundancy Costs (A)	9.883	6.813	6.813
Rebranding / Comms	0.250	0.500	0.500
Public consultation	0.200	0.400	0.400
Transition support / remodelling costs	3.000	5.000	5.000
Programme Management	1.000	2.000	2.000
Legal costs (contract novation, new constitutions)	1.000	1.250	1.250

ICT costs	2.000	4.000	4.000
Contingency	2.000	4.000	4.000
Shadow operations	0.500	1.000	1.000
Additional agency year 1	1.000	0.750	0.750
HR Support for transition / TUPE etc	0.000	1.200	1.200
Sub-Total Non-Redundancy Costs (B)	10.950	20.100	20.100
 Total One-off Costs (A+B)	 20.833	 26.913	 26.913

Consideration was also given to how quickly expected savings would be realised. Greater disaggregation of existing county-level services results in a longer projected time to fully realise savings, with the assumptions and impact on early-year savings projected below:

	A	B	C
%age saved - Year 1	33%	30%	30%
%age saved - Year 2	67%	60%	60%
%age saved - Year 3	100%	80%	80%
%age saved - Year 4	100%	90%	90%
%age saved - Year 5	100%	100%	100%
 Saving before one-off costs	 £m	 £m	 £m
Ongoing saving - Year 1	6.915	4.209	4.044
Ongoing saving - Year 2	13.829	8.419	8.088
Ongoing saving - Year 3	20.744	11.225	10.784
Ongoing saving - Year 4	20.744	12.628	12.132
Ongoing saving - Year 5 (and ongoing)	20.744	14.031	13.480

Summary of financial modelling - The following table sets out the key metrics from each of the options:

	A	B	C
One-off costs (£m)	20.833	26.913	26.913
Ongoing annual savings (£m) *	20.744	14.031	13.480
10 Year Savings (£m)	165.859	93.757	89.015
Payback period (years)	3	4	4

* Annual savings once fully ramped up

Financial Sustainability Assessment

Steady State Assessment

To assess the financial sustainability of this proposal we assessed what the ‘steady state’ position would be after savings had stabilised.

This modelling followed the following steps:

- Income and expenditure from 2023-24 RO forms are split between new authorities based upon population, except children’s social care, which was split on number of supported cases
- General efficiencies applied as described above
- Judgement used to split and allocate ongoing additional costs / savings specific between the authorities
- Comparing the Council Tax Requirement at 2025/26 prices against the ability to raise that funding from the current Council Tax base (adjusting for proposed boundary changes)

The outcome from this analysis was that based upon the levels of savings generated and the allocations made, both authorities could more than raise the required level of funding from their Council Tax base within existing Council Tax rates.

Transition Assessment

After this initial assessment, the costs of getting to this overall ‘steady state’ were assessed. These were calculated as the following:

- One-off costs (as described above)
- Ongoing savings shortfall – these are defined as the difference between the maximum annual savings and the annual projected savings, due to the time for change to occur and new systems and processes to bed in

For this proposal [Option C] the total costs are calculated as follows:

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)	(£m)
<i>Projected saving</i>	4.044	8.088	10.784	12.132	13.480	48.528
<i>Steady state saving</i>	13.480	13.480	13.480	13.480	13.480	67.400
Difference	9.436	5.392	2.696	1.348	0.000	18.872
One-off costs	26.913	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	26.913
TOTAL	36.349	5.392	2.696	1.348	0.000	45.785

To assess how easily this total cost of transition could be borne across the county, this figure is compared to the total reserves held by existing councils within the county. The stated position based upon 1st April 2025 submitted Revenue Outturn reports are presented below:

Reserve type	£m
Unallocated Financial Reserves	44.193
Earmarked reserves: Planned future revenue and capital spending	187.095

Note that reserves held for schools, public health, existing contractual commitments, risks or budget stabilisation were not considered. The reserves figures have not been updated for GCC following the updated outturn positions, this is not material in the overall figures presented. All figures are calculated based on assumptions.

There are several assumptions and factors underpinning this assessment:

- It assumes current levels of external support and splitting on a population basis
- No assessment is made of future needs, changes in demand, levels of reserves or changes to funding methodologies
- It assumes a shared pool of reserves and transition costs are met from this pool before allocation decisions

Based on these assumptions, the costs represent less than 20% of relevant reserves, suggesting overall costs of transition could comfortably be contained, without even considering disposal of excess assets such as surplus properties. Thus this proposal [Option C] is sustainable long-term and transition to that point can be contained within existing resources.

Conclusion - A single authority is projected to generate the most significant efficiencies and lead to the quickest payback of transition costs. These savings should however be considered alongside wider economic benefits and disbenefits to the county (such as changes to health, investment, job creation / retention, culture and tourism) to get a fairer overall reflection of the impact of changes to the county.

Differences in outputs compared to models used in other submissions - The key differences between assumptions in this modelling compared to other published local submissions are:

- Redundancy costs are much greater within this model for all options (120% of employment costs saved compared to much less in other observed models) - our assumption is based upon experience at previously combined authorities and includes pension strain for people taking redundancy.
- Lower additional ongoing costs for social care following disaggregation - informed by the findings of the Impower report commissioned by DCN (<https://www.districtcouncils.info/wp-content/uploads/Impower-DCN-ASC-LGR-Report-2025-FINAL-compressed-version.pdf>) - which states “*There are no economies of scale in delivering social care and in some cases, there is evidence that larger systems introduce diseconomies*”; although allowances have still been made for additional leadership roles and ICT relating to running an additional ICT system.
- Lower ongoing savings modelled across all options and a longer time to realise these - informed by findings in previous merged authorities showing that savings took longer to achieve than anticipated and were overestimated. As an example: <https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/your-council/finance/westmorland-and-furness-council-productivity-plan> is projecting £1.293m of unitary specific efficiencies after 4 years of operations (this being one of two new unitary councils formed in Cumbria).
- This model includes a modest increase in income based upon reviewing and aligning fees & charges; this increase is consistent with previous reviews of fees & charges in single authority situations (i.e. there should be a greater ability to raise income as there is already differential in fees charged across the existing councils).
- This model makes explicit adjustments for savings already realised in terms of shared services and makes an expenditure allowance for enhanced localised democracy across all options; other submitted models do not make such allowances.
- This model does not attempt to make assumptions about any of the following:

- Changes to future service demands, which cannot be projected with any degree of certainty
- Realisation of future savings plans
- Changes to Council Tax collection rates, which cannot be projected with any degree of certainty
- Re-distributional impact of Fairer Funding reforms, which cannot be projected with any degree of certainty
- Ceasing any specific grant support that is currently allocated within the county (such as floor payments, specific grants)
- Changes to debt and associated debt costs, that could be offset via sale of surplus assets, which cannot be projected with any degree of certainty
- This model assumes greater transition costs across all options, again based upon experience of costs from previous reorganisation; although the split of these costs is different between models, this split is highly dependent upon how the new organisation(s) choose to resource the required transformation and the reliance on internal versus external support (Westmorland and Furness, as one of two new councils in the region were themselves allocated £10m to facilitate transformation in Cumbria as referenced in the same report as linked above). Grant Thornton referenced an example of transformation costs reaching over £50m (see box 1 below):

Box 1: Example of under-estimation and transformation costs associated with LGR

Transformation needs to be fully costed and those costs kept under control. For example, in one council the estimated transformation programme costs increased significantly from £29.5 million in November 2019 to £52.12 million by February 2024. Transformation programmes need effective programme management and regular progress reporting in public to elected members is essential. Elected members need enough evidence to challenge delivery and ensure officers are taking corrective action if needed.

Source: https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/globalassets/1.-member-firms/united-kingdom/pdf/publication/2024/report---learning-from-the-new-unitary-councils_v08.pdf

Economic Case

Wider Economic Benefit Model

Purpose - To summarise the assumptions and outputs from the benefits modelling undertaken to inform Local Government Reorganisation in the options appraisal. This builds on the work undertaken within the financial modelling and combines the results from this with estimates of wider economic benefits and disbenefits from various LGR options.

Options modelled - Within this report, 3 options are considered as follows:

- Option A - A single County-wide Unitary Council
- Option B - 2 Council model - split geographically East/West
- Option C - 2 Council model - split between an expanded Greater Gloucester City and Gloucestershire Unitary (the remainder of the County)

Identifying wider economic impact - Economic benefits have been based upon local expected outputs, converted to financial outputs through established models. The following approach has been used consistently in developing the benefits estimation:

- Limited to one broad measure per key area to avoid duplication (or removal of any overlapping figures)
- Implicit optimism bias included within figures, with greater allowance where national data is used (see below for further details)
- Where local baseline data was unavailable, no economic benefit has been calculated and any such expected benefits have been included in the non-monetised impact instead
- When a range of outputs were forecast, then Monte Carlo analysis was undertaken, multiplying each outcome with the estimated probability of that outcome - due to the uncertainty implied via this approach an increased optimism bias / deadweight weighting is used (see Additionality factors section below)

An exercise was undertaken with commissioning council officers to consider strategic factors that are likely to be influenced by the future structure of local government and where those outcomes are likely to be materially different between the options. Table 1 presents these outcomes, the linked measure used for calculating the economic impact and the justification for their inclusion:

Table 1: Measures used for calculating economic impact

Outcome	Output measure	Reason for inclusion
Job creation	Gross Value Added for jobs created	A combination of impact of public sector losses in county from re-organisation + impact of an enhanced economic strategy tailored to urban/rural needs in each unitary
Small business survival	Gross Value Added for increased start-up / SME survival rates	Greater aligned economic development with local strengths and needs - where tighter focus on specific areas
Investment within area / region	Investment within area	Gloucester City has a strong track record of working to engage partners in regeneration within its boundaries - there is a risk that this is

		diluted without a specific council carrying out these duties
Cultural engagement	Change in people engaging in cultural activities	The closer the link between each council and its residents will allow for more engagement and celebration of cultural identities - conversely the more distant, the more likely for there to be disengagement from current activity levels
Crime & disorder	Change in recorded crime	Exceptional prevention focused work currently taking place within Districts - risk of this being diluted through merging into larger councils
Visitor economy	Visitor spend in region	Risk of loss of promotion of urban areas if integrated into wider areas including the Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean - the appeal of the area is very diverse, making it harder for a council with a mix of urban and rural areas to market the appeal to those different visitor groups
Homelessness prevention	Number of homelessness applications	Solutions to homelessness (or the factors that help prevent it) are often household-specific and reliant on a high degree of flexibility, creativity, local connections and partner organisations, which are easier to build and sustain on a smaller footprint.
Children social care	Costs of looked after children	Nationally evidenced report showing links between average cost of provision and size of councils
Adult social care	Costs of residential and nursing care	National evidenced report showing links between average cost of provision and size of councils

Impact calculation - For each output measure above, a baseline figure was determined, the range of outcomes likely to be achieved and an economic impact of each output produced. The detailed calculations for this can be seen in Appendix C. Once the impact is assessed these are adjusted in line with factors included within the Additionality Guide. These adjustments ensure that naturally occurring increases are considered part of the benefits for this project.

The following factors elements were considered for each benefit:

- Leakage - benefits going to people outside the target area (e.g. health benefits from people coming from overseas participating in leisure activities generated by a scheme).
- Displacement - benefits lost because individuals swap from another activity which would also have provided similar benefits (e.g. when a job created is taken by someone already in full time employment and their previous role is not re-filled).
- Substitution - benefits lost because companies change their decisions because of the scheme (e.g. they don't repair a building themselves, because they can get a grant to support it).
- Economic Multiplier - the wider supply chain and regional impact of the benefit (e.g. construction work having a beneficial impact on the local supply chain).
- Deadweight - what would happen even if the project didn't go ahead (e.g. general rises in commercial or house prices).

Each economic impact was assessed for the likely impact of each factor, using the reference cases set out in the Additionality Guide and HCA Additionality Guide as starting points, supplemented with local knowledge and sector specific research. Appendix C sets out for each benefit the values used for each factor and the reasoning behind this.

All benefits were then combined with the direct calculated impact from the financial model (both the ongoing savings and transition costs). All results are then discounted by the Government's Green Book value of 3.5% per year. Discounting is used to reflect the fact that a benefit today should be valued higher than the same benefit in the future. The overall economic impact of each option is presented in table 2 below:

Table 2: Economic impact of options

Category		Option A		
Economic impact category	Gross impact (£m)	Additionality adjustment (£m)	Discount (£m)	NPV of impact (£m)
Economic benefits				
Ongoing savings	186.696	0.000	(33.993)	152.703
Sub-total economic benefits (A)	186.696	0.000	(33.993)	152.703
Economic disbenefits				
Transition costs	(20.833)	0.000	0.000	(20.833)
Job Creation	(67.640)	30.165	6.309	(31.167)
Small Business Survival	(106.195)	86.841	3.258	(16.096)
Investment in area / region	(17.845)	3.102	2.482	(12.262)
Cultural Engagement	(57.686)	36.379	3.587	(17.720)
Crime & Disorder	(19.060)	4.765	2.406	(11.888)
Visitor Economy	(12.421)	5.539	1.158	(5.723)
Homelessness Prevention	(120.069)	37.942	13.825	(68.302)
Sub-total economic disbenefits (B)	(421.749)	204.733	33.025	(183.991)
Overall economic impact (A+B)	(235.052)	204.733	(0.967)	(31.288)

Category		Option B		
Economic impact category	Gross impact (£m)	Additionality adjustment (£m)	Discount (£m)	NPV of impact (£m)
Economic benefits				
Ongoing savings	120.667	0.000	(22.459)	98.208
Children Social Care	88.091	(35.237)	(9.688)	43.167
Adult Social Care	106.181	(42.472)	(11.677)	52.032
Sub-total economic benefits (A)	314.939	(77.709)	(43.823)	193.407
Economic disbenefits				

Transition costs	(26.913)	0.000	0.000	(26.913)
Job Creation	(33.820)	15.082	3.154	(15.583)
Small Business Survival	(53.097)	43.420	1.629	(8.048)
Investment in area / region	(8.923)	1.551	1.241	(6.131)
Cultural Engagement	(28.843)	18.190	1.793	(8.860)
Crime & Disorder	(9.530)	2.382	1.203	(5.944)
Visitor Economy	(6.210)	2.770	0.579	(2.862)
Homelessness Prevention	(60.034)	18.971	6.913	(34.151)
Sub-total economic disbenefits (B)	(227.371)	102.366	16.513	(108.492)
Overall economic impact (A+B)	87.568	24.658	(27.311)	84.915

Category	Option C			
Economic impact category	Gross impact (£m)	Additionality adjustment (£m)	Discount (£m)	NPV of impact (£m)
Economic benefits				
Ongoing savings	115.928	0.000	(21.577)	94.351
Children Social Care	30.776	(12.310)	(3.385)	15.081
Sub-total economic benefits (A)	146.704	(12.310)	(24.961)	109.432
Economic disbenefits				
One-off costs	(26.913)	0.000	0.000	(26.913)
Adults Social Care	(31.026)	12.410	3.412	(15.024)
Sub-total economic disbenefits (B)	(57.939)	12.410	3.412	(42.117)
Overall economic impact (A+B)	88.765	0.100	(21.549)	67.316

Note: Where a category is contained in one option and not in others, then it is assumed performance remains at current (pre-reorganisation) levels; therefore, a neutral or zero impact.

An overall summary is presented as table 3, combining the “Ongoing savings” and “One-off costs” as the Net Savings and combining all the other factors as the Other Economic Impact, to split the direct savings to the Council and the wider economic impact to residents.

Table 3: Overall Economic Impact (NPV)

	A	B	C
Net Savings NPV (£m @ 3.5%)	131.870	71.295	67.438
Other Economic Impact NPV (£m @ 3.5%)	(163.158)	13.620	(0.122)
Overall Economic impact NPV (£m at 3.5%)	(31.288)	84.915	67.316

This would suggest that while the single unitary authority option has the greatest direct financial savings to the councils, when combined with the wider economic impact on the region, then Option B, the East/West split provides the best overall economic impact.

Non-Quantified Benefits / Opportunities

Not all benefits are quantifiable; some may lack baseline information, others (such as satisfaction ratings) may be very difficult to translate into an economic impact. Table 4 sets out other identified opportunities or benefits and which model(s) most benefit.

Table 4: Summary of Non-Quantifiable Benefits

Area	Description	Option(s) benefitting
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Strategic Authority changes	Options including a split of councils would facilitate governance arrangements for joining different combined authorities, which in turn could support job creation, green travel and education opportunities	B & C
Local democracy	Decisions taken at a more local level may lead to more engagement in local government, leading to increase voter turnout and satisfaction with performance	C
Engagement for other public bodies	With a single council, other public bodies (such as NHS and police) will have to engage and consult with fewer bodies and would be less likely to get contradicting responses	A
Health via Sport	Research based upon previous rounds of local government reorganisation shows an inverse relationship between size of authorities and sport and leisure performance metrics ⁷	B & C

Conclusion - Whilst a single local authority may provide the greatest degree of direct savings, there many wider economic disbenefits of such an approach. Recent research carried out by Peopletoo on behalf of the District Councils Network shows a diseconomy of scale for both Adult and Children Social Care residential placements, with higher unit costs incurred by councils with greater than 500,000 population. Furthermore, the greater number of public sector jobs at risk and the risk of lack of focus upon major urban areas creates further risks to job retention, social and cultural identity and tourism.

Carrying out an overall economic impact assessment, in line with Government best practice in major projects would suggest that the wider economic impacts more than offset this bigger direct financial saving and that the greatest overall economic impact is Option B, the East/West model, followed by Option C, with the single county unitary being the least beneficial overall to the area.

⁷ “Unitary Local Government”, House of Commons Library, March 2025 (page 31) “a linear negative scale effect for road maintenance and sport participation” <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9056/CBP-9056.pdf>

9. Listening to Gloucestershire

Engagement to Discover and Improve

Our engagement approach has been shaped by the guidance within the invitation to submit proposals: it's been rooted in genuine discovery and learning, not campaigning for any particular outcome. This focus on open engagement has been enabled by:

- **Unified, option-neutral engagement:** We agreed that the engagement around all three unitary options would be developed collectively, without using the activity to campaign or advocate for preferences
- **Strong political leadership:** Gloucestershire's Leaders set the tone – driving a shared engagement plan across councils
- **Clear accountability:** A lead Chief Executive was appointed to oversee all communications and engagement activity
- **Joint working:** Every council played an active role through a joint communications and engagement workstream
- **Prioritised investment:** We prioritised MHCLG LGR funding to support joint engagement activities.

These early actions, underpinned by a clear sense of purpose, enabled us to deliver a wide range of non-partisan engagement activities – each designed to listen, learn, and feed real insights back into the development of our proposals.

Our key engagement activity

Our joint engagement activity from March 2025 – September 2025 is summarised in the table below:

Engagement type	Key activities
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Option-neutral Future Gloucestershire microsite⁸ presenting clear, factual information• Online survey, designed to discover values, concerns and ambitions of local people (3,112 completed surveys, including 1,480 open-text responses)• In-person community events, enabling over 500 one-to-one conversations (12 events in total, two in each district, plus two additional events in and around Gloucester)• Two county-wide public webinars• Information leaflets and display banners (used principally at council offices and community events)• Regular social media information updates and paid advertising for wider promotion of the survey.
Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement webinar for VCFSE (hosted by Gloucestershire VCS Alliance) with over 100 attendees• Engagement webinar for Town and Parish Councils hosted by GAPTC with over 100 attendees

⁸ <https://futuregloucestershire.org.uk>

Engagement type	Key activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional initial awareness-raising meeting on the Greater Gloucester proposal for potentially affected neighbouring Parish Councils • Representation on Place Model workstream from NHS (ICB and providers), GAPTC, OPCC, SLCC, and VCS Alliance.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular LGR staff communications and briefings • Senior officers from principal councils represented on all LGR workstreams, with different Chief Executives acting to lead and chair • Specialist service officers engaged in structured, cross-council aggregation and disaggregation workshops.
Council members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive all-member webinars • FAQs and other written briefings • Bespoke briefing and democratic processes delivered by individual councils.
MPs⁹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloucestershire County Council Leader and Chief Executive monthly engagement with Gloucestershire MPs • Other district ad hoc engagement with local MPs
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition to Place (above), workstreams conducted bespoke engagement as relevant. For example, the Vision and Ambition workstream conducted a range of briefings with senior district leaders to develop an understanding of place-based perspectives.

The online survey and in-person community events were co-designed and facilitated by an external specialist engagement organisation, *Cratus*. Their independent report can be found in Appendix E.

Our learning and insights

Our learning themes synthesise the responses from a variety of methods and types used. As far as possible, we have avoided significant focus in this proposal on feedback on the relative merits of structural options, since the primary aim of engagement was to discover common concerns and ambitions of local people and organisations. However, some of this data, from the public survey and stakeholder interviews is shown for transparency. It should not be read as representative data on the preferences of the public and partners.

Three big themes have emerged:

1. Belonging in Gloucestershire
2. Service improvement
3. Vulnerable people and communities

⁹ At a meeting of all Principal Authority Leaders on 09/10/2025 it was agreed that Gloucestershire Councils would collectively engage with all local MPs to understand their preferences and comments in the light of the published proposals. This process will be conducted to develop an objective understanding of MP views to inform both Gloucestershire Councils and Ministers.

Theme 1: Belonging in Gloucestershire

Our engagement revealed something powerful: people in Gloucestershire feel a strong sense of belonging - whether that's to a village, an estate, a district, or the county as a whole. Local identity runs deep, and it's clear that "home" means different things to different people.

This insight is crucial. It shows that the new council must enable participation and engagement at every level - recognising and supporting the many overlapping communities that make Gloucestershire unique.

Key actions to shape our proposals: Belonging in Gloucestershire (Theme 1)	
Place Model	Proposals for our locality arrangements have avoided prematurely drawing 'lines on maps'. We will deliver a carefully designed engagement and consultation process to develop the spatial scale, competency, and differentiation (by Place) of our Neighbourhood Partnerships. This commitment is reflected in our implementation roadmap.
Future Operating Model (FOM)	The differentiation of Gloucestershire's places is recognised in both the design principles and key features of the Future Operating Model. We have reflected place and identity strongly in engagement, commissioning, and service delivery features.

Theme 2: Service Improvement and Efficiency

Our survey captured a wealth of feedback on council services. Most areas scored well, with the majority of residents rating services as 'good' or 'very good'. However, roads, pavements, and streetlights stood out as clear concerns.

When asked what should shape future council services, 'community' - meaning representation, voice, and engagement - was the top priority. 'Transport' (including public transport, road maintenance, and connectivity) also featured strongly.

Stakeholder interviews reinforced this theme, highlighting the need for simpler, more efficient services and better integration with partners.

The message is clear: while there are specific areas to address, any improvement must be rooted in local context and connectivity - making sure services work for people and places across Gloucestershire.

Key actions to shape our proposals: Service Improvement and Efficiency (Theme 2)	
Vision and Ambition	<p>Our vision and ambition includes a specific focus on the use of data to transform transport and wider public services. The feedback we have received on public transport in particular has assisted with shaping this ambition.</p> <p>Our vision and ambition also reflects the excitement and energy in the Gloucestershire business community to drive growth. We pay particular attention to the economic opportunities in Gloucestershire, and the desire to use LGR to accelerate our trajectory of breakthrough innovation in economic clusters, such as cyber, clean energy, and agri-tech.</p>
Future Operating Model (FOM)	Our strategic enablement feature within the FOM is specifically designed to create capacity and capability to drive improvement and transformation.
Place and FOM	Our neighbourhood model is linked to service delivery within the FOM, with a proposed specification to tailor on a locality basis, addressing some of the feedback about different satisfaction and experience in different parts of Gloucestershire.
Financial Case	Our financial case shows our desire not simply to reorganise, but to transform. We will reinvest structural and transformation savings into services that people want to see improve. The councils will feel local and responsive but be powered by scale and efficiency for the benefit of everyone.

Theme 3: Vulnerable people and communities

A key theme from our engagement with partners was the opportunity for the new council to do more for Gloucestershire's most vulnerable people and communities.

- **Community development and local engagement must be front and centre.**
- **There's real appetite for public sector reform.** From the emerging Neighbourhood Health Service to new powers for neighbourhood working, they see LGR as a chance to join up regeneration, health, and community development - especially where VCFSE organisations are already leading the way.
- **Tackling deep-rooted inequalities is essential.** We know there are sharp divides between urban and rural areas, and that data and lived experience is important to drive local action and smarter service design. This is a particular strength of the Gloucester/Gloucestershire option, where the creation of distinct unitary councils to tackle the significantly different socio-economic challenges faced in Gloucester to those experienced in most of the rest of the county.

Respondents have made it clear that LGR offers a huge opportunity to address these challenges and opportunities.

Key actions to shape our proposals: Vulnerable people and communities (Theme 3)	
Vision and Ambition	<p>Our vision makes it clear that we want to use LGR to spark a transformation in community empowerment. We can be closer to communities and people than before, e.g. utilising better and more widely the ‘hub’ approach to delivering preventive, community-led activity, as well as more tailored services for vulnerable people, families, and communities.</p> <p>We are also clear in our vision that we will more consciously link with partners on wellbeing, housing, climate action, and nature recovery – feedback is showing these are connected issues for local people.</p>
Data, Digital and Technology (DDaT)	<p>Our proposals are clear there are major opportunities to use DDaT to drive better environments, interventions, and services for vulnerable people. We have set out a bold ambition to develop joined-up predictive analytics platforms across adult and children’s services, education, housing, and health.</p>
Place	<p>Our place research has revealed a wealth of current good practice in evidenced-based community development. We have hard-wired into our neighbourhood proposals a focus on community development, supported by data insight, the skills of our public health team, and dedicated staff and other resources.</p>

Feedback from engagement activity with Town and Parish Councils on the Greater Gloucester model

Gloucester City Council co-designed and co-facilitated with GAPTC an initial engagement event for the twenty or so town and parish councils within and surrounding the city of Gloucester (which along with Cheltenham, is largely unparished) and who would be most affected by the proposed boundary modifications that are being sought through this proposal. About three-quarters of the town/parish councils invited attended the event.

The event was highly interactive, with four key topics or themes that the Parish and Town Councils discussed:

1. Identity
 - a. What do think drives a community’s sense of place?
 - b. What area, other than the parish, do you/your residents most strongly identify with?
 - c. To what extent do you/your residents see themselves as part of Gloucester?
 - d. What specifically informs the answers to (b) and (c)?
 - e. Do you think you share a greater sense of place with neighbouring parishes?
2. Service Delivery
 - a. Which council services are currently the ones that interest you and your residents the most?
 - b. What services do you currently deliver and, thinking about the opportunities Local Government Reform may present, what services might you like to deliver in the future?
 - c. What principles should underpin effective service delivery in a new unitary council structure and how can they be realised?
 - d. If the Greater Gloucester model is not selected, what are your views on neighbourhood level service delivery within a larger unitary structure? Is there a place for a Gloucester Parish Council or Councils to deliver localised services on behalf of neighbouring parishes?
3. Community Engagement
 - a. What do you think are the biggest challenges around Councils engaging with our communities today and how can we overcome them?
 - b. What would meaningful community engagement look like in a unitary council model?

- c. How should we engage with you and your residents about Local Government Reform and the 'Greater Gloucester' unitary authority concept?
 - d. Are there any specific local groups, stakeholders or organisations we should be directly targeting?
 - e. How will we know if we have effectively engaged with residents?
4. Governance
- a. What opportunities and what concerns should be at the forefront of designing new governance structures?
 - b. How do you envisage parish councils successfully influencing decisions in a new unitary council structure?
 - c. Noting that parishes vary in size, do you have any preliminary thoughts about if/how your parish could be grouped with neighbouring areas when the ward boundaries and number of councillors for a unitary is decided?
 - d. What involvement would you like in the further development of the Greater Gloucester option?

As can be expected, there was a wide spectrum of opinion expressed across these themes.

Some key messages were as follows:

- Many different factors influence people's sense of identity: natural features (e.g. River Severn, Cotswold escarpment), man-made features (e.g. roads), urban vs rural, where they shop or use leisure facilities, schools and GP surgeries, places of employment, even public transport routes.
- Senses of identity can change over time and with different population cohorts (e.g. youth).
- Many felt a strong identification with Gloucester, for the above reasons. Most of their residents shop in Gloucester and use facilities there. Some felt a stronger cultural identification with Forest of Dean, even though they were only 4 miles from Gloucester and 20 miles from Coleford. Similarly with Stroud. Some felt a shared sense of identity between Gloucester and Cheltenham.
- Planning and housing growth were key matters of importance for them and their residents. Being part of a Greater Gloucester area might allow them to have greater involvement in some planning decisions that affect them, but over which they currently have no control as they occur within the city boundaries.
- Parishes raised concerns about the impact from LGR on local plans and Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs). The potential dilution of parish influence in planning was a key concern, particularly where no NDP is in place.
- Harmonisation of council tax rates was also raised as a matter of importance. Other service priorities mentioned were:
 - Education
 - Waste and recycling
 - Roads and verges
 - Flood management
- There was some support for parishing for Gloucester, to be preceded by an engaging Community Governance Review. But also acknowledgement this might only make sense if Greater Gloucester was not the chosen option for reorganisation.
- LGR provides an opportunity to engender trust across areas of Gloucestershire which are demographically and geographically different, and also to improve communication and relationships between authorities.

- Possible role for parish councils in taking on some powers and functions, providing there is sufficient funding and resource. There is already a wide disparity in infrastructure, assets and service provision e.g. one parish council runs eight parks whilst others have no parks at all.
- Participants noted the importance of first engaging with their own communities to determine local service needs. This would enable parish councils to better assess what they can realistically deliver under a devolved model.
- Several councils requested:
 - A clear, accessible menu or list of potential services that parish councils might take on, from which they could select based on local capacity and interest.
 - An accessible walk-in office for the new authority, providing direct public access to raise service delivery concerns.
- Whichever LGR option is chosen, local knowledge is essential for both Members and Officers.
- Concerns about finding sufficient volunteers to stand as Councillors if Gloucester became parished.
- Concerns about Unitary Councillor-Elector ratios being too high (i.e. representing too many people) with new larger unitary councils – democratic deficit and loss of representation: the gap between Parishes and the next tier of government above will be too large and communications will be poor.
- Important that outlying rural areas don't miss out on investment, and this doesn't all go on urban areas.
- High levels of enthusiasm for ongoing substantive consultation and engagement throughout LGR process, though some still grappling with the implications of LGR and not yet ready to engage more fully.
- Support for the proposal to have a committee of parish councils for the Greater Gloucester unitary council.

This feedback has been used to shape several aspects of this proposal, and a programme of sensitive engagement will continue through the transition phase to new unitary councils.

10. Implementation Roadmap

We believe that establishing these two Unitary Councils for Gloucestershire – Greater Gloucester and Gloucestershire Councils - constitutes the best option for our residents, communities, businesses and partners.

Implementing the proposal in a straightforward way with carefully considered governance arrangements as well as the programme planning required to deliver a successful transition, will enable the strength of the proposal to be realised by communities with minimal disruption.

We recognise the new councils will need to take their own decisions about the pace and scale of change, the plans set out here provide a clear indication of our commitment to be safe and legal from day one, to accelerate implementation and secure the maximum benefits possible during the transition phase.

Safe and legal services from day one

Our most important priority for reorganisation is that the services from the new councils are “safe and legal” from day one. We will not allow the disaggregation of county council services to impact on anyone receiving these services and as we transition to the new councils, we will ensure that everyone currently receiving support from services continues to do so and will not fall through any gaps during this period of change. We say more on how we will do this below.

a. The Roadmap to Vesting Day

There are four key phases in the roadmap running through to vesting day in 2028. These phases are:

Phase 1: Business case and mobilisation

Phase 2: Preparation for implementation

Phase 3: Shadow authorities

Phase 4: Launch and transformation

The diagram below demonstrates the timings of key events and the overall road map through to vesting day.

Implementation Plan & Workstreams

Delivering a new model of local government for Gloucestershire will require careful planning, collaboration and leadership.

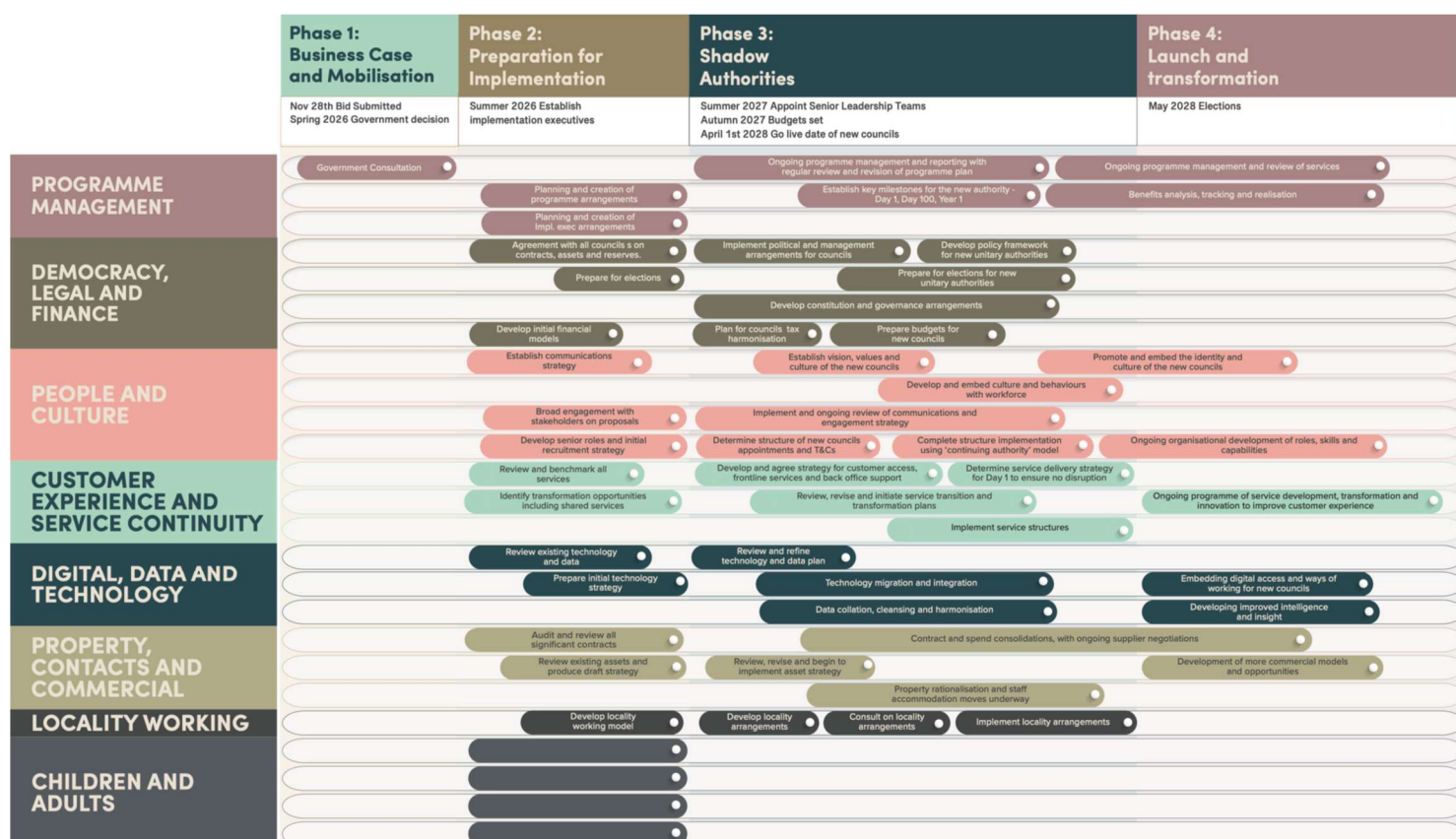
The implementation plan below sets out how the two new unitary councils would be established by Vesting Day in April 2028. Each phase is designed to ensure continuity, minimise disruption and deliver a smooth and successful transition to the new councils.

To oversee and drive the successful delivery of this change, we propose the creation of two dedicated Programme Management Office (PMO) and multi-disciplinary change teams (for each new authority), jointly supported by all current Gloucestershire councils.

A collaborative programme will ensure consistent oversight, transparent governance and the most efficient use of resources. Where possible, we will identify activity within current councils that can be paused or re-scoped, to free up capacity for implementation. It is recognised that additional capacity may be required at specific stages, depending on complexity and resource availability.

Key Features:

- PMO structure: A core team including a Programme Director, Programme Managers, Business



Analysts, PMO specialists and Change Managers will coordinate delivery for a minimum of two years.

- Subject Matter Experts (SMEs): Seconded or recruited as needed to support planning and transition across specific workstreams - such as finance, HR, ICT, legal and service design.
- Flexible capacity: While the core programme will rely primarily on internal resources, future councils may choose to invest in additional specialist support to strengthen delivery.
- Workstream alignment: Cross-cutting workstreams will support implementation, initially led by current councils (Phases 1 and 2) and later transferring into and between the shadow authorities (Phase 3 onwards).

The following table shows the key workstreams for the programme:

Programme Management	Democracy, Legal and Finance
People and Culture	Children's and Adults

Customer Experience and Service Continuity	Digital, Data and Technology
Property, Contracts and Commercial	Locality Working

Phase 1: Business Case & Mobilisation

This phase will see the submission of this proposal to government by the end of November 2025.

Following submission, government is expected to consult on this and any alternative proposals over spring/summer 2026. During this period, we will continue to engage proactively with local residents, partners and stakeholders to build understanding and support.

At the same time, we will:

- Establish the Local Government Reorganisation Programme Management Office (PMO) and programme structure
- Begin technical information gathering (budgets, staffing, contracts, IT systems)
- Mobilise internal teams and prepare governance, communications and early engagement planning

We will engage with stakeholders on an ongoing basis in this phase, to raise awareness of the coming change and to build cooperation and consensus between key stakeholders across central and local government.

This phase lays the groundwork for effective delivery and early collaboration across all councils involved.

Phase 2 - Preparation for Implementation

Once government confirms the new structure for Gloucestershire - expected by Summer 2026 - this phase will begin the detailed preparation for delivering two new unitary councils.

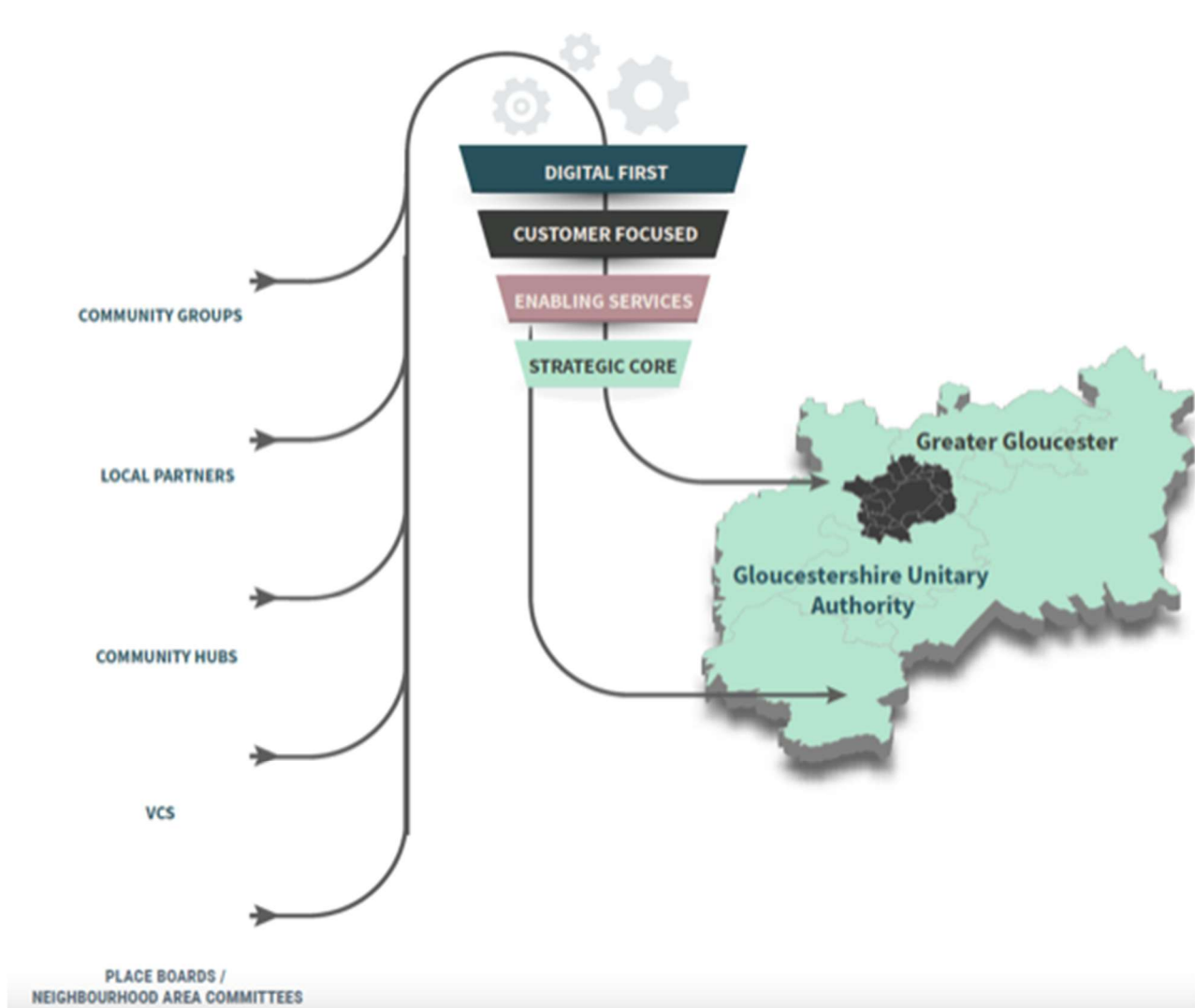
A new Gloucestershire Leaders' Implementation Oversight Group will be established to guide this work, ensuring political balance and representation from all seven existing councils. Cross-council coordination will be key during this stage, with a clear focus on delivery, readiness and continuity.

Work will begin on designing the new authorities and putting in place the governance, resources and infrastructure needed for a smooth and successful transition.

Key activities in this phase include:

- Establishing formal governance arrangements and programme management structures that will continue into the next phase and underpin the work of shadow authorities
- Developing a detailed implementation programme, mapping out delivery milestones and interdependencies

- Confirming future service requirements and target operating models, including both disaggregation of county services and aggregation of district-level functions
- Designing leadership, team structures and operating models, aligned to the proposed geography and identity of the new councils
- Planning for transition of key services, including those that need to be separated (e.g. social care, highways) and those brought together across current boundaries
- Aligning existing change activity across the current authorities to avoid duplication and ensure effort is focused on future delivery
- Reviewing baseline IT architecture, with early preparation for systems migration, including access to shared systems, email and building Wi-Fi for day one readiness
- Baselining property portfolios and initiating asset planning for the new councils
- Agreeing an external communications strategy, with clarity on engagement for residents, staff and partners
- Launching staff and trade union communications, including early workforce planning and shared HR principles
- Agreeing high-level HR transition plans, focused on continuity, fairness and retaining critical skills
- This phase will ensure all councils are aligned in their efforts, that momentum is maintained following government's decision and that the foundations are laid for a confident transition into the shadow authority period



Phase 3 - Shadow Authorities

The creation of shadow authorities will mark a key milestone in the journey to establishing two new unitary councils for Gloucestershire.

These shadow authorities will be formed around one year prior to Vesting Day in April 2028. Their purpose is to ensure continuity, clarity and confidence in the transition - both for those working within councils and for the residents and partners we serve.

Elections to the shadow councils will be held, supported by appointed officers. Together, they will oversee the complex planning and delivery required to launch the new authorities successfully.

During this phase, the shadow authorities will take responsibility for:

- Detailed integration planning and service transition, including the disaggregation of county services and aggregation of district and borough responsibilities, as well as integration of any existing shared or common services across current councils

- Organisation and operating model design, refining and finalising structures developed during Phase 2 to ensure the new councils are fit for purpose from day one
- Recruitment of senior leadership teams, including the appointment of Chief Executives, Statutory Officers and Directors to lead each of the new councils
- Staff transition and workforce planning, ensuring that the right people are in the right roles, while maintaining continuity of service and embedding the culture and values of the new organisations. TUPE processes will be carefully managed to support a skilled and motivated workforce
- Staff and trade union communications and engagement, including ongoing dialogue with employees throughout the transition to support morale, clarity and retention
- Budget setting for the new authorities, including development of consolidated financial plans and determining approaches to issues such as council tax harmonisation and business rates collection
- Look across all back-office support functions to ensure smooth continuation of employment arrangements, pensions and pay
- Data management and IT transition, including the safe migration of systems and records to ensure operational readiness and a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) for each new Council from day one
- Stakeholder engagement, reinforcing current partnerships and establishing new ones where needed to support strategic delivery and local impact. This includes engagement with NHS partners, police and emergency services, business groups and the voluntary sector

This phase is crucial for operational confidence, democratic continuity and service assurance. It is where the plans made earlier in the programme begin to take practical shape - setting the stage for the formal launch of the new councils and their future success.

Phase 4 - Launch of the New Councils

At the point that new authorities formally come into existence on vesting day in April 2028, greater focus can be placed on the long-term strategy for the future authorities.

In April 2028, the new unitary authorities will formally come into existence. Vesting Day will mark the point at which the two new councils assume full responsibility for delivering all local government services in their areas. Optimisation of aggregated services - particularly where integration creates the opportunity to enhance consistency and efficiency.

From this point forward, the focus will shift from transition to transformation. Each new council will shape and deliver its own long-term vision - built around local priorities, empowered communities and better outcomes for residents.

To do this, each unitary authority will establish a dedicated transformation programme, responsible for delivering the agreed target operating model and embedding new ways of working.

Key areas of focus are likely to include:

- **Resident contact** - delivering modern, responsive and accessible services through digital channels, local hubs and joined-up customer experience models
- **Service transformation** - reshaping service delivery models to be more efficient, effective and tailored to local needs
- **Back office and enabling services** - streamlined to deliver better value and smarter support for frontline delivery
- **IT and data strategies** - supporting secure integration, improved automation and evidence-based decision-making
- **People, organisational development and culture** - fostering a strong public service ethos and shared organisational identity, focused on delivering for residents
- **Estates and assets** - reviewed and optimised to ensure buildings and infrastructure reflect the new councils' structures, workforce and accessibility goals
- **Optimisation of aggregated services** - particularly where integration creates the opportunity to enhance consistency and efficiency
- **Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems** - including implementation of new platforms or the further consolidation of existing systems to ensure seamless operations
- **Detailed review of existing contracts and third-party spend** - with a focus on consolidation, rationalisation and achieving best value through economies of scale
- **Consolidation and alignment of fees and charges** - reviewed to ensure a fair, transparent and sustainable approach across the new councils
- **Review and harmonisation of pay, terms and conditions** - ensuring fairness, equity and support for staff retention
- **Ongoing change management and communications** - delivered as a dedicated workstream, with continued engagement of staff, partners and residents throughout the transformation process

This phase is when vision becomes reality: two strong, forward-looking councils are now functioning that are simpler, more strategic and better connected to the people and places they serve.

Implementation Costs

Delivering change at this scale requires investment - not only in systems and infrastructure, but also in people, partnerships and preparation.

Our proposed implementation model is deliberately pragmatic and collaborative. It assumes that most of the delivery work will be led by councils themselves.

We will build a multi-disciplinary change team that includes representatives from all councils and is empowered to drive delivery efficiently and effectively. This collaborative approach keeps costs proportionate, reduces duplication and ensures that expertise from across the system is embedded from the outset.

Category	(£m)
Redundancy Costs (A)	6.813
Rebranding / Comms	0.500
Public consultation	0.400
Transition support / remodelling costs	5.000
Programme Management	2.000
Legal costs (contract novation, new constitutions)	1.250
ICT costs	4.000
Contingency	4.000
Shadow operations	1.000
Additional agency year 1	0.750
HR Support for transition / TUPE etc	1.200
Sub-Total Non-Redundancy Costs (B)	20.100
Total One-off Costs (A+B)	26.913

Our modelling includes all potential costs associated with the transition to two new unitary councils - from systems and branding to staff time and technical delivery. This includes:

- Creating and launching the two new councils
- Closing down legacy council structures
- Establishing branding and communications infrastructure
- IT systems migration and licensing
- Programme governance and delivery

- HR and legal transition processes

Estimates are based on a prudent approach. We have modelled both baseline and stretch scenarios and a 20% contingency has been included (excluding redundancy and early retirement). Staffing-related costs are benchmarked against current average redundancy costs in Gloucestershire County Council and are directly linked to workforce savings in the model.

This investment will enable a strong and stable transition, while unlocking long-term savings and better services for every community in Gloucestershire.

b. Managing Delivery

The disaggregation of county-level services - and the consolidation of district and borough functions - is one of the most complex and critical aspects of local government reform.

Our approach is rooted in service quality, resident outcomes and local delivery. We will work closely with service teams to ensure that change is owned by those best placed to lead it - supported by robust governance and clear communication at every stage.

Within this, there is some important nuance - especially when it comes to highly specialist services. For example, Emergency Duty services and Approved Mental Health Professionals in Adult Social Care may require transitional or alternative delivery arrangements to ensure safe, legal and effective service on Day One.

Similarly, the disaggregation of the county's contact centres for social care and learners will require careful planning and coordination.

These teams are often the first point of contact for Gloucestershire's most vulnerable residents and play a critical safeguarding role. Until sufficient capacity is built up in both new authorities, there is a risk of uneven demand distribution, which could lead to service backlogs or safeguarding concerns if not proactively mitigated.

Three enablers of success will underpin this work:

- 1. Service-led transition:** Teams with day-to-day knowledge will lead the design, planning and change implementation, supported by the wider LGR Programme Team, ensuring continuity and clarity. This ensures the right skills and capabilities are in place while recognising that those with the most knowledge and experience are best placed to shape the future operating model
- 2. Strong governance and oversight:** Cross-council boards will provide assurance, challenge and strategic direction, supported by expert advice
- 3. Resident and stakeholder engagement:** Our communications will be transparent and proactive, helping residents, partners and frontline teams understand what's changing and why

Key transition activities will include:

- Reviewing the current locality structures and workforce to identify appropriate allocation to future authorities
- Agreeing future organisational design and delivery structures with shadow authorities and delivery partners
- Refining service operating models to reflect new geographies and population needs
- Reviewing policies, systems and processes to ensure consistency and compliance
- Restructuring governance, board memberships and local representation frameworks
- Developing detailed service transition plans to ensure service continuity and quality

Social Care and Safeguarding

Some services - such as social care, highways and waste - will require special attention due to their complexity and infrastructure requirements.

We recognise the significant potential risks associated with disaggregating Children's and Adults' social care. Transitions will be carefully phased and informed by risk assessments and workforce planning; we remain open to exploring models that mitigate any negative impacts.

While shared service models have been trialled elsewhere, evidence suggests they often increase complexity and reduce accountability. We do not believe this is the right solution for Gloucestershire.

However, for certain highly specialised functions - such as Emergency Duty and Approved Mental Health Professional services - transitional arrangements or federated delivery models may be considered to ensure safety, legality and continuity on Day One.

Single point of access contact centres for vulnerable residents will also need careful management to avoid service backlogs or safeguarding risks. Additional capacity may need to be built into early plans to ensure safe and timely delivery.

To ensure clarity and confidence in delivery, we have set out a high-level implementation plan for Adult Social Care, highlighting the key actions, leadership responsibilities and governance arrangements required through transition.

Implementation Plan for Adult Social Care:

ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	COMPLETION DATE	GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS
Recruit Senior Leadership Team (including Director of Public Health) Establish a vision and priority	Chief Executive and Recruitment Agency - Members Appointment Panel.	Three months from date of approval of new arrangements.	Cabinet and Corporate Management Team.

objectives			
Appoint Lead Member Adults and Health.	Political Appointment - Leader of the Council. Monitoring Officer.	Within first week of creation of the shadow authority	Cabinet
Establish Key Partnership Boards. Adults Safeguarding Board / Health & Wellbeing Board / Joint Commissioning Board.	DASS and Senior Leadership Team of Adults Social Care.	First Three months of shadow authority	Adults and Health Leadership team / CMT / Cabinet.
Transition to Single Point of Access (SPA). Confirm arrangements for s42 / Hospital Discharge / ASC client workflow.	Adult Social Care Leadership Team	Effective first month	Adult Social Care DMT and CMT.
Understand provider / commissioning arrangements. Make decisions on contract provision continuity from go live date.	Adult Social Care Senior Leadership Team	On-going	ASC Leadership and Cabinet.
Understand the early support and prevention and amend where necessary against need	DPH and Adult Social Care Senior Leadership Team	On going from shadow authority arrangements	ASC DMT / CMT / HWB & Cabinet.
Establish updated QA and performance data for the new directorate.	Adult Social Care Senior Leadership Team	Within first three months of shadow authority go live date.	Adult Social Care DMT / CMT / Adults and health Scrutiny / Cabinet
Establish links with key partners - Carers Forum / Care Providers (home care & residential care). VCS Network.	Adult Social Care Leadership Team	Within first month of shadow authority go live date.	Adult Social Care DMT / Health Committee & Cabinet
Develop the ASC model - Family Network / Community support services / supported living and extra care housing / use of technology & adaptations.	Adult Social Care Leadership team.	Within first six months of shadow authority go live date.	
Undertake financial assessment of cost of care and benchmark with statistical	Adult Social Care Senior Leadership team and LGA.	Within first six months of shadow authority arrangements	Adult Social Care DMT / CMT / Adults & Health Committee / Cabinet.

neighbours and national			
Profile of Workforce	Adult Social Care Senior Leadership team / PSW & HR Lead.	Within first three months of shadow authority go live date.	Adult Social Care DMT / CMT / Health & Social Care Committee.
Prepare for CQC Inspection and create a Self-Assessment	Adult Social Care Senior Leadership Team & HoS	Within first six months of shadow authority go live date.	Adult Social Care DMT / CMT / Adults & Health Committee and Cabinet.

Implementation Plan for Children's Services:

A similar approach will be taken for Children's Services, where safe transition and continuity of care are paramount. A high-level implementation plan for these services will follow, capturing the actions, leadership roles and governance required to deliver a smooth transfer.

ACTION	LEAD OFFICER	COMPLETION DATE	GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS
Recruit Senior Leadership Team	Chief Executive / Lead Member and Leader of the Council	First three months of creation of shadow authority	CMT / Cabinet
Appoint Lead Member for Children's Services	Leader of the Council / Cabinet	First three months of creation of shadow authority	Chief Executive / Cabinet
Establish Arrangements for MASH (Multi-agency safeguarding Hub / Front Door)	Children's Services DMT & Safeguarding Children's Partnership	First three months of creation of shadow authority	CS DMT / CMT / Children's Committee / Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SCP)
Create new partnership Boards - SCP / Youth Justice / SEND / Schools Forum / Secondary and Primary Heads meetings.	Children's Services DMT / Lead Member for CS	First Three months of shadow arrangements	CS DMT / CMT / CS Committee / Cabinet
Review the profile of the workforce and understand agency rates - develop a social worker recruitment campaign for new authority.	Children's Services DMT / CMT	First three months of shadow authority being established.	CS DMT / CMT / CS Committee.
Review Budgets - Revenue and HNB of the DSG. Commit to existing savings plans.	CS DMT / Schools Forum	First three months of shadow authority being created.	CS DMT / DMT / CS Committee.
Review the	CS DMT	Within first three	CS DMT / CMT /

arrangements for in-house provision (children's homes)		months of shadow authority being established.	Children's Services DMT.
Develop updated CLA and SEND sufficiency strategies.	CS DMT	Within first three months of creation of shadow authority.	CS DMT / CMT / Schools Forum / Children's Services Committee.
Review practice methodologies across the LA's and commit to integration of one with an accompanying training and workforce plan.	Principal Social Worker / CS DMT	Within first three months of creation of new authority	CS DMT / CMT / Children's Services Committee
Review the IT systems and if appropriate plan to integrate into one system.	CS DMT / Resources IT Lead.	First three months of creation of new shadow authority. (Could be a long term change programme.)	CS DMT / CMT / Children's Services Committee / Cabinet.
Develop performance management and quality assurance arrangements including case audit.	Principal Social Worker / Corporate performance Lead / CS DMT	First three months of creation of shadow authority	CS DMT / Children's Services Committee / Cabinet.
Develop a self-assessment for service and prepare for ILACS / SEND Area Inspection / Include also the OFSTED Annual Conversation.	Children's Services DMT	Within first six months of creation of shadow authority being created.	CS DMT / CMT / Children's Services Committee / Cabinet / ICB for SEND Area Self-Assessment.

Cultural and Heritage Services

Gloucestershire's history, culture and heritage is a vital part of our identity and community infrastructure. Several cultural services - such as libraries and heritage sites - currently operate on a county-wide footprint or receive shared funding. These services will require bespoke planning and may benefit from lead authority models or continued partnership structures - ensuring that our cultural assets continue to inspire pride, learning and connection across all our communities.

These services rely heavily on infrastructure that is not evenly distributed across the county. For example, we propose that Gloucestershire Archives remains as a single countywide service, regardless of how many unitaries are created. Similarly, countywide registration service (registrars), coroners, and support for the Lord Lieutenantcy would also remain countywide. Similarly, waste services depend on assets like community recycling centres, some of which may need to be shared temporarily post-vesting.

For the early implementation period, we will explore fair and transparent models - such as service agreements or 'pay to use' arrangements - to avoid disruption while longer-term options are developed.

The goal is simple: services must remain safe, effective and locally responsive, throughout the transition and into the future.

Managing Risks & Interdependencies

Change on this scale comes with risks, but also with clear rewards.

We will adopt a formal risk management approach, based on best practice from across local government and aligned to existing frameworks within Gloucestershire councils.

Our risk strategy will:

- Identify and assess risk at corporate, programme and service level
- Put in place clear mitigation strategies and ownership
- Regularly review and report risk through governance structures
- Capture and respond to cross-cutting risks that could impact multiple services or authorities
- Use risk insight to shape delivery timelines and investment decisions

Workstream	Risk Theme	Description	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation / Control Measures	Accountable Owner
1. Programme Governance & Delivery	Programme coordination and delivery capacity	Weak governance or unclear accountability could cause timetable slippage and reduce confidence in programme delivery	High	Medium	Establish Programme Board and PMO with clear roles; detailed milestone plan; independent gateway reviews; escalation process for issues and decisions	Programme Director
2. Finance & Benefits Realisation	Financial pressure and delayed savings	Transition or redundancy costs may exceed forecasts, delaying savings and affecting early budgets	High	Medium	Build contingency into financial model; conduct regular budget and benefits reviews; independent audit assurance; benefits realisation framework integrated into reporting	Section 151 Officer / PMO Lead
3. People & Workforce	Workforce stability and retention	Uncertainty may lead to staff loss, capability gaps or institutional knowledge loss, weakening service delivery	High	Medium	Early and transparent communication; retention incentives; career pathways in new unitaries; joint HR and trade union engagement forum; clear TUPE plan	HR Director

4. Systems, Digital & Data	ICT integration and data migration	System failure or data loss during integration could disrupt services and breach compliance	High	Medium	Develop a comprehensive digital transition plan; dual running of critical systems; robust data governance and testing; external assurance on migration readiness	Chief Information Officer
5. Service Continuity & Design	Service disruption during transition	Disaggregation or redesign of People and Place services (e.g., social care, housing, waste) may cause disruption to critical care or local services during transition	High	Medium	Create service continuity teams; map statutory services; phased implementation; maintain interim shared services; align with regulatory expectations (e.g., Ofsted, CQC)	Service Transition Leads (People & Place)
6. Legal & Governance	Statutory approvals and governance design	Delay or amendment to legal orders may disrupt timetable or create uncertainty	Medium	Low	Early engagement with government departments and legal counsel; scenario planning for order timing; interim governance arrangements agreed between partners	Monitoring Officer / Legal Lead
7. Communications & Engagement	Clarity and stakeholder confidence	Unclear or inconsistent communication could confuse residents, partners, and staff	Medium	Medium	Develop comprehensive communications plan; branded GLFA transition portal; staff FAQs; regular updates to elected members and stakeholders	Communications Lead
8. Partnerships & Devolution Alignment	Alignment with MCCA and key partners	Lack of coordination with the Mayoral Authority, NHS, PCC or VCSE sector could create duplication or weaken outcomes	Medium	Medium	Establish joint planning forums; shared leadership representation; quarterly alignment reviews; active collaboration in devolution planning	Partnership Lead

This robust risk strategy will help maintain momentum, avoid duplication and deliver the new councils with confidence and clarity.

11. Conclusion

Our plan for Local Government Reorganisation in Gloucestershire represents both a practical and a visionary step forward. By moving from the current two-tier and mixed unitary structure to two new unitary councils - Greater Gloucester and Gloucestershire - we will simplify local government, strengthen accountability and create a system fit for the future.

The new councils will deliver financial sustainability by reducing duplication, achieving efficiencies and reinvesting savings into frontline services. This is essential to address current budget pressures and to ensure long-term resilience. At the same time, the new structure will provide stronger leadership, clear, local accountability and services designed around the lives of our residents.

Change must be managed carefully. A phased transition, guided by strong governance and robust engagement with staff, partners and communities, will ensure continuity of services and a safe handover into the new arrangements.

This reorganisation is also about unlocking potential. With empowered councils working alongside the Strategic Mayoral Authority, Gloucestershire will be positioned to secure new investment, attract good jobs and lead in areas such as green technology, food security and healthy ageing.

Our ambition is clear: to create a fairer, greener and more prosperous Gloucestershire for all - rooted in our proud identity as a “place of places,” and driven by the needs and hopes of the people who live and work here.

Appendices

Appendix A | Submission (unmodified): Gloucester City/Gloucestershire County Proposal

Introduction

In response to the invitation made by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, on the 5 February 2025, Gloucester City Council (GCC) is submitting the following proposal under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

GCC believes that the solution that will deliver a long term sustainable solution for Local Government in Gloucestershire, delivering better outcomes for residents and business and best value for money for the tax-payer, is built on the heritage of an urban, growth focused Gloucester City and largely rural Gloucestershire County area.

The model we have developed will enable all parts of Gloucestershire to achieve their potential.

The Gloucester City authority will foster economic growth. It will be able to focus on the issues that matter to its unique population: higher social needs, homelessness and improving children's services, along with protecting its heritage.

The Gloucestershire County authority will represent its very different demographic and need: sustaining scale, stability and rural heritage, whilst also focusing on the challenges of an ageing rural and market-town populations. This council will have capacity to manage growth in market towns, secure rural transport and sustain prevention in adult care.

Our vision is that these two authorities, with unique focus and identities that will serve their communities, will build on the effective partnership working that has taken place across Gloucestershire over the past 15 years. Our model offers the opportunity to strengthen those partnerships, developing a system of local government for the area that optimises value for money and delivers the best outcomes for residents and businesses.

Our proposal provides the basis for: -

- 1. Improving outcomes for residents:** by addressing imbalance in demand for services - through early intervention, local place-based delivery and simpler access to services
- 2. Reforming failing services:** enabling each authority to focus on the needs of their population, across the diversity and younger population of Gloucester City, and the older and rurality of Gloucestershire County.
- 3. Unlocking growth:** giving Gloucester the tools of a unitary council to match the performance of peer cities while Gloucestershire focuses on delivering prosperity across towns, villages, and the rural

economy

4. **Creating financial sustainability:** simplifying governance, reducing duplication will unlock operational savings; while prevention-first delivery will improve outcomes in children's and adults' services bringing long-term savings.
5. **Preserving historic identity:** strengthening Gloucester's heritage as an historic cathedral city, and Gloucestershire protecting the internationally recognised heritage of the Cotswolds, Forest of Dean, and wider county.

A vision for change -

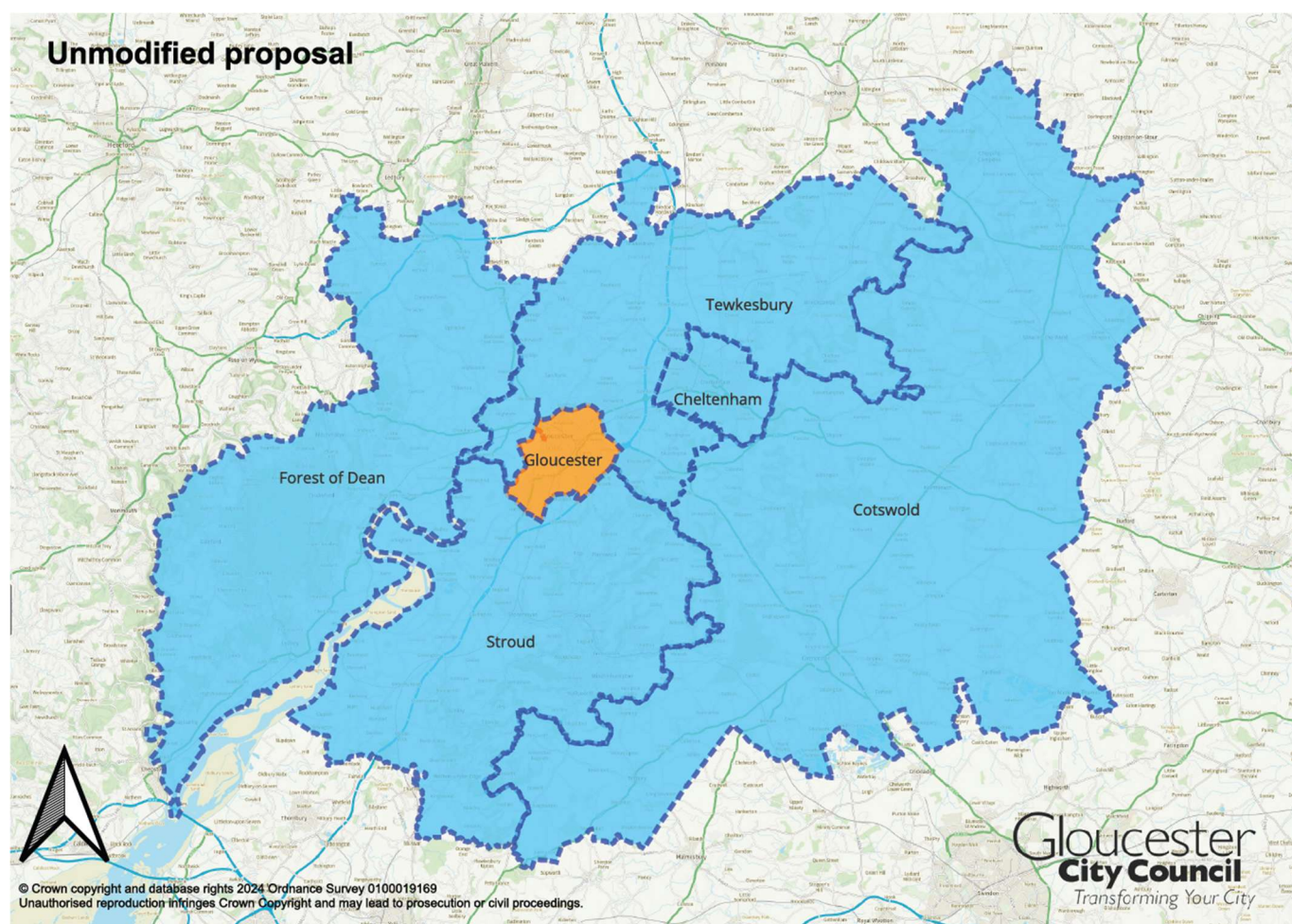
Our submission is built from our fundamental belief and understanding that:

1. Gloucestershire is not a single area and has vastly different opportunities and challenges between the only city – Gloucester - and the largely rural rest of the county. These differences will not be best served through a single and remote Council.
2. Growth across Gloucestershire will come through a thriving City of Gloucester which is the economic driving force for Gloucestershire. Unitary status for Gloucester will unlock its significant potential.
3. Building on the multiple unique characteristics of Gloucestershire will create growth and the best future for residents. The characteristics and heritage are diverse – an historic cathedral city, the Cotswolds and the Forest of Dean. This diversity is best served with the focus that two Unitary Councils will bring: one for Gloucester and one for the rest of Gloucestershire.
4. Outcomes for residents need to be improved to tackle failing services. This reform is most effectively delivered at a local level, with services tailored to neighbourhood need and focused on partnership, early intervention and prevention.
5. Devolution is best supported by multiple strong unitary Councils aligned to distinct local economic geographies. A single county unitary council won't match the size of existing neighbouring unitary councils leading to unbalanced democracy in the region.

Proposal

We formally submit the following 'Type B' submission (as set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) for two new Gloucestershire Unitary Councils.

Figure 1. Unmodified Unitary Map – using district boundaries as the building blocks



As set out in the diagram above, our proposal, based on unmodified local government district boundaries, is for two new unitary Councils designed around distinct social, economic and place geographies covering:

New Unitary	Comprised of (full Districts)	Population (2021)	Population Projection (2040)
Gloucester City	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gloucester City Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 132,500 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 143,300
Gloucestershire Unitary Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stroud District Council Cotswolds District Council Tewkesbury District Council Forest of Dean District Council Cheltenham Borough Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 121,104 91,500 98,900 89,100 120,300 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 143,500 106,300 120,000 97,000 128,100

Policy Alignment

We believe our approach represents a strong fit against all criteria set out in the invitation for LGR submissions:

Criteria 1: Establishing of a single tier of local government for the whole area concerned	✓
<p>The two-unitary model creates a single tier of local government across Gloucestershire. The proposed structure of local government is based on geographies that align with economic areas and embraces the opportunity to stimulate both urban and rural growth in the County.</p> <p>There are huge areas of economic and housing growth potential in the Gloucestershire Unitary including a step change in housing delivery to achieve the 3000 homes per year that the County needs and embracing area-specific opportunities such as the Golden Valley in Cheltenham and the Ashchurch garden town.</p> <p>Gloucester City requires its own solution: as one of the key cities in the South West Region, it has the potential to achieve significant housing growth, with the goal of increasing housing delivery by over 50%, while unlocking the economic potential of the City.</p> <p>The proposed model provides both new authorities with the tools and focus required to deliver sustained growth and improve opportunities for residents across the entire region.</p>	
Criteria 2: Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shock	✓
<p>Both authorities are within the population range of existing unitary authorities in England, the Gloucestershire unitary council with a population of 512,600 would be within the top 15 largest unitary authorities in England (based on current configuration). Gloucester City Council with a population of 132,500 is larger or similar to a number of unitary councils including Hartlepool, Darlington, Herefordshire and Halton.</p> <p>Although the Council Tax base is imbalanced between the two authorities there are a number of unitary authorities with similar Council Tax bases to Gloucester City Council, which have demonstrated sustainability and resilience to financial shocks. The Gloucestershire Unitary Council Tax base is extremely robust and provides the authority with the resilience to withstand unforeseen events.</p>	

Criteria 3: Prioritising the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens	✓
<p>The design and delivery of public services around specific local needs and demands is central to the two-unitary proposal and will build on the existing culture in Gloucestershire of strong partnership working to optimise both the quality and value for money of the services delivered. The model embraces the existing service delivery company Ubico, jointly owned by the Councils, as a model for delivering best value for residents and in this model we would seek to deliver more services through this route wherever sensible to do so.</p> <p>The proposed model includes two distinct authorities, who will be accountable for delivering key services such as Adult Social Care and Children's Services and housing. Existing data demonstrates that the demand in different parts of the county vary greatly, with the Gloucester City Council area having a demand for children's services that is significantly greater than its population. Whereas the Gloucestershire Unitary area consists of a much older population, with 25% higher proportion of the population being over 65.</p> <p>Our model will enable both new unitary authorities to focus on the interventions that the people and places they serve require.</p> <p>In the proposed model the vision is that both authorities will unlock the potential of their local places and build a strong partnership based culture, working closely with public and voluntary sector partners and embedding a prevention based approach.</p>	
Criteria 4: Showing how Councils have worked together, considered local views and embraces heritage	✓
<p>The proposed model embraces the diverse heritage of Gloucestershire, building on the heritage of the historic City of Gloucester and the rurality and key towns of the Gloucestershire Unitary.</p> <p>Councils in Gloucestershire have a strong history of working collaboratively for the benefit of their residents, delivering value for money services through shared assets and delivery vehicles – our model enhances that.</p> <p>The model is informed by feedback that was collectively commissioned by all seven councils and the development of the Gloucester City and Gloucestershire Unitary unlocks new opportunities to engage with residents, businesses, partners and other stakeholders to ensure both Councils deliver for the people they serve and play a central role in enabling other public services to deliver most effectively within the area.</p>	

Criteria 5: Supporting devolution arrangements	✓
<p>The development of the Gloucester City and Gloucestershire Unitary will support devolution in the area by creating two strong voices at the devolution table for Gloucestershire, giving the county more proportionate voting rights in the governance of the Combined Authority than a single unitary would. A strong City voice, to sit alongside the voices of other key cities such as Bristol and Bath in the WECA sub-region, or Hereford and Worcester, or Oxford and Swindon, and to drive growth more equitably across the sub-region, standing alongside a Gloucestershire County voice to balance the rural areas of the Mayoral Authority.</p> <p>Our initial preference is that the two authorities will join the West of England Combined Authority, however we are also exploring other options with existing or potential new Strategic Mayoral Authorities.</p>	

Criteria 6: Stronger community engagement and empowerment	✓
<p>The two unitary approach ensures that local democracy is accessible to all and retains strong democratic accountability in decision making. The model is founded on an enhanced approach to neighbourhood working and place-based governance which will embrace the roles of Parish and Town Councils.</p> <p>Alongside formal neighbourhood governance there is a vision to develop a number of informal mechanisms that will enable communities to engage at the most local level to ensure that the Councils are able to understand, engage with and respond to the people they are there to serve.</p> <p>The model for the Gloucester City and Gloucestershire Unitary Councils will make local democracy simpler, easier to understand and more accessible to residents.</p>	

Request for modification –

The preceding proposals are submitted following the invitation and the terms of section 2 of the Act. They follow a considerable amount of work completed within our partnership and with our partners.

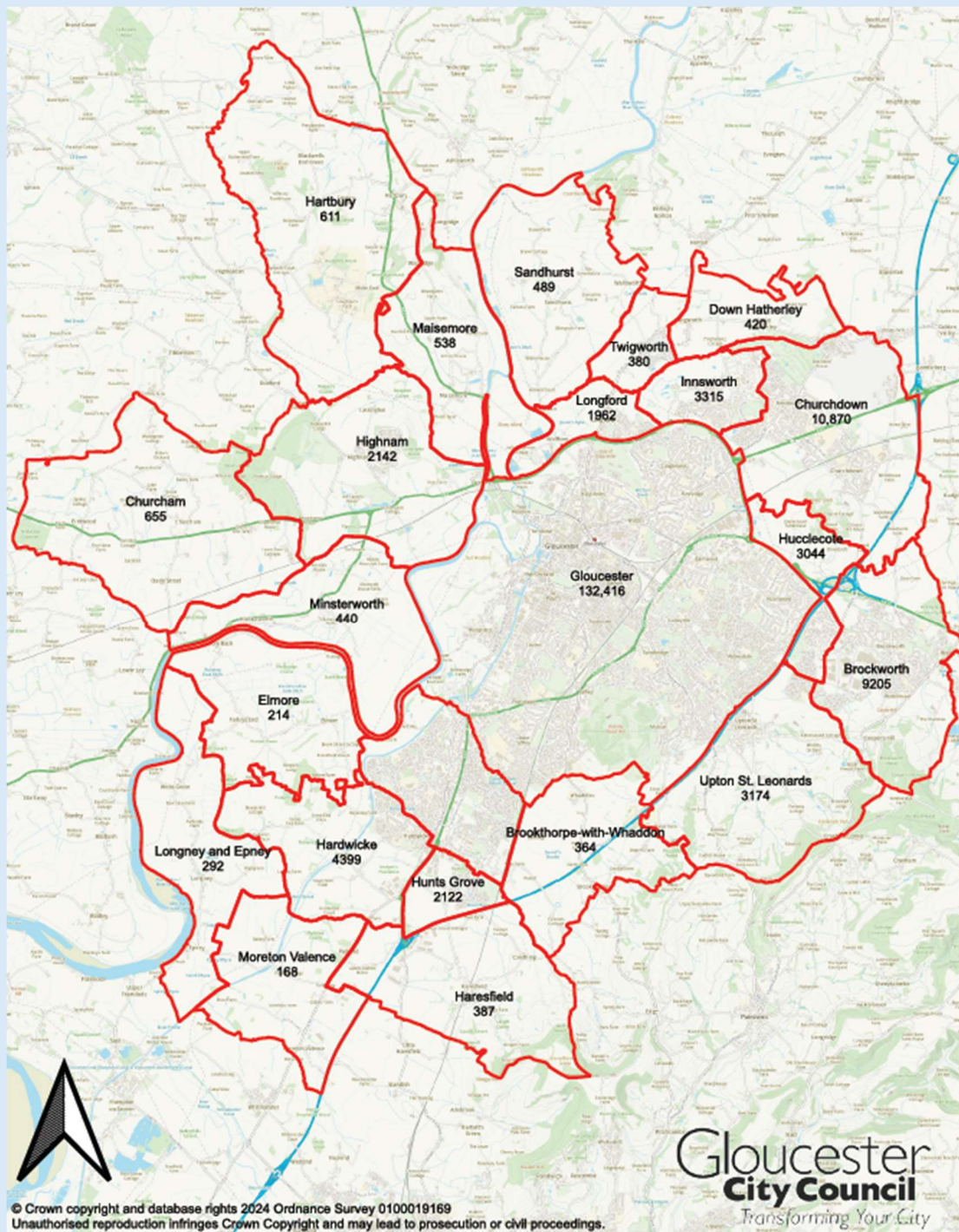
Pursuant to the Act, in particular section 7, the Secretary of State can, by order, implement proposals with modifications. Following our extensive workings, local knowledge, and analysis we are requesting that modifications are made to our proposals in order to substantially improve the overall benefits to be gained by reorganisation.

This approach follows the indications set out in the Interim Plan submissions for Gloucestershire and is considered to be essential to achieve best outcome for residents, communities and businesses through substantial enhancement of the benefit case. The modified proposal delivers a local government structure fit for the next fifty years.

The specific modification we are seeking is that –

- The boundaries of the Gloucester unitary set out above are extended to encompass the true economic geography of Greater Gloucester, by including the Civil Parishes of: Churcham, Highnam, Maisemore, Hartpury, Sandhurst, Longford, Twigworth, Down Hatherley, Innsworth, Churchdown, Hucclecote, Brockworth, Upton St Leonards, Brookthorpe and Whaddon, Haresfield, Hunts Grove, Moreton Valance, Hardwicke, Longney and Epney, Elmore and Minsterworth
- The boundaries of the Gloucestershire unitary set out above are reduced through the removal of these same civil parishes.

Figure 2. Modified Unitary Map -



We request this on the basis that –

- This would allow a substantial enhancement to the proposal set out above, and in particular our ability to better meet the LGR criteria, as set out in our modified submission (attached) and enable the creation of a new Greater Gloucester authority to form the model for local government alongside the Gloucestershire Unitary Council.
- There is a very strong public service justification, on the basis that our core service models are rooted in the establishment of new prevention and neighbourhood focused services, aligned around the demographic differences found across the county, which are not considered to be achievable via other means. This modification provides the scale for Greater Gloucester and also better reflects the way people in Gloucestershire live their lives, and the people and places they engage with.
- Whilst we model a significant reorganisation one-off cost, estimated at around £26.913m, these are proximate to estimates for other forms of reorganisation and still self-financing within 4 years of vesting day.

These boundary changes are –

- The most effective way to develop a new unitary that accurately reflects the true geography of Gloucester, creating a new Greater Gloucester unitary which addresses historic under-bounding and has the scale and potential to achieve the growth the city, county and country needs.
- The optimal way of mitigating any unintended consequences of boundary change with Cheltenham Borough Council, Cotswold District Council and Gloucester City Council contained entirely within one unitary and small changes to the boundaries of Forest of Dean Council and Stroud District Council, with only the boundary of Tewkesbury District Council changing substantially

Discounted options

We do not believe it practical to achieve the same via other means – particularly a future Principal Area Boundary Review (PABR). The significant downside of a PABR approach would be the substantially increased transition and service disruption time, alongside the significantly – and unnecessary – increased costs to implement. In effect, as the size and shape of authorities are materially different a PABR would mean:

- Requiring, effectively, two rounds of reorganization, impacting on both authorities.
- Transition period significantly extended, with substantial additional disruption for staff and service users.
- Transition costs growing by a further 20-30% driven, in particular, by duplication of transformation elements and additional ICT costs accrued.
- Payback being delayed substantially due to additional costs and benefits being deferred.

On this basis we believe immediate modification is the only practical route forward.

We request this be taken into account, and our modified submission, as attached, be the version presented for consultation.

Appendix B | Inner Circle Report: A Case for Cities

[circulated as separate file attachment]

Appendix C | Economic Impact Calculations

Purpose

Appendix C sets out in a step by step process the calculation of the economic impact (benefits and disbenefits) of each of the three options considered within the option appraisal.

Process

The initial steps were:

- Identifying the appropriate measures
- Identifying the baseline for each measure (from national statistics or local reports)
- Identifying the value of each unit of the measure (from research)
- Agreeing the relative impact each option may have in movement from that baseline (based upon local knowledge and previous examples / pilot studies)

The calculation steps then follow:

- Multiplying the forecast change by the respective value (to get the Gross Impact)
- Applying an 'Additionality Adjustment' - a series of factors adjusting for what might have happened anyway without the change (see below for a detailed description)
- Discounting future (dis)benefits to reflect a benefit now, all things being equal is more desirable than the same benefit in the future

This approach then gets to a calculated net present value per option for the impact per measure and overall impact.

Appropriate measures

As detailed in the main report, a series of potential outcomes were presented, which were eliminated down to those where the option selected was likely to have a material impact on that outcome achieved. Then to avoid duplication, a single measure was chosen to measure the impact of that change per outcome. Table A.1 sets out the selections.

Table A.1: Measures used for calculating economic impact

Outcome	Output measure	Reason for inclusion
Job creation	Gross Value Added for jobs created	A combination of impact of public sector losses in region from re-organisation + impact of an enhanced economic strategy tailored to urban needs in options focussed on such
Small business survival	Gross Value Added for increased start-up / SME survival rates	Greater align economic development with local strengths and needs - where tighter focus on specific regions
Investment within area / region	Investment within area	Gloucester City has a strong track record of working to engage partners in regeneration within its boundaries - there is a risk that this is diluted without a specific council carrying out these duties

Cultural engagement	Change in people engaging in cultural activities	The closer the link between each council and its residents will allow for more engagement and celebration of cultural identities - conversely the more distant, the more likely for there to be disengagement from current activity levels
Crime & disorder	Change in recorded crime	Exceptional prevention focused work currently taking place within Districts - risk of this being diluted through merging into larger councils
Visitor economy	Visitor spend in region	Risk of loss of promotion of urban areas if integrated into wider councils - the appeal of the area is very diverse, making it harder for a council with a mix of urban and rural areas to market the appeal to those different visitor groups
Homelessness prevention	Number of homelessness applications	Solutions to homelessness (or the factors that help prevent it) are often household-specific and reliant on a high degree of flexibility, creativity, local connections and partner organisations, which are easier to build and sustain on a smaller footprint.
Children social care	Costs of looked after children	Nationally evidenced report showing links between average cost of provision and size of councils
Adult social care	Costs of residential and nursing care	National evidenced report showing links between average cost of provision and size of councils

Baseline for each measure

Table A.2 sets out the baseline position and source for each measure used for calculating the benefits.

Table A.2 Baseline Position and Source for each Output Measure

Measure	Baseline (per year)	Source / justification
Job creation	4,294	Number of new workers required per year in Gloucester (Gloucestershire's Economic Strategy - Economic Evidence Base 2023) ¹⁰
Small business survival	3,155	UK Business Count of Micro Enterprises within Gloucester (2024) ¹¹
Investment within area / region	£50m pa	Over £1 billion invested in Gloucester over last two decades (averaged) ¹²
Cultural engagement	78,000	Number of people attending local cultural events where numbers were recorded ¹³

¹⁰ <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/bzle1nc5/evidence-base-2023-executive-summary.pdf> (page 39)

¹¹ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157375/report.aspx> (in businesses section)

¹² <https://www.investgloucester.co.uk/regeneration-in-gloucester/>

¹³

<https://democracy.gloucester.gov.uk/documents/s62656/Appendix%201%20Review%20of%20Festivals%20and%20E>

Crime & disorder	£105.375m	Total number of instances of crime ¹⁴ multiplied by the published figures on cost of crime by type ¹⁵ (inflated to current day costs)
Visitor economy	£124.207m	3-year average of visitor spend (prior to Covid years) in Gloucester ¹⁶
Homelessness prevention	275	Average number of people per year prevented from becoming homeless due to action from Gloucester City officers ¹⁷
Children social care (cost of children in care)	£82.599m	Proxy for cost of children in care, by multiplying number of Children in Care in Gloucestershire (815) by national average weekly cost of placement in an authority over 500,000 population (£1949 pw), multiplied by 52 weeks ¹⁸
Adult social care (cost of residential and nursing care)	£116.465m	Proxy cost by multiplying number of Residential and Nursing placements in Gloucestershire (1,317 and 655 respectively) multiplied by the national average weekly cost of placement in an authority over 500,000 population (£1,160pw and £655pw), multiplied by 52 weeks

Impact per unit

Unit values for each (dis)benefit were also determined by a research review, using Government approved figures where possible, peer assessed national or international research if not, then local pilots if neither of these were available. The figures used and their sources are contained within Table A.3.

Table A.3: Unit values used to calculate gross economic impacts [EXAMPLES]

Assumption	Value	Justification
GVA per job created / per micro business surviving	£67,640	Average GVA in region 2023 ¹⁹
Value per person engaging in cultural activity	£1,498.35 per person	DCMS Commissioned report calculating welfare benefit of sports and cultural activities

[vents%20Activity%202024-25.pdf](#)

¹⁴ <https://www.plumplot.co.uk/City-Gloucester-crime-stats.html>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-crime>

¹⁶ <https://www.visitbritain.org/research-insights/england-domestic-tourism-regional-and-subregional-data>

¹⁷ <https://www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk/news/gloucester-news/300-new-homelessness-cases-each-9199888>

¹⁸ Local Government Reform - An Adult and Children's Service's Lens, Peopletoo, presented to Chief Executives Forum of District Council's Network in July 2025

¹⁹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/labourproductivity/datasets/subregionalproductivitylabourproductivitygvaaperhourworkedandgvaaperfilledjobindicesbyuknuts2andnuts3subregions> (table b3 - Column Y)

		(inflated for years since published at 3.5% pa) ²⁰
Crime & Disorder	%age change	Measure is already direct economic impact, therefore forecast %age change by each option is appropriate to use to measure the impact
Visitor Economy	%age change	Measure is already direct economic impact, therefore forecast %age change by each option is appropriate to use to measure the impact
Cost impact on a homelessness application	£218.307 per person	Research by Xantura on costs of homelessness including both direct costs and welfare impact on individuals affected ²¹
Children Social Care	%age efficiency difference	Percentage difference between average unit costs for a 500,000+ size council compared to the relevant size council(s)
Adult Social Care	%age efficiency difference	Percentage difference between average unit costs for a 500,000+ size council compared to the relevant size council(s)

Estimate of Impact per Option

For each option, the relative impact was measured. Ranges were modelled unless fully based upon external data (i.e. the savings associated with social care), although for reporting purposes these were combined using Monte Carlo analysis - essentially multiplying the value of each outcome by the estimated probability of it happening to get a single figure, rather than a range.

Value of benefits

Table A.4 shows the range for each output measure and the expected value within that range for each option. Each is presented here as a percentage change away from the current baseline.

Table A.4: Estimates of the range and expected value for each output measure per option compared with current position (low = greatest disbenefit or smallest benefit)

Measure	A	B	C
Jobs Created (absolute number see below)			
Micro businesses sustained	-5%	-2.5%	0%
Investment change	-10%	5%	0%
Cultural engagement	-5%	-2.5%	0%
Crime rates	2%	1%	0%
Visitor economy	-1%	-0.5%	0%
Homelessness prevention	-20%	-10%	0%
Children Social Care	0%	11.85%	4.14%
Adult Social Care	0%	10.13%	-2.96%

* 1% Across the wider Gloucestershire geography rather than Gloucester specific

²⁰ <https://www.sportengland.org/media/11240/moves-v2-se-final-nov16.xlsm>https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/304899/Quantifying_and_valuing_the_wellbeing_impacts_of_sport_and_culture.pdf (Table 6 - p9)

²¹ <https://xantura.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-Risks-and-Costs-of-Homelessness.pdf>

Multiplying the percentage to the baseline got the absolute change fed into the benefits model to calculate the gross economic impact. Table A.5 shows the calculated figures for each option - in this context it is the change away from the current model, so a zero would be no expected change from the current two-tier model.

Table A.5: Figures used to calculate economic impact per model (per annum)

Measure	A	B	C
Jobs Created	(100)	(50)	0
Micro businesses sustained	(157)	(78.5)	0
Investment change	(£5m) pa	(£2.5m) pa	0
Cultural engagement	(3,850)	(1,925)	0
Crime rates	2% inc	1% inc	0
Visitor economy	(£1.242m)	(£0.621m)	0
Homelessness prevention	(55)	(27.5)	0
Children Social Care	0	£9.788m	£3.420m
Adult Social Care	0	£11.798m	(£3.447m)

* Fed into each individual crime rate

Gross economic impact

The gross economic impact for each measure can be taken by multiplying the change in units by the benefit per unit (except in the case of physical activity where a specialised model is used to calculate the expected impact). These figures are combined with the financial projected savings (as additional benefits) and transition / one-off costs (as additional disbenefits). These gross economic impact of these benefits modified by two additional adjustments:

- An additionality adjustment
- A time-discounting factor

Additionality Adjustment

The following factors elements were considered for each benefit:

- Leakage - benefits going to people outside the target area (e.g. health benefits from people coming from overseas participating in leisure activities generated by a scheme)
- Displacement - benefits lost because individuals swap from another activity which would also have provided similar benefits (e.g. when a job created is taken by someone already in full time employment and their previous role is not re-filled)
- Substitution - benefits lost because companies change their decisions because of the scheme (e.g. they don't repair a building themselves, because they can get a grant to support it)
- Economic multiplier - the wider supply chain and regional impact of the benefit (e.g. construction work having a beneficial impact on the local supply chain)
- Deadweight - what would happen even if the project didn't go ahead (e.g. general rises in commercial or house prices)

Each economic impact was assessed by the project to assess the likely impact of each factor, using the reference cases set out in the Additionality Guide and HCA Additionality Guide as starting points, supplemented with local knowledge and sector specific research. Appendix D sets out for each benefit the

values used for each factor and the reasoning behind this.

Time discounting factor

All benefits were then combined with the direct calculated impact from the financial model (both the ongoing savings and transition costs). All results are then discounted by the Governments Green Book value of 3.5% per year. Discounting is used to reflect the fact that a benefit today should be valued higher than the same benefit in the future.

Overall position per option

The combination of all these factors combined, gives the calculated Net Present Value of Benefits for each option. These are presented in the Table A.7 - A.9 below.

Table A.7: Overall economic impact calculation of Option A

Category	Option A			
Economic impact category	Gross impact (£m)	Additionality adjustment (£m)	Discount (£m)	NPV of impact (£m)
Economic benefits				
Ongoing savings	186.696	0.000	(33.993)	152.703
Sub-total economic benefits (A)	186.696	0.000	(33.993)	152.703
Economic disbenefits				
Transition costs	(20.833)	0.000	0.000	(20.833)
Job Creation	(67.640)	30.165	6.309	(31.167)
Small Business Survival	(106.195)	86.841	3.258	(16.096)
Investment in area / region	(17.845)	3.102	2.482	(12.262)
Cultural Engagement	(57.686)	36.379	3.587	(17.720)
Crime & Disorder	(19.060)	4.765	2.406	(11.888)
Visitor Economy	(12.421)	5.539	1.158	(5.723)
Homelessness Prevention	(120.069)	37.942	13.825	(68.302)
Sub-total economic disbenefits (B)	(421.749)	204.733	33.025	(183.991)
Overall economic impact (A+B)	(235.052)	204.733	(0.967)	(31.288)

Table A.8: Overall economic impact calculation of Option B

Category	Option B			
Economic impact category	Gross impact (£m)	Additionality adjustment (£m)	Discount (£m)	NPV of impact (£m)
Economic benefits				
Ongoing savings	120.667	0.000	(22.459)	98.208
Children Social Care	88.091	(35.237)	(9.688)	43.167

Adult Social Care	106.181	(42.472)	(11.677)	52.032
Sub-total economic benefits (A)	314.939	(77.709)	(43.823)	193.407
Economic disbenefits				
Transition costs	(26.913)	0.000	0.000	(26.913)
Job Creation	(33.820)	15.082	3.154	(15.583)
Small Business Survival	(53.097)	43.420	1.629	(8.048)
Investment in area / region	(8.923)	1.551	1.241	(6.131)
Cultural Engagement	(28.843)	18.190	1.793	(8.860)
Crime & Disorder	(9.530)	2.382	1.203	(5.944)
Visitor Economy	(6.210)	2.770	0.579	(2.862)
Homelessness Prevention	(60.034)	18.971	6.913	(34.151)
Sub-total economic disbenefits (B)	(227.371)	102.366	16.513	(108.492)
Overall economic impact (A+B)	87.568	24.658	(27.311)	84.915

Table A.9: Overall Economic Impact Calculation of Option C

Category	Option C			
Economic impact category	Gross impact (£m)	Additionality adjustment (£m)	Discount (£m)	NPV of impact (£m)
Economic benefits				
Ongoing savings	115.928	0.000	(21.577)	94.351
Children Social Care	30.776	(12.310)	(3.385)	15.081
Sub-total economic benefits (A)	146.704	(12.310)	(24.961)	109.432
Economic disbenefits				
One-off costs	(26.913)	0.000	0.000	(26.913)
Adults Social Care	(31.026)	12.410	3.412	(15.024)
Sub-total economic disbenefits (B)	(57.939)	12.410	3.412	(42.117)
Overall economic impact (A+B)	88.765	0.100	(21.549)	67.316

Note there is no discount factor applies within the overall model for physical activity impact as the specialised model already applies a 3.5% discount factor within its output

Appendix D | Additionality Adjustments

All benefits were assessed to determine if and how much of these would have been achieved if the project did not go ahead. This follows the principles of the Additionality Guide and ensures that naturally occurring increases are removed before considering the wider economic impact of an option. The formula used is as follows:

$$AI = [GI \times (1-L) \times (1-Dp) \times (1-S) \times M] - [GI^* \times (1-L^*) \times (1-Dp^*) \times (1-S^*) \times M^*]$$

Where:

AI = Net additional impact

GI = Gross impact

L = Leakage

Dp = Displacement

S = Substitution

M = Multiplier

* denotes reference case and hence deadweight

- Net additional impact - the final value of the benefit after the calculation
- Gross impact - the total benefit, the starting point before adjustments for this formula
- Leakage - benefits going to people outside the target area (e.g. health benefits from people coming from overseas participating in leisure activities generated by a scheme)
- Displacement - benefits lost because individuals swap from another activity which would also have provided similar benefits (e.g. when a job created is taken by someone already in full time employment and their previous role is not re-filled)
- Substitution - benefits lost because companies change their decisions because of the scheme (e.g. they don't repair a building themselves, because they can get a grant to support it)
- Economic Multiplier - the wider supply chain and regional impact of the benefit (e.g. construction work having a beneficial impact on the local supply chain)
- Deadweight - what would happen even if the project didn't go ahead (e.g. general rises in commercial or house prices) - this formula is often simplified to be a percentage of the overall benefits where a reference case is not directly calculated

The values for each of these components were considered on a benefit-by-benefit basis. The following table sets out the values used for each, per benefit.

Additionality Components per Quantified Benefit

Area / measure	Value	Justification
Jobs created		
Leakage	10%	Low leakage - Some jobs may be filled by people that choose to live elsewhere and commute, but most benefits of jobs created are expected to remain in the region
Displacement	10%	Low displacement - any jobs filled by people already employed are likely to be advertised and filled themselves
Substitution	10%	Low substitution - it is relatively unlikely that the public sector jobs will prevent similar jobs in the private sector
Multiplier	1	No wider benefit considered as the Gross Value Added element already considers the impact the employment has on the wider economy
Deadweight	24%	In line with City Challenge Regeneration schemes average (Table 3.3 of Additionality Guide)
Micro-business sustained		
Leakage	10%	Low leakage - likely to be very small for micro-businesses as their nature they are hyper-local
Displacement	10%	Low displacement - if someone finds another job after their micro-business fails then they are probably in competition with others, who will themselves lose out on employment instead
Substitution	10%	Low substitution - generally micro-businesses fill niches that other businesses are unwilling or find uneconomic to fill
Multiplier	1	No wider benefit considered as the Gross Value Added element already considers the impact the employment has on the wider economy
Deadweight	75%	Very high due to the limited direct impact the council has on the wider economic impact
Investment in the area		
Leakage	10%	Low leakage - some supply chain and materials may be sourced internationally and therefore leak out of the economy
Displacement	25%	Moderate displacement - limit overall capacity in construction industry, so any major work will have somewhat of an impact on other developments taken forward
Substitution	0%	The private sector is already carrying out this work, so there is no substitution effect
Multiplier	1.7	2.7 is average for new build projects based upon the HCA additionality guide - 1 is removed as the direct benefit of the building is not considered here
Deadweight	28%	Average for major construction schemes
Cultural Activities		
Leakage	40%	Moderate - Figure based upon survey findings of number of attendees from outside the region
Displacement	10%	Low - some people will choose council run events which would otherwise have chosen alternative cultural events, but it is

expected this number will be relatively low

Substitution	10%	Low - some public events might crowd out private sector events, but the nature of the events are likely to limit the degree that substitution takes place
Multiplier	1	Multiplier impact already included with the valuation of the benefit
Deadweight	24%	In line with City Challenge Regeneration schemes average (Table 3.3 of Additionality Guide)

Crime levels

Leakage	0%	Impact of crime is focussed within region
Displacement	25%	Potential for some crime to be displaced rather than stopped
Substitution	0%	No private sector investment will be offset by having a more localisation crime prevention approach
Multiplier	1	Multiplier impact already included with the valuation of the benefit
Deadweight	0%	No deadweight as measure and value already calculated through research taking into account any such factors

Visitor spend

Leakage	10%	Low - Small leakage from visitor spend
Displacement	10%	Low - Advertising may displace customers from one location in the region to another
Substitution	10%	Low - Some advertisement / tourism strategy may reduce the advertising private companies would otherwise have to undertake
Multiplier	1	Kept low conservatively to avoid double counting (especially with GVA for employment)
Deadweight	24%	In line with City Challenge Regeneration schemes average (Table 3.3 of Additionality Guide)

Homelessness Prevention

Leakage	0%	Impact is all within region
Displacement	10%	Low - reflecting the fact that not all homelessness applications are accepted, so some work will be on unsuccessful applications
Substitution	0%	No private sector provision impact
Multiplier	1	Multiplier impact already included with the valuation of the benefit
Deadweight	24%	In line with City Challenge Regeneration schemes average (Table 3.3 of Additionality Guide)

Adult & Children Social Care

Leakage	0%	Impact is all within region
Displacement	0%	No displacement impact
Substitution	0%	No private sector provision impact
Multiplier	1	Multiplier impact already included with the valuation of the benefit
Deadweight	40%	Significant factor built in due to usage of national average unit data rather than actual local data, plus risks that some elements of the calculations maybe affected by external factors, such as smaller

local authorities being more prevalent in areas where costs are lower

Appendix E | Cratus Public Engagement Report

[circulated as separate file attachment]

Appendix F | Aggregation and Disaggregation Tables

Service Area	Current delivery model	Recommended Delivery Model	Level of change required	One off Transition Costs	Additional ongoing recurring costs	Aggregation Benefits
3.1 Corporate Services						
Digital & ICT	Different delivery models across the Councils. County / Tewkesbury / Glos City / Stroud - In-House Cotswold / Forest of Dean / Chelt - Publica	Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary. (Noting that some specialist functions e.g. cyber security, hardware and software may be jointly outsourced / shared across the two)	High	High	Low	Medium
Asset Management & Property	All councils currently deliver property and asset services largely in-house. However, there are external consultants and framework partners utilised for specialist services by councils. Note services previously delivered by Publica were brought in house with the exception of one health and safety advisor.	Hybrid: In-house strategic teams with some shared services of technical functions under an SLA and hosted arrangement. <i>Strategic ownership and direction would remain local to each authority.</i> <i>Note: This excludes commercial property</i>	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Pensions	Operated and administered in-house via the Gloucestershire Pension Fund within GCC for all councils in Glos	GU is designated as the administering authority for the Gloucestershire Pension Fund; GG becomes a scheme employer within the fund (similar to current arrangements with district councils).	Low	Low	N/A	Low
Strategic Finance	In-house	Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary.	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Insurance & Counterfraud	CFEU - Counter fraud and enforcement unit ARA - Shared service hosted by County Council for itself and Gloucester City Council and	Shared Countywide Service – Hosted in GU with traded services	Low	Low	N/A	Low

	Stroud SWAP - South West Audit Partnership					
Democratic Services	In-House across all councils	Two separate in-house , one per unitary with local delivery teams. Also combined Democratic services and elections teams into one team.	Low	Low	Low	Medium
Elections	In-House across all councils	Two separate in-house , one per unitary with local delivery teams. Also combined Democratic services and elections teams into one team.	Low	Low	Low	High
Legal Services	Mixed – One Legal between 4 councils, quasi shared service between 2 councils and in-house for county	Hybrid: shared services or hosted on day 1 – with some functions independent and traded services. Will need 2 monitoring officers	Low	Low	Low	High
Comms	In-house	Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary	Low	Low	Low	High
HR	Different delivery models across the Councils. Most - In-House Some - Publica	Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary	Low	Low	Low	High
Transactional Services incl. Payroll, AP / AR	Different delivery models across the Councils. Most - In-House Some - Publica	Shared service – hosted by GU with traded services	Low	Low	Low	High
Planning, Performance & Insight (Data)	In-house	Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary	Low	Low	Low	High
Information Governance	In-house	Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary	Low	Low	Low	High
Transformation	In-house	Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary	Low	Low	Low	High
Customer Management	In-house	Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary	Low	Low	Low	High
Internal audit	Tewkesbury – In-House Cheltenham, Cotswold and Forest of Dean – South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) Gloucestershire County – In-house service which is also provided to Gloucester City Council and Stroud.	Delivery model to be determined following an options analysis of the different options.	Low	Low	Low	High

3.2 Front-Line Upper Tier Services (Only County Council currently)						
Public Health	In-House management & advisory with a range of commissioned services	Two separate in-house, one per unitary (disaggregated). Noting that there is still likely to be joint working in some limited areas where it makes sense to retain county wide provision and economies of scale e.g. sexual health. Will need 2 DPH Could be joint commissioning of supply chain e.g - out of hours	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Adult Social Care	ASC is delivered in-house by GCC, and the care market is managed centrally, with countywide contracts and provider relationships	Two separate in-house , one per unitary with its own DASS. (disaggregated) delivered locally. Noting: commissioning may take between 3 - 5 years to fully disaggregate. Commissioning jointly on areas e.g - tech enabled care	High	High	High	Medium
Childrens	Mixed Delivery Models The service is managed overall in-house but there are also a number of elements of the service commissioned out e.g. Family and Youth Hub development	Two separate in-house , one per unitary (disaggregated) each undertaking their own commissioning and statutory partnership arrangements Will need 2 DCS and become 2 members of Adoption West	High	High	High	Medium
Education	In-house Note: Cross-authority music service	Two separate in-house , one per unitary (disaggregated)	High	High	High	Medium
Archives	In-house	Shared Countywide Service - Hosted by GG given this is where the Heritage Hub is (Gloucester)	Low	Low	Low	N/A
Transport & Highways	In-House With outsourced service delivery	Two separate in-house , one per unitary (disaggregated) Commissioning but flexibility on supply chain (over the long-term) but on day 1, may have to have the service hosted in one authority and providing services to the other.	High	High	High	Low
Fire & Rescue	In-House - GCC currently holds the governance and service responsibilities.	Independent Fire and Rescue Authority	High	High	N/A	N/A

Trading Standards	In-house	Two separate in-house teams, one per unitary	Medium	Low	Low	N/A
Coroners	In-house	Shared Countywide Service (Hosted) - Hosted by GG as the Coroner's court is located in Gloucester	Low	Low	Low	N/A
Libraries	In-House	Two separate in-house , one per unitary (disaggregated) Joint Library Management System	Low	Low	Low	Low
Registrars	In-House	Shared Countywide Service - Hosted TBD which authority would be the host with shared Proper Officer	Low	Low	Low	N/A
Employment and skills	In-House	County wide, Hosted by one authority	Low	Low	Low	N/A
3.3 Front-Line Lower Tier Services OR Both (Only Districts OR both County and Districts currently)						
Public Protection	Mixed. Most services are delivered in-house by district councils though Publica provides services for Forest of Dean and Cotswold with some local differences. There are also some services (in some councils) contracted out e.g stray dogs, contaminated land.	Two separate in-house teams but with some specialist functions shared e.g. contaminated land.	High	Medium	N/A	High
Emergency Planning	In-House across all councils currently	Two separate in-house teams with opportunity for joint working	Low	Low	Low	Low
Revenue & Benefits	In-House Cotswold and FoD via Publica	Two separate in-house teams Consider merging customer services	High	High	N/A	Medium
Cemetery and crematorium	In-house across all 7 councils	Two separate in-house teams	Medium	Medium	N/A	Medium

Housing Strategy, Maintenance & Homelessness	Mixed - All councils have some elements in-house but note: Stroud and Chelt have in-house DLOs and their own housing stock. FoD and Cotswold have shared housing staff in Publica (shared with West Oxfordshire too) Glos City host the Strategic Housing Partnership which is countywide across all 7 councils. All councils commission some services externally	Hybrid - Each UA would operate some services in-house and some under shared arrangements (hosted by one authority)	High	High	Medium	High
Climate & Sustainability	In-House teams in each council but there is also a county-wide Climate Leadership Gloucestershire Team managed by Glos City.	Two in-house teams, with a shared partnership forum for collaboration	High	Medium	Low	Low
Economic Development	All councils have in-house ED capabilities noting variations in terms of scope of services, structures and extent of partnership working	Two in-house teams but with countywide partnership working (where needed)	High	Medium	N/A	High
Tourism & Visitor Economy	All Councils have small in-house local tourism teams but they are all also part of (and put varying amounts of funding towards) the Cotswolds Plus Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP).	Strategic Countywide Visitor Economy Function with Local Place Marketing Not yet been determined if the strategic element would be in-house or as a separate organisation	Low	Low	N/A	High
Leisure	Stroud - In-House model 5 of the 6 councils outsource provision (3 to Freedom Leisure; CBC to the Chelt Trust and Tewkesbury to Places Leisure)	Harmonisation of current contractual positions over time to move to a sustainable and aligned model	High	Medium	N/A	Medium

Culture & Heritage	Mixed A number of councils have this in-house; Cotswold outsource running of museum to Freedom Leisure; A lot of partnership working e.g. Glos City have a strategic partnership with Gloucester Culture Trust	Codesigned future delivery models with the sector and communities with a consideration of future implications related to devolution	TBD based on delivery models that are chosen	TBD based on delivery models that are chosen	TBD based on delivery models that are chosen	TBD based on delivery models that are chosen
Planning	In-house	Two separate in house teams	High	Medium	Medium	Medium
Building Control	Mixed - Some in-house and some with shared arrangements e.g - Gloucester City and Stroud partnership / Cheltenham and Tewkesbury	Delivered as a shared service across both UAs, with joint governance, shared systems, and local operational teams	Medium	Medium	N/A	Medium
Development & Regeneration	In-house	Two separate in house teams	Medium	Medium	N/A	Medium
Waste & Environmental Services: Waste disposal and HRCs	Mixed Delivery - Through in house teams and contractors such as Ubico and FCC (Javelin Park)	Ubico co-owned and co-commissioned by two UA's HRCs: Ubico continue to manage HRC Operations FCC: GU would provide due to Javelin Park location	Low	Low	N/A	Medium
Waste & Environmental Services: Waste collection	Delivered via Ubico	Remain delivered by Ubico, commissioned by two UA's	Low	Low	N/A	Low – Consistency and standardisation
Waste & Environmental Services: Environmental Services	Mixed Delivery - in house team with some elements contracted out, some delivered by Ubico e.g tree planting	Ubico commissioned by GG. Two separate in-house teams, GU model would be mixed	Medium	Medium	N/A	Medium
Parking	Mixed. Most services are delivered in-house by district councils though Publica provides services for Forest of Dean and Cotswold with some local differences.	Two separate in-house teams for management and notice processing. Outsource physical enforcement	High	Medium	Low	Medium

	All enforcement activities at GCC are outsourced					
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Appendix G | Equality Impact Assessment

Directorate: All	Service: All
Accountable Officer: Ruth Saunders	
Date of assessment: 30.09.25	Who was involved in completing this assessment? One Legal, Managing Director, Head of Transformation and Commissioning, Policy and Governance Manager
Name of service/function/policy/strategy or process: Greater Gloucester/Gloucestershire proposal for LGR	
Is this new or existing? New	
Why has this change been proposed? Government policy change	

Part 1 – Screening

1.1 Please provide an Executive Summary of this service/function/policy/strategy or process, including the reasons behind the proposed change and who will deliver this service. Remember to demonstrate how you have shown due regard to both negative and positive aspects, for example:

Negative

- Discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct (state how you will eliminate this)
- Prejudice and lack of understanding (how will you foster good relations between people to tackle prejudice and promote good understanding?)
- Which protected characteristics could be negatively affected by this change? Use the table in question 2 to explain these fully

Positive

- Who is to benefit from this change, and what positive opportunities does this offer to Gloucester (residents, GCC and partner agencies)
- Advance equality of opportunity: (remove or minimise disadvantage; meet people's needs; take account of disabilities; encourage participation in public life). (Does not apply to marriage and civil partnership or pregnancy and maternity)
- How might ABCD approaches be implemented?

The main purpose of local government reorganisation is to create simpler governance structures that deliver better outcomes for residents, enhance local accountability and achieve efficiency savings that can be reinvested in public services.

The English Devolution White Paper outlines central Government's plans to replace the current two-tier system of district and county councils with a single tier of local government. This would establish larger, unitary authorities that are responsible for delivering all local government services within an area.

For Gloucestershire there are three proposals being developed and Gloucester City Council is leading on the 'Greater Gloucester/ Gloucestershire' 2 unitary proposal. The work is outlined in the interim report to Cabinet in March 2025 and the report to Council in September 2025.

This EIA focuses on the Greater Gloucester/ Gloucestershire two unitary proposal, not LGR itself as that is a decision which has already been taken by Central Government and is outside of our control. This EIA informs and supports the case for Greater Gloucester/Gloucestershire and responds to the needs and concerns of Gloucester city residents and stakeholders, including those captured within the expanded Greater Gloucester footprint; it also complements the wider two-unitary model for Gloucestershire, as part of a joined-up examination of resident and stakeholder needs across the county.

1.2 Which groups could be affected by this change, in either a negative or positive way? Please include the evidence (i.e. consultation/research) as to how you reached this decision.

(Positive – it could benefit, **Negative** – it could disadvantage, **Neutral** – neither positive nor negative impact or **Not sure?**)

'Protected Characteristic'	Type of impact (Positive, Negative or Neutral)	Reason	Evidence base for decision
Age	Negative (short-term), Positive (long-term)	Short-term risk of confusion and disruption for older people due to changes in service access; long-term opportunity for integrated, person-centred services.	Experience from previous reorganisations (e.g. Somerset, Dorset) shows initial disruption, but also demonstrates that joined-up services can improve outcomes for older people. Local engagement highlights concerns about transition, but also support for the ambition of better, more accessible services.
Disability	Negative (short-term), Positive (long-term)	Short-term disruption and risk of digital exclusion; long-term improvements through integrated service design and data sharing.	National and local evidence (including feedback from disability groups) indicates that change can be unsettling, but that well-designed, joined-up services can significantly improve accessibility and outcomes for disabled residents.
Gender	Neutral	No direct impact identified.	No evidence of differential impact from local data or engagement.
Marriage & Civil Partnership	Neutral	No direct impact identified.	No evidence of differential impact from local data or engagement.
Pregnancy & Maternity	Neutral	No direct impact identified.	No evidence of differential impact from local data or engagement.
Race (including Gypsy & Traveller)	Neutral	Larger footprint of the Greater Gloucester area may improve ability to identify and provide sites for Gypsy & Traveller communities. The reduction of footprint of the remaining	Local data shows previous difficulty in site provision; expanded area increases opportunities for the more urban centre.

		Gloucestershire area so the impact is therefore neutral.	
Religion/Belief	Neutral	No direct impact identified.	No evidence of differential impact from local data or engagement.
Sexual Orientation	Neutral	No direct impact identified.	No evidence of differential impact from local data or engagement.
Transgender	Neutral	No direct impact identified.	No evidence of differential impact from local data or engagement.
Community Cohesion	Neutral	No immediate impact identified; long-term potential for stronger local identity and engagement in the Greater Gloucester area but this may be reduced for the wider area.	Evidence from other unitarisation suggests improved community engagement over time.
Other Socio-economic Groups (e.g. Single Parents)	Positive	Opportunity to address inequalities through targeted, joined-up support.	National research and local data suggest integrated services better support vulnerable groups so reducing from 7 Councils to 2 is likely to show benefits.
Any Human Rights implications?	None	No direct impact identified.	No evidence of human rights implications from local or national sources.

1.3 Is any part of this policy/service to be carried out wholly or partly by contractors?

If yes, please consider equalities impact through procurement.

☐ Yes ☒ No

1.4 Is a Full People Impact Assessment required? If you have identified any potential or actual negative impact you will need to complete a Full People Impact Assessment (Part 2 below)

☐ Yes ☒ No

Date it is to be completed: N/A