

ERMIN WARD

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

MAY 2026



@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

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Parliamentary constituency is North Cotswolds [CLIFTONBROWNG@parliament.uk](mailto:CLIFTONBROWNG@parliament.uk)

County Division is Cirencester North with Ermin - [Mark.Harris@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:Mark.Harris@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

except Coberley which is in Bourton-on-the-Water & Northleach

[Paul.Hodgkinson@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:Paul.Hodgkinson@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

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

Wednesday **13 May** 2.00 pm [Meeting of Planning and Licensing Committee](#)

Wednesday **20 May** 6.00 pm [Meeting of Annual Council, Council](#)

Thursday **28 May** 2.00 pm [Meeting of Licensing Sub-Committee \(Taxis, Private Hire, and Street Trading](#)

[Recent Committee Meetings](#)

Wednesday **8 April** 2.00 pm [Meeting of Planning and Licensing Committee](#)

Thursday **9 April** 4.00 pm [Meeting of Audit and Governance Committee](#)

Monday **13 April** 4.00 pm [Meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#)

Thursday **16 April** 6.00 pm [Meeting of Cabinet](#)

Thursday **23 April** 2.00 pm [Meeting of Licensing Sub-Committee \(Taxis, Private Hire, and Street Trading](#)

[Member Questions \(with answers\) Full Council – 18 March 2026](#)

[Click here](#)

## CABINET MEETING DECISIONS - 6 APRIL

### Service Performance Report 2025-26 Quarter 3

To provide an update on progress on the Council's priorities and service performance for Q3 2025 -26.

The report updated Members including progress on the Council's response to the Government's Local Government Reorganisation proposals, the establishment of the

Climate Board, installation of electric vehicle charging points in Council car parks, the capital fleet replacement programme, the Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation, and positive outcomes from the leisure contract.

### **Financial Performance Report 2025-26 Quarter 3**

To set out the third quarterly budget monitoring position for the 2025/26 financial year. The report showed a favourable variance of £0.045m and confirmed that the Council remained in a financially sound position without the need for borrowing. The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Enhanced vacancy controls, income improvements, and the continued transfer of underspends to earmarked reserves to support financial resilience, local government reorganisation, and future budget pressures. Also a £0.719m forecast underspend in the capital programme.

### **Strategic Risk Register Q3 2025-26**

To set out the current Strategic Risk Register for the Council.

The report highlighted key strategic risks, including preparedness for civil contingencies and the robustness of business continuity arrangements, which were confirmed to be under active review and update. Members also noted the escalation of a new strategic risk relating to compliance with the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS), further mitigation work was ongoing to achieve compliance.

### **Discretionary Rate Relief policy**

To ask Cabinet to consider proposed changes to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy following recent government announcements. Under the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the Localism Act 2011, the Council was required to grant mandatory rate relief in certain circumstances and had discretion to award additional relief where it supported local priorities. From 1 April 2026 a new 100% business rate relief for a ten-year period for standalone electric vehicle charging points and electric vehicle charging forecourts, and a 15% business rates discount for eligible pubs and live music venues for the 2026/27 financial year. It was noted that the cost of the pub and live music venue relief would be shared between the Central Government, the District Council, and the County Council. The relevant reliefs had been applied to 2026/27 annual business rates bills, and that businesses could contact the Council's Revenues service if they believed they were eligible but had not received the relief.

Cabinet RESOLVED to:

1. Approve the amendments to the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy as detailed within the report;
2. Delegate to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, any future amendments to the Policy in respect of Electric Vehicle Charging Points and Electric Vehicle Forecourts

## **Publica Business Plan 2026-28**

To seek Cabinet's consideration of the Draft Publica Business Plan 2026–28 and to ask that Cabinet recommend that the Leader approve the Plan. Publica's Articles of Association include twelve reserved matters requiring Shareholder Council approval, among them the adoption or amendment of the Business Plan. The Draft Business Plan 2026–28, prepared by the Publica Board in consultation with Directors and Shareholders, set out a two-year programme aligned to the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) timetable through to Vesting Day on 31 March 2028. The report outlined Publica's proposed priorities and service delivery arrangements. Publica was recognised as being a key service delivery partner for the Council, and the Plan focused on supporting the organisation, its services, and its workforce through a period of change, including preparation for Local Government Reorganisation, while continuing collaboration with partner councils across Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire.

Cabinet RESOLVED to:

1. Endorse the Publica Business Plan 2026-2028
2. Ask the Leader, as shareholder representative, to recommend its adoption to the Board

## **Review of Publica Governance Agreement and Extension of Service Agreement**

Cabinet to consider proposals for amendments and an extension to governance arrangements following the conclusion of the Publica Review. The report also sought delegated authority to make any minor adjustments to the Publica specification in the run-up to Local Government Reorganisation should it become necessary. The report reflects the significant changes to the Publica shared service arrangements following the Publica Review, including revised governance structures and reduced service provision. The updated arrangements clarified roles and responsibilities and aligned service specifications with current delivery, while supporting preparation for potential Local Government Reorganisation. Amendments would be implemented primarily through deeds of variation to existing agreements to minimise cost, with delegated authority granted for minor amendments as required. The changes applied to the Articles of Association, Members' Agreement, Service Agreements and Service Specifications, and included the extension of Service Agreements to October 2030, while retaining flexibility for service exit with appropriate notice.

Cabinet RESOLVED to:

1. Approve in principle the changes to the governance agreements set out in
2. 3. section 3. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to finalise and enact through appropriate legal documentation, the detailed changes to the agreements, in line with the principles agreed. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to approve minor amendments to the scope of services delivered by Publica to Cotswold District Council in advance of Local Government Reorganisation.

## **Retention Strategy 2026-28**

To present the Council's Retention Strategy for approval.

To ensure the organisation continued to attract, develop and retain a skilled and resilient workforce to deliver the Corporate Plan 2025–28. The Strategy, aligned to the Local Government Association's "Six Ps" framework, set out a values-based approach to workforce planning, leadership development, engagement, inclusion, career progression and employer appeal. It responded to ongoing recruitment and retention pressures, including skills shortages, increased competition for talent, rising costs and the uncertainty associated with potential local government reorganisation. The Strategy promoted a positive organisational culture and strong leadership, supported by a measurable action plan to reduce workforce risks; improve stability and wellbeing; and support current and future service priorities. Any financial implications arising would be managed within existing budgets.

### **Advertising, Sponsorship & Endorsement Policy**

To present the Council's Advertising, Sponsorship and Endorsement Policy for approval. The report established a clear and consistent framework for managing commercial partnerships and promotional activity. The Policy ensured compliance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements, including the Local Government Act 1986 and the Publicity Code, safeguarded the Council's reputation and mitigated for conflicts of interest or undue influence. The Policy set out governance arrangements, and formalised a consistent approach to assessment, approval and monitoring, strengthening governance and alignment with the Council's values and priorities

### **Artificial Intelligence Adoption Strategy**

To consider a strategy for the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) across council services that protects residents and service users whilst enabling them to access the benefits that AI can offer. The report also recommended the adoption of a policy to guide use of AI for employees and councillors. The Policy and Strategy established a clear governance framework for the responsible adoption and use of AI across the Council and its key delivery partners, supporting service improvement, efficiency and digital transformation while ensuring transparency, accountability, data protection and human oversight. It was noted that the Strategy set out objectives, an action plan and ethical principles, including the establishment of an AI Oversight Board to manage risk, scrutinise proposals and drive appropriate adoption, while the accompanying Policy defined the rules, boundaries and mandatory requirements for AI use. The approach was intended to enable the Council to adopt AI safely and confidently, support officers and improve outcomes for residents and businesses, while strengthening organisational resilience and preparing for potential Local Government Reorganisation.

Notification of Draft  
Cabinet RESOLVED to:

1. Approve the AI Usage Policy at Annex A
2. Approve the AI Adoption Strategy and Roadmap at Annex B.

### **Creation of a Commercial Development Post**

To seek Cabinet's approval of the creation of a part-time, fixed term post to drive commerciality across the culture sector in Cirencester and the wider district.

To strengthen commercial leadership of the cultural and visitor economy. Members noted the importance of the cultural sector to the local economy and its wider social and place-shaping benefits, including its contribution to the visitor economy, and recognised the need to place non-statutory cultural assets on a more sustainable financial footing in the context of Local Government Reorganisation. It was noted that many cultural facilities were delivered through third-party organisations and required targeted, specialist support to improve resilience, efficiency and income generation. The report proposed the creation of a fixed-term post to work with cultural and visitor attractions to drive income growth and reduce costs, with growth targets to be set over a two-year period, and delegated authority granted to the Director of Communities and Place to develop appropriate measurement and reporting arrangements. The second recommendation in the report was divided to present the delegation as a separate recommendation.

Cabinet RESOLVED to:

1. Approve the creation of a fixed term contract post to work with visitor attractions to drive up income and reduce costs.
2. Endorse the principle of targets for growth over the two years and
3. Grant delegated authority to the Director of Communities and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Health, Culture and Visitor Experience to set out the detailed proposals for how this is calculated and reported.

### **UBICO Business Plan 2026-27**

To ask Cabinet to consider the draft Ubico Business Plan 2026-27, produced by Ubico in consultation with its directors and shareholders, and to endorse that the Leader (as Shareholder Representative) approve the plan. The Plan had been shaped through a consultation process and reflected the transition from Ubico's previous five-year strategy to a refreshed 2026–2031 roadmap, focusing on improving efficiency, strengthening service resilience, and preparing for Local Government Reorganisation. Cabinet noted that the Plan set out operational and strategic priorities for 2026–27, including enhanced emissions reporting, implementation of Simpler Recycling requirements, decarbonisation of the fleet alongside delivery of core waste, recycling, street cleansing and grounds maintenance services. Cabinet were asked to note the inclusion of Ubico's proposed expansion of services to Wiltshire from August 2026.

Cabinet RESOLVED to:

1. Note the draft Ubico Business Plan 2026-27; and
2. Endorse that the Leader of the Council, as shareholder representative, would sign the written resolution to approve the draft Ubico Business Plan 2026-27.

## PLANNING

### Government refuses to rethink Cotswold housing target - again

The Government has once again told Cotswold District Council that it must use the Local Plan process to set out the constraints that meeting its huge housing target presents. It comes as part of the most recent exchange between the Council and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and follows representation made by council leader Mike Evemy in February, when he presented ministers with dozens of comments from residents and town and parish councils.

### Council withdraws from Moreton-in-Marsh housing appeal

Cotswold District Council has confirmed it has withdrawn from a public inquiry into a proposed 195-home development in Moreton-in-Marsh claiming that the national planning system now leaves councils with little realistic chance of defending refusals of this kind. The development was refused permission by councillors last year – on the recommendation of planning officers – because it was considered unsustainable. The decision is considered deeply disappointing and disturbing by residents and Cllr Daryl Corps, believing that CDC should be insisting that the development has a full environmental impact report, and that it covers contamination and downstream impacts.

## Local Government Reorganisation - Devolution

### 1. Where Gloucestershire is in the LGR process

- Gloucestershire submitted **three LGR options** to the government in **November 2025**.
- Government consultation closed on **26 March 2026**.
- Gloucestershire is now in **Phase 2 – preparing for implementation**.
- A government decision is expected **before summer recess (June/July 2026)**.
- **Vesting Day** remains **1 April 2028**.

Councils are not waiting for the decision before preparing, due to the scale of work required.

### 2. The three options submitted

The options considered by government are:

- A **single county-wide unitary authority**
- **Two unitary authorities (east-west split)**
- **Greater Gloucester and the rest of Gloucestershire**

The government may select one of these or propose a modification.

### 3. How councils are working together

- All **seven Gloucestershire councils** are participating, regardless of which option they supported.
- Leaders and Chief Executives have agreed shared **ways of working principles**.
- Councils are:
  - Sharing officer capacity
  - Jointly funding implementation preparation
  - Working collaboratively through a single programme structure

### 4. Governance and programme arrangements

- **Political oversight:** Group Leaders Steering Group (all councils).
- **Portfolio Board:** Programme sponsors (Chief Executives and senior officers).
- Around **10 work programmes**, including:
  - Legal & governance
  - Finance
  - Assets & property
  - People & culture
  - Digital & technology
  - Communications & engagement
  - Neighbourhoods & communities

Each programme has a sponsor and a lead drawn from across county and district councils.

### 5. Programme management and assurance

- A central **Programme and Portfolio Management Office (PPMO)** is in place.
- Led by a dedicated Portfolio Director.
- The PPMO:
  - Coordinates work across all programmes
  - Manages risks and interdependencies
  - Tracks progress to Vesting Day
  - Ensures strong governance and decision-making discipline

### 6. Structural Change Order (SCO)

- The **Structural Change Order** is the legislation that formally creates the new council(s).
- The government intends to accelerate this process.
- Councils must begin shaping local elements of the SCO **before** the government decision.

Areas where local input matters include:

- Names of new councils
- Election arrangements
- Ward boundaries
- Composition of shadow and joint bodies
- Civic and ceremonial arrangements

## 7. Elections and councillor terms

### If there is one unitary authority

- District councillors continue until April 2028.
- Elections in May 2027 elect **110 councillors**.
- These councillors act as both County Council and Preparing Authority until Vesting Day.

### If there are two unitary authorities

- County and district councillors remain in post until April 2028.
- Elections in May 2027 elect two shadow authorities.
- Those councillors become unitary councillors from April 2028.

## 8. National context

- The government has made different decisions in the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) areas.
- East and West Sussex decisions were deferred.
- MHCLG has stated that **each area is assessed individually**, and no inference should be drawn for Gloucestershire.

## 9. Government consultation

- Around **2,200 responses** were received (approx. 0.34% of the population).
- This is consistent with other areas nationally.
- Consultation **informs** but does not determine the decision.
- Full results will be published **with the government's decision**.

## 10. Scrutiny arrangements

- Councils are working towards **joint scrutiny arrangements**.
- The preferred approach is a joint scrutiny panel.
- Strong expectation that scrutiny will be conducted **transparently and largely in public**.
- Final arrangements will be agreed by council leaders.

## 11. Neighbourhoods and communities

- All proposals place strong emphasis on:
  - Local democracy
  - Neighbourhood voice
  - Community empowerment
- Work is at an **early, listening stage**.
- Town and parish councils are seen as **central partners**.
- No neighbourhood boundaries have been fixed.
- The aim is **more local influence, not less**.

## 12. Parish councils

- Parish councils are **not being abolished or forced to take on new responsibilities**.

- Any additional role would be voluntary.
- Existing rules on elections, precepts and vacancies remain unchanged.
- Parish involvement will increase as proposals are developed.

### 13. Devolution

- The government is encouraging areas to consider **Foundation Strategic Authorities**.
- Six Gloucestershire councils support:
  - Gloucestershire becoming a Foundation Strategic Authority
  - Longer-term ambition to work with **WECA**
- Tewkesbury has asked to keep options open.
- Government response is awaited.

### 14. What happens next

- Await government decision (summer 2026).
- Further member briefings will follow.
- Detailed work will accelerate once the decision is known.
- Members will continue to be kept informed and involved.

Peers in the House of Lords voted in favour of a major amendment to the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill that strengthens parish governance across England. While the government has opposed the amendment, its supporters continue to reinforce the importance of parish and town councils as the foundation of local democracy. The bill will now proceed to the Third Reading in the House of Lords before returning to the House of Commons for consideration of Lords' amendments.

NALC has recently raised concerns with ministers that rural and parish communities must not be overlooked as Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and devolution progress. Their message is clear: reforms must not stop at higher tiers of government but must empower neighbourhoods and local councils as key partners in delivering services and shaping communities.

GALC has now delivered five Devolution Preparedness Training Sessions with a further seven coming up.

NALC has urged the government to place county associations (aka County Boards/Area Boards and other similar titles) at the centre of LGR, ensuring their expertise directly shapes the future of new unitary authorities. In response to recent consultations NALC insists county associations are recognised as key partners and are included as full members of Joint Implementation Teams responsible for designing and delivering new governance structures.

[Local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire - GOV.UK](#)

[Future Gloucestershire : Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation in Gloucestershire](#)

A decision is expected this summer with elections for the new unitary authority or authorities planned for May 2027. Any new structure will come into effect no earlier than April 2028.

## A417 MISSING LINK

**Weeknight closures** - The road will be open in the daytime as normal.

The A417 will be closed in both directions between the A46 Brockworth junction and the Air Balloon roundabout overnight from:

- 9pm on Tuesday 5 May to 6am on Saturday 9 May
- 9pm on Monday 11 May to 6am on Saturday 16 May
- 9pm on Wednesday 27 May to 6am on Friday 29 May

To carry out earthworks, surfacing, drainage works and central barrier construction so traffic can be moved onto the new A417.



A46 Brockworth junction to Air Balloon roundabout

Any updates will be communicated on the project website [nationalhighways.co.uk/a417-missing-link](https://nationalhighways.co.uk/a417-missing-link).

Check the National Highways website for updates and other works in the region.

Access for emergency services will be fully maintained during the closures.

Fully signposted diversion routes will be in place during the closure. Please follow the official, signed diversion route and not satnav.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dZMn6iutH0>

To receive National Highways updates, opt in to ensure compliance with GDPR, [please follow this link](#).

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. 10 mph and site restrictions. Please Reverse Park.

A417 Project Office, Birdlip, Gloucester, GL4 8JX

What3words: <https://what3words.com/shaped.quietest.payback>

Site visits for members of the public. If you are interested, please contact [A417MissingLink@nationalhighways.co.uk](mailto:A417MissingLink@nationalhighways.co.uk)

All roadworks and planned road closures on motorways and major A roads, including the A417, are published here: <https://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: <https://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:

<https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-roads/south-west/a417-missing-link/>

Email: [A417MissingLink@nationalhighways.co.uk](mailto:A417MissingLink@nationalhighways.co.uk)

Phone: 0300 123 5000

X: @HighwaysSWEST

Facebook: @HighwaysSWEST

Please report highway issues, such as potholes, and track their progress online at [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fixmystreet](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fixmystreet) Or download the app: FixMyStreet

Sir Geoffrey Clifton Brown is your MP for North Cotswolds [cliftonbrowng@parliament.uk](mailto:cliftonbrowng@parliament.uk)  
Cllr Mark Harris is your Gloucestershire County Council councillor, responsible for Highways - [Mark.Harris@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:Mark.Harris@gloucestershire.gov.uk) except Coberley which is in Bourton-on-the-Water & Northleach [Paul.Hodgkinson@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:Paul.Hodgkinson@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

Cotswold District Council [NEWS](#)