

ERMIN WARD

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

NOVEMBER 2025

 @ErminWard

I post helpful information, including road closures for infrastructure repair etc., on my Ward Councillor Facebook page. Please could you mention this in your Parish News and Village Website. **Underlined text is linked.**

Cllr Julia Judd, Ermin Ward District Councillor
julia.judd@cotswold.gov.uk
07853 383874

[Forthcoming Committee Meetings](#) (underlined texts are linked)

ERMIN WARD

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

[Forthcoming Committee Meetings](#) (underlined texts are linked)

Thursday 6 November 11.00 am [Standards Hearings Sub-Committee](#)
Thursday 6 November 5.00 pm [Performance and Appointments Committee](#)
Wednesday 12 November 2.00 pm [Planning and Licensing Committee](#)
Monday 17 November 4.00 pm [Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#)
Thursday 29 November 6.00 pm [Cabinet](#)
Wednesday 26 November 2.00 pm [Council](#)
Wednesday 26 November 6.00 pm [Extraordinary Meeting, Cabinet](#)
Thursday 27 November 2.00 pm [Licensing Sub-Committee \(Taxis, Private Hire, and Street Trading](#)

[Recent Committee Meetings](#)

Wednesday 8 October	2.00 pm	<u>Planning and Licensing Committee</u>
Monday 13 October	4.00 pm	<u>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</u>
Thursday 16 October	6.00 pm	<u>Cabinet</u>
Tuesday 28 October	2.00 pm	<u>Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis, Private Hire, and Street Trading</u>

CABINET DECISIONS

Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/2027

Council the revised Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2026/2027.

Cabinet recommend to Council to

1. Agree the increase to income bands as detailed within paragraphs 3.2, 3.3 and Annex A of this report from 1 April 2026.

2. Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer, in Consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to amend the income bands by the September 2025 CPI rate due to be published on 22 October 2025, should this be different to the assumed increase set out in the report and annex A.

3. Agree that any balance remaining in the earmarked reserve 'Hardship Fund' be made available in 2026/27 financial year for reasons detailed in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of the report.

Cotswold District Local Plan (2011-31) Regulation 18 Consultation

The purpose of the report was to seek approval to consult on the Preferred Options for development in the Cotswold District for the Regulation 18 consultation, and further technical documents as and when necessary; and to approve the updated Local Development Scheme to progress the Plan to submission in winter 2026 and adoption in winter 2027.

It was noted that a final version of the consultation document had been published as a supplement. The supplement contained some changes, mainly between paragraphs 2.9 to 2.16. which further explained the issue of development density. The figures in Table 1 had also been updated to exclude sites where there was no reasonable prospect of the density of development being increased.

In addition, further to the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the following changes had been made:

The name of the strategic site in Moreton-in-Marsh had been updated to Strategic extension north, south and east of Moreton-in-Marsh; and

For clarity, two footnotes had been added to Table 2 for explain how the 'current dwellings' and 'new dwellings' figures were calculated.

Cabinet

1. Approved the Cotswold District Council Local Plan Review Regulation 18 Consultation Preferred Options (November 2025) document and the commencement of a six-week public consultation on this, together with a call for sites from 5 November 2025 to 18 December 2025.

2. Delegated authority to the Director of Communities and Place, the Accountable Officer and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to agree any minor amendments or additions to the Consultation Document prior to the Regulation 18 Consultation.

3. Delegated authority to the Director of Communities and Place and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to approve for consultation any supporting

technical documents for the Regulation 18 consultation.

4. Delegated authority to the Director of Communities and Place and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to approve additional technical documents for further Regulation 18 consultation as and when necessary.

5. Approved the Local Development Scheme.

Budget Strategy and Medium Term Financial Strategy Update

The purpose of the report was to set out the Budget Strategy to support the preparation of the 2026/27 revenue and capital budgets and present an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy forecast.

Cabinet Approved the 2026/27 Budget Strategy as outlined in the Report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW - DEVOLUTION

[GCC Press Release](#)

Gloucestershire's devolution process is estimated to cost £3.6 million for the period up to the submission of the county's preferred devolution plan in November 2025, which local councils are seeking government funding to cover. It has been reported that the devolution of Gloucestershire councils could eventually run to around £30m. The government believes the simpler unitary structure will be more cost effective to run and lead to better outcomes for residents and improved local accountability. However from a district and parish council point of view, it will mean that contact and decision making is moved further away from residents. Gloucestershire's current county and district local government system has been in place since 1974 consisting of Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), and six district councils – Stroud, Gloucester, Cotswolds, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury and the Forest of Dean.

Gloucestershire will become either one or two unitary authorities, the seven local councils will be dissolved.

Three options are being considered:

1. Merging all seven councils into one Gloucestershire "super unitary"
2. Splitting the county down the middle into two
3. Creating "Greater Gloucester" authority and a second authority for the rest of the county - aka the doughnut.

Council leaders and officers will shortly submit a final proposal for each option which will be voted on by the Cabinets in November.

The proposals will be open to a Public Consultation from January 2026 to April 2026. The government will then assess the chosen models against six criteria. The new authority (or authorities) is/are due to be launched in April 2027.

As I have formerly said, around 30% of Gloucestershire residents live in rural areas and there are numerous tiny parish councils, many more than in average LA areas.

It is only fair that rural residents have representation within the new unitary authority and that their concerns are not ignored whilst councillors (there will be two unitary councillors per 'ward') focus on the bigger issues of schools, health, highways etc. I am leaning towards a Rural Area Board, aka a Neighbourhood Committee. From my understanding with the new CEO of Cotswold District Council, Jane Portman, 10 Neighbourhood Committees of about 90,000 residents will form part of the unitary base and my view is that at least one should be representative of residents who live in rural areas. The total population for Cotswold District in mid-2022 was 91,360 so a 'Cotswold' Area Board might be feasible. Alternatively a Rural Parish Area Board, which soaks up small rural parishes from neighbouring district councils, might be appropriate.

Rural parishes are also advised to collaborate and communicate with one another so that they can share valuable information and organise group campaigns together.

DEVOLUTION TIMELINE

16 December 2024 - The English Devolution White Paper was published, setting out the need for a completely new way of governing – a generational project of determined devolution.

2. What duties and powers will devolved areas receive?

2A. Role of Strategic Authorities

Strategic Authorities will have the ability to perform functions in the following areas:

- transport and local infrastructure
- skills and employment support
- housing and strategic planning
- economic development and regeneration
- environment and net zero
- health, wellbeing and public service reform
- public safety

2B. Transport and Local Infrastructure

2C. Skills and employment support

- 2D. Housing and strategic planning
- 2E. Economic growth and regeneration
- 2F. Environment and climate change
- 2G. Health, wellbeing and public service reform
- 2H. Public safety
- 2I. Mayoral Powers of Competence

A list of 'local partners' will be set out in regulations and will include organisations such as local authorities, NHS partners, police and fire services and organisations providing other public services.

6 February 2025 - Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, Jim McMahon OBE MP wrote to the leaders of all two-tier councils in Gloucestershire, requesting a full proposal to be submitted by 28 November:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-reorganisation-invitation-to-local-authorities-in-two-tier-areas/letter-gloucestershire>

A population size of 500,000 or more is the guiding principle, not a strict target.

Cheltenham Borough Council
Cotswold District Council
Forest of Dean District Council
Gloucester City Council
Gloucestershire County Council
Stroud District Council
Tewkesbury Borough Council

A consultation could be launched in the New Year, and it would likely close after the local elections in May. Following this, decisions on which proposal to implement could be announced before the summer recess. Secondary legislation would then be prepared, to be laid in the House after the summer recess. The legislation could then be made, subject to Parliamentary approval.

This would allow for elections to the new unitary authorities on 6 May 2027. The new authorities would then go live on 1 April 2028. depending on the proposals received. 1 April start dates are necessary for financial arrangements.

3 June 2025 - Local Government Reorganisation Statement: £7.6 million will be made available in the form of Local Government Reorganisation Proposal Development Contributions, to be split across 21 areas - each to receive a flat rate of £135,000, plus

an additional 20p per person based on the latest ONS population estimates - Gloucestershire has been allocated £266,855.

Local Government Reorganisation should facilitate better and sustained community engagement, and I welcome the steps areas are taking to consider how to maintain a strong community voice. A simplified and standardised system of local area-working and governance is needed, and neighbourhood Area Committees, led by frontline ward councillors, are the best route to achieve this. Neighbourhood Area Committees support local authorities to deliver their commitments to community partnership-working at a neighbourhood level. There are also opportunities to bring in other service providers into broader membership of Neighbourhood Area Committees, for instance town or parish councillors where they exist, and co-opted members from other local community organisations. This allows for the benefit of structural efficiencies from Local Governance Reorganisation while deepening localism and engagement across every community.

It is aimed that new authorities go live on 1 April 2028.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-government-reorganisation-letter-to-areas-invited-to-submit-final-proposals/summary-of-the-local-government-reorganisation-process>

Stage one: Inviting unitary proposals - 6 February 2025

Stage two: Submission of formal unitary proposals - 28 November 2025

Stage three: Statutory consultation Jan-May 2026

Stage four: Decision to implement a proposal - Summer 2026

Stage five: Making secondary legislation – the Structural Changes Order (SCO) -

a. The Order

b. Elections - May 2027

c. Transition period arrangements May 2027-April 2028

Stage six: Transition period

Stage seven: New unitary authority goes live - 1 April 2028

BACKGROUND

On 4 June I attended a forum outlining how devolution will evolve.

I asked Jackie Weaver how residents in rural villages are heard by unitary authority councillors.

Her reply was '...they won't - the Parish councils will have to step up to form strong relationships with the unitary authority, but their concerns will be considered of little consequence in comparison to the major urban issues such as social care.'

Matt Kirby from Chippenham Town Council said that the unitary authority will not be able to afford to care for rural Parishes in proportion to what those residents pay in Council Tax. Councillors focus will be on adult social care, children, planning, highways and other big ticket county wide services.

He also said that Chippenham Town Council took on services over and above their brief by raising their precept, because they didn't believe Wiltshire Unitary would deliver these services well, but this raises the question of residents paying double Council Tax.

He went on to list the lessons learned through the process:

It takes longer than expected

Not exact science

Take the game to principal council

Be clear what you want to achieve

Ask your community what they want

Put precept up by enough

The unitary authority will not be able to afford to do what you want, their focus on adult care,

children, planning, highways and other county wide services

Take ownership of your place

Area Boards (now being referred to as Neighbourhood Committees) are a tool within a Unitary Authority which could be invaluable to support rural parishes and be heard by the administration within a large local authority. Area Boards will need proper resourcing and will need to be set up by the Unitary Authority.

I will pursue my ambition that one is created within the proposed Gloucestershire unitary authority, specifically designed to promote the interests of Cotswold rural parish councils. Together with a collaboration of rural parishes, the Area Board could manage communication and collaboration and provide invaluable support. There are too many Cotswold rural parishes to organise themselves without some formal structure.

Town & Parish Council Forum - Update on the Local Plan, meeting government housing targets, and LGR

Redesdale Hall, Moreton-in-Marsh, [Wednesday 5 November, 6pm-8.30pm](#)

Council Chamber, [Cotswold District Council, Monday 10 November 6pm-8.30pm](#)

The Cotswold district parish councillors and clerks are urged to attend one of two forums being held in November.

The events, one in Moreton-in-Marsh, and one in Cirencester, will be led by Councillor Mike Every, Leader of Cotswold District Council.

They will focus largely on the council's update to its Local Plan and offer you the chance – just as the [Regulation 18 consultation](#) opens – to hear more and ask questions about the council's development strategy options, which have been developed in response to the Government doubling the district's housing target. Please find attached the briefing note sent to town and parish councils last week, and [view the draft consultation document here](#).

There will also be an update and questions can be asked on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The county's proposals will have been published not long before these events, ahead of submission to the Government on Friday 28 November.

Parish councillors are encouraged to attend. Please RSVP below. I will be attending the one in Moreton.

This will be an invaluable resource to help you prepare for the Local Plan public consultation and engage confidently with residents.

PLANNING

Cotswold District Council has published draft options for future housing development in response to a sharp rise in government-imposed targets for new homes.

As previously mentioned, Cotswold District Council needs to plan for 1,036 new houses each year, more than double previous targets, as part of a national drive to build 1.5 million homes during this parliament.

Following Cabinet endorsement of potential development scenarios, a six-week public consultation will start on Wednesday November 5 (the first of two) before the final plan is submitted to the Secretary of State in December 2026 for independent examination.

Over 80 per cent of our district is protected National Landscape, which severely limits where houses can be built, yet 18,650 new houses are expected to be delivered over the next 18 years.

The council has developed several strategic options based on land that could be available, and housing that could be delivered in the time period. The recommended option that will be discussed by councillors next week includes:

- A new village near Driffield
- Extensions to Kemble, Ampney Crucis, Preston, Siddington, Fairford, Moreton-in-Marsh and Cirencester
- Smaller developments in other towns and villages

This option could provide sites to deliver 14,660 homes between now and 2043 – the updated Local Plan period – with potential development areas outside of the National Landscape across the north, south and east of the district.

Only one of the options meets the full government target, and this involves building within the National Landscape, which is unlikely to be viable under current planning rules.

The council is also talking with neighbouring authorities exploring whether they can help meet the shortfall. The consultation in November will also include a call for further sites in the district that have potential to be used for housing.

At this stage, these numbers are indicative and high-level, based on sites that currently have planning permission, as well as sites that have been put forward to the council by landowners, which have potential for housing.

The results of the consultation might mean that some sites are discounted or other new sites may come forward.

In July, Cllr Every wrote to Angela Rayner, the previous Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, requesting a rethink. In response, the minister said there would be no change to housing numbers and that the council should proceed with a full update to its Local Plan.

TILED BALANCE AND POLICIES - as also in my October newsletter

As reported in my June Newsletter, CDC has a revised expected 5 Year Housing Land Supply 2024-2029 of 5,439 but can only demonstrate delivery of 1.8 years (1,908).

TILTED BALANCE: NPPF Paragraph 10 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Delivery - the 'Tilted Balance' - **Benefits** outweighing **Harm** has shifted - i.e. applications are more likely to be approved.

The update has rendered the Cotswold Local Plan 'out of date' - specifically Policies DS1, DS2, DS3 and DS4 - other policies are still relevant. CDC is therefore undertaking an update (2-3 years). Cotswold National Landscape areas will retain the usual protections.

Other Paragraphs of the NPPF which are steering the new shift: In particular 11d, Footnote 8, 68, 84, 91, 110, 115, 129, 135, 139.

BINS AND MISSED COLLECTIONS

Despite new efforts being made, missed bin collections continue to fill my inbox (PLEASE continue to keep me informed, I cannot help if I do not know that your bins have not been collected). One Ermin resident resolutely posed a question to Full Council about this issue and she was offered a full apology and assurance that the service will improve. The issue has also been picked up by the press (see link below). The power of asking a public question at Full Council! If you would like to ask a question at full council, please get in touch and I will guide you through the process.

<https://www.gloucestershirelive.co.uk/news/cheltenham-news/cotswold-residents-frustration-over-appalling-1053531>

ELKSTONE ROAD CLOSURE

Many of you have been in touch about this road closure and with good reason. Residents and businesses had 8 weeks to 'plan' but how can anyone plan for anything if they don't know if they can get in or out from day to day. The highways communications have confirmed that Elkstone and Elkstone Studios are told there would be road closures effectively trapping everyone from 7am to 7pm for 12 days.

Local Authorities are expected to support residents and businesses. In this case the left hand has not coordinated with the right hand - how can businesses thrive if customers

are unable to reach them? How can residents of a rural village plan their lives if they can't get in or out?

Summary: Concerns Over Road Closure in Elkstone

- Access Restrictions: The closure plan suggests residents and businesses may be unable to enter or leave the village during working hours, potentially trapping them at home or away.
- School Transport: The school bus will not be able to access the village, and parents may struggle to collect children.
- Business Impact: Local businesses, especially retail and hospitality, fear significant disruption during their busiest trading period before Christmas.
- Diversion Route Issues: Previous diversions caused chaos, especially for larger vehicles like HGVs and coaches, due to unsuitable narrow roads. Several Requests have been made to the Highways Team.
- A more pragmatic approach to access during works, possibly staged resurfacing rather than full closure.
- Clear communication and a direct contact from the capital works team to discuss day-to-day logistics.
- Consideration to reschedule the works to January, post-peak trading season.

Response from GCC:

- The works are part of a fixed annual programme and cannot be rescheduled.
- Safety to roadworkers is the priority, hence the full closure.
- Updates will be provided via Gloucestershire County Council's resurfacing page, social media, and signage.

And their response to my email:

Due to the site location, the south end of the site will be the main access for all vehicles associated with the resurfacing. Therefore, all other access will be severely restricted for the safety of the operatives and the travelling public. There will be gatemen on site and their primary role is to prevent access by anyone in line with the Road Closure Traffic Order that is in place for the duration of the works. As per my previous email, if possible they may be able to offer some very limited access if safe to do so but you should plan for no access from this location.

I am surprised that neither Elkstone PC nor Elkstone Studios were consulted on the plans before they were put in place.

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9d6e2jgq2lo?mc_cid=322fdab392&mc_eid=9720e6feff

DAGLINGWORTH ROAD CLOSURE

Daglingworth has a similar scenario - residents in the village will be cut off for vehicle access and exit for four hours to allow for the Cirencester Half Marathon on Sunday 2 November and have been told to leave their cars outside of the village boundary. This is completely unreasonable - there is no such place that would be safe or allowable! Highways would know that if they had consulted with the village in the first place.

A417

Project update [Newsletter](#) (This link is via an email sent to me, I hope the link opens for you. There are some spectacular images of the project)

The A417 Missing Link project achieved a major milestone in September as it reached the halfway mark since construction started in Spring 2023.

53 20-tonne concrete beams have recently been put in place to form the new underbridge at Shab Valley junction. Work has started to build the carriageway which sits on top. Once open, the bridge will require minimal maintenance through its lifetime and, most importantly, the A417 will not need to be closed in order for it to be carried out. The underbridge will be 20 metres wide and 62 metres long and will provide access to and from the main carriageway.

13,000 drivers have been prosecuted for speeding through the A417's 40mph sections of roadworks since the cameras were installed in November 2024.

There are two 40mph sections as part of our scheme: between the Highwayman Inn/Elkstone junction and Nettleton Bottom, and between the A46 and Air Balloon roundabout. Complying with the 40mph speed limit adds less than a minute to drivers' journeys.

Visit the [A417 Missing Link web page](#).

The Customer Hub, located at the crusher compound at Shab Hill, is open every Tuesday and Wednesday from 10am until 2pm. You can visit any time during these hours, without pre-booking an appointment. Members of the team will be on hand to answer questions. A417 Project Office, Birdlip, Gloucester, GL4 8JX
What3words: <https://w3w.co/shaped.quietest.payback>

10 mph and site restrictions must be adhered to. Please Reverse Park.

Site visits for members of the public. If you are interested, please contact
A417MissingLink@nationalhighways.co.uk

All roadworks and planned road closures on motorways and major A roads, including the A417, are published on the Traffic England website: www.trafficengland.com. Road Closure Reports, which includes a seven day look ahead of planned road closures, are updated twice daily, Monday to Friday except for bank holidays: www.nationalhighways.co.uk/travel-updates/road-closure-report/.

To find the latest information about local road closures, please visit:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/roads/roadworks/>.

Webpage: www.nationalhighways.co.uk/a417-missing-link/

Email: A417MissingLink@nationalhighways.co.uk

Phone: 0300 123 5000

X: @HighwaysSWEST

Facebook: @HighwaysSWEST

Did you know that you can report highway issues, such as potholes, and track their progress online at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fixmystreet Or download the app: FixMyStreet

NEW SCAM DETECTION TOOL

From [Get Safe Online](#) via Neighbourhood Alert which is supported by the Police

If you are suspicious of a text, email or message and you want to check if it is legit or not before responding, you can upload it to Ask Silver on the Get Safe Online website and whereupon it will return an indication of whether the communication is safe or a 'red flag' for fraud. [Ask Silver - Get Safe Online](#)

A417

Visit the [A417 Missing Link web page](#).

The Customer Hub, located at the crusher compound at Shab Hill, is open every Tuesday and Wednesday from 10am until 2pm. You can visit any time during these

hours, without pre-booking an appointment. Members of the team will be on hand to answer questions. A417 Project Office, Birdlip, Gloucester, GL4 8JX

What3words: <https://w3w.co/shaped.quietest.payback>

10 mph and site restrictions must be adhered to. Please Reverse Park.

Site visits for members of the public. If you are interested, please contact A417MissingLink@nationalhighways.co.uk

All roadworks and planned road closures on motorways and major A roads, including the A417, are published on the Traffic England website: www.trafficengland.com. Road Closure Reports, which includes a seven day look ahead of planned road closures, are updated twice daily, Monday to Friday except for bank holidays: www.nationalhighways.co.uk/travel-updates/road-closure-report/.

To find the latest information about local road closures, please visit: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/roads/roadworks/>.

Webpage: www.nationalhighways.co.uk/a417-missing-link/

Email: A417MissingLink@nationalhighways.co.uk

Phone: 0300 123 5000

X: @HighwaysSWEST

Facebook: @HighwaysSWEST

Did you know that you can report highway issues, such as potholes, and track their progress online at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fixmystreet Or download the app: FixMyStreet