



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

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To all Members of Stroud District Council

09 October 2019

You are hereby summoned to attend the Meeting of the **STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL** in the Council Chamber, Ebley Mill on **THURSDAY 17 OCTOBER 2019 at 7.00 pm.**

Kathy O'Leary
Chief Executive

Please Note: This meeting will be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site (www.stroud.gov.uk). By entering the Council Chamber you are consenting to being filmed. The whole of the meeting will be filmed except where there are confidential or exempt items, which may need to be considered in the absence of the press and public.

AGENDA

- 1 **APOLOGIES**
To receive apologies for absence.
- 2 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
To receive declarations of interest.
- 3 **MINUTES**
To approve the Minutes of the Council's meeting held on 18 July 2019.
- 4 **ANNOUNCEMENTS**
To receive announcements from the Chair of Council.
- 5 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**
The Chairs of Committees will answer questions from members of the public submitted in accordance with the Council's procedures.

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF QUESTIONS

Noon on Monday, 14 October 2019

Questions must be submitted to the Chief Executive, Democratic Services, Ebley Mill, Ebley Wharf, Stroud and sent by post or email (democratic.services@stroud.gov.uk)

6 **COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Audit and Standards Committee – Councillor Clifton to replace Councillor Hall.

Environment Committee – A Conservative member will be nominated to replace Councillor Mossman.

7 **EXTENSION TO DESIGNATION OF MONITORING OFFICER**

To extend the designation of the current interim Monitoring Officer.

8 **CIVIC TIMETABLE 2020/21**

To agree the civic timetable for the 2020/21 civic year.

9 **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE ON 3 OCTOBER 2019**

The relevant Committee reports are available on the website page for this Council meeting.

The Chair of Strategy and Resources will present these items.

9a **Local Council Tax Support Scheme ([Agenda Item 6](#))**

'a. To adopt the current default scheme for 2020./21, keeping the scheme unchanged.

b. That during 2020/21 a full review and remodelling will be carried out.'

9b **Budget Strategy 2020/21 – 2023/24 ([Agenda Item 9](#))**

'To approve the Budget Strategy 2020/21 to 2023/34 as set out in this report.'

9c **Vision 2050 Severn Vale Delivery Board ([Agenda Item 14](#))**

'a. The Terms of Reference for the Severn Vale Board set out in Appendix 1 are agreed and

b. Stroud District Council participates in the activities of the Board.'

10 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

See Agenda Item 5 for deadline for submission.

**COUNCIL MEETING**

18 July 2019

7.00 pm – 10.25 pm

Council Chamber, Ebley Mill, Stroud

3**Minutes****Membership:**

Martin Baxendale	P	Nick Hurst	P	Nigel Prenter	P
Dorcas Binns	A	George James	P	Skeena Rathor	P
Catherine Braun	P	Julie Job	P	Sue Reed	P
Chris Brine	P	Haydn Jones	P	Mark Reeves	P
Miranda Clifton	P	John Jones	P	Steve Robinson*	P
Nigel Cooper	P	Norman Kay	P	Mattie Ross	P
Doina Cornell	P	Darren Loftus	P	Tom Skinner	A
Gordon Craig	P	Stephen Lydon	P	Nigel Studdert-Kennedy	P
Rachel Curley	P	John Marjoram	P	Haydn Sutton	P
Stephen Davies	P	Phil McAsey	A	Brian Tipper	P
Paul Denney	A	Karen McKeown	A	Chas Townley	P
Jim Dewey	P	Jenny Miles	P	Jessica Tomblin	A
Jonathan Edmunds	P	Dave Mossman	P	Ken Tucker	P
Chas Fellows	A	Gill Oxley	P	Martin Whiteside	A
Colin Fryer	P	Keith Pearson	A	Tim Williams	A
Lindsey Green	P	Simon Pickering	P	Tom Williams	P
Trevor Hall	P	Gary Powell**	P	Debbie Young	P

**Chair *Vice-Chair P = Present A = Absent

Officers Present:

Chief Executive	Democratic Services & Elections Manager
Director of Development Services	Solicitor and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Interim Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer	Democratic Services & Elections Officer

CL.014 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Binns, Denney, McKeown, Pearson, Skinner, Tipper and Whiteside.

CL.015 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Agenda Item 8ci, Unite Construction Charter, Councillor Cornell stated she and Councillors Fryer, Curley, and Hall were members of Unite the Union and did not consider that they had an interest under the Council's Code of Conduct which would

prevent them from taking part in this matter. Nevertheless, in the general interests of being open and transparent, they asked that it be noted.

CL.016 MINUTES

RESOLVED That the minutes of the Council's AGM held on 16 May 2019 are confirmed and signed as a correct record.

CL.017 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made the following announcements:-

- 24 October 2019 was originally a provisional date for an Environment Committee and this date has now been confirmed.
- At the National Recycling Awards, the Council won the Overall Service Change Award for Cutting Waste and Landfill. Councillor Pickering, Chair of Environment Committee accepted the award on behalf of the Council and thanked residents in the district, officers and particularly the workers of UBICO.
- Councillor Ross congratulated the Museum Development Manager for the Museum in the Park receiving a 5 star accessibility rating from Accessible Gloucestershire.
- Councillor Ross invited those present to contribute to the charity collection for Allsorts, the Council's charity of the year, following the charity rounders tournament the previous evening.

The Leader confirmed that the final version of the Council's Corporate Delivery Plan had been published and copies had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

CL.018 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Questions were submitted from Wotton-under-Edge Town Council and also Kingswood Parish Council regarding Agenda Item 6, the Community Governance Review. They were answered by Councillor Davies. Supplementary questions were also answered. (Refer to the [Council's webcast](#) and Agenda Item 5.)

The Chair confirmed that Agenda Item 8ci, The Unite Construction Charter would be taken after the next item.

CL.019 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Councillor Davies, a member of the Community Governance Review Working Group presented the above report that contained 11 recommendations. He proposed that Members first took recommendations 1 – 10 and then discussed Wotton-under-Edge and Kingswood separately. He thanked the other Working Group Members and the Democratic Services and Elections Manager for all of their work.

Councillor Ross reminded Members that the Council could make a recommendation but the final decision for a number of the recommendations would be made by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

Councillor Davies made reference to how Parish and Town Councils had worked together during the review process to acknowledge the views and requests of their residents.

Councillor Cooper seconded the proposal, which was subsequently agreed unanimously by Members.

- RESOLVED 1. To approve the final recommendations in relation to each Parish/Town Council within the Stroud District, with the exception of the recommendation for the boundary amendment to Kingswood Parish Council and Wotton-under-Edge Town Council;**
- 2. To authorise the Democratic Services and Elections Manager to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to make related alteration orders to change District Wards and county divisions to reflect the changes made to parish boundaries; and**
 - 3. To authorise the Interim Head of Legal Services to make a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order to implement the changes agreed by Council, subject to receiving the necessary consents from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.**

The Council then moved on to deal with Wotton-under-Edge and Kingswood separately. Councillor Davies replied to Members' questions reiterating that the Boundary Commission may or may not accept the Council's recommendations.

Councillor Braun proposed an amendment which was seconded by Councillor Tucker so that the substantive motion would read:

- "a) An amendment is made to the boundary of Kingswood Parish Council and Wotton-under-Edge Town Council to transfer Wotton-under-Edge South Ward into Kingswood Parish with the exception of the hamlet of Wortley as shown on Map 6 and the land highlighted in red on the map (see attachment), which includes Wotton Community Sports Foundation and Katharine Lady Berkeley's School;
- b) Wotton Road (B4060) and the associated adjacent footway (but excluding the OK Footpath), from the access track for Hawpark Farm to the existing Kingswood Parish boundary, would also transfer to Kingswood Parish Council;
- c) The number of Parish Councillors for Kingswood Parish is increased to EIGHT;
- d) Wotton-under-Edge Town Council retains THIRTEEN Councillors and there are no longer any warding arrangements in place for the Town Council; and
- e) The Council will make a consequential recommendation to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for related alterations to the district ward boundary between Kingswood and Wotton-under-Edge so that the hamlet of Wortley is transferred to Wotton-under-Edge District Ward."

The proposer outlined her reasons for the amendment which was the integrity of the site and not the division of sports facilities. A map showing the amendment to retain Wotton Community Sports Foundation and Katharine Lady Berkeley School in Wotton-under-Edge Town Council was displayed.

In reply to a question the Democratic Services and Elections Manager confirmed that the ownership of the land could be addressed within the consequential matters of the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order. Upon both parties agreement, the ownership of the land would remain the same.

During debate the following points were made by Members:-

- Three electors within the area next to Wotton Community Sports Foundation and Katharine Lady Berkeley's School was not a good enough reason to move the boundary resulting in the transfer of these facilities to Kingswood Parish.

- The concerns of Wotton-under-Edge Town Council were not raised early enough for the Working Group to consider them; however as per public question responses they were available for deliberation by Council when coming to its decision on whether to support the Working Group's recommendation.
- Community cohesion needed to be considered.
- The amendment had been previously considered by the Working Group.

Councillor Tucker read out a statement in support of the amendment outlining the history of Katharine Lady Berkeley's School and the surrounding land. In his opinion, the proposed amendment was the best solution to enforce the boundary change.

In summing up Councillor Braun outlined the strong ties that existed between the School and Wotton Community Sports Foundation and asked Members to support the amendment as a compromise.

When put to the vote the amendment was LOST.

Councillor Reeves put forward a further amendment which was seconded by Councillor Haydn Jones, so that the substantive motion would read:

"11.4.6 It is RECOMMENDED that the following community governance and electoral arrangements be approved;-

- a) An amendment is made to the boundary of Kingswood Parish Council and Wotton-under-Edge Town Council to transfer Wotton-under-Edge South Ward into Kingswood Parish with the exception of the hamlet of Wortley and Wotton Community Sports Foundation as shown on Map 6 the attached map;
- b) Wotton-under-Edge South Ward is absorbed in to Kingswood Parish and the Parish would not be warded;
- c) The number of Parish Councillors for Kingswood Parish is increased to EIGHT;
- d) Wotton-under-Edge Town Council retains THIRTEEN Councillors and there are no longer any warding arrangements in place for the Town Council; and
- e) The Council will make a consequential recommendation to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for related alterations to the District Ward boundary between Kingswood and Wotton-under-Edge so that the hamlet of Wortley is transferred to Wotton-under-Edge District Ward."

The Proposer also outlined the history of Katharine Lady Berkeley's School and how Kingswood had been pro-active in dealing with traffic issues in their Parish.

Councillor Braun confirmed that both facilities were working well at the moment and the split may create issues.

The Proposer confirmed that the two facilities would continue to be run by their existing parties.

Councillor Braun acknowledged that there was a small amount of disagreement between the two Parishes. A further option could be to have further time and not go forward with making a decision.

Councillor Davies stated that there had already been consultation as part of the process. The two Parishes failed to agree a way forward and deferring was not a realistic option.

There was no debate and when put to the vote the amendment was LOST.

Councillor Davies thanked Members for their patience in seeing democracy in action. He explained what Members would be voting for.

When put to the vote the Motion was CARRIED.

- RESOLVED 1.** To approve the final recommendations in relation to the boundary amendment between Kingswood Parish Council and Wotton-under-Edge Town Council;
- 2.** To authorise the Democratic Services and Elections Manager to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to make related alteration orders to change district wards and county divisions to reflect the changes made to parish boundaries; and
- 3.** To authorise the Interim Head of Legal Services to make a reorganisation of community governance order to implement the changes agreed by Council, subject to receiving the necessary consents from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the following community governance and electoral arrangements be approved:-

- a)** An amendment is made to the boundary of Kingswood Parish Council and Wotton-under-Edge Town Council to transfer Wotton-under-Edge South Ward into Kingswood Parish with the exception of the hamlet of Wortley as shown on Map 6;
- b)** Wotton-under-Edge South Ward is absorbed in to Kingswood Parish and the parish would not be warded;
- c)** The number of Parish Councillors for Kingswood Parish is increased to **EIGHT**;
- d)** Wotton-under-Edge Town Council retains **THIRTEEN** Councillors and there are no longer any warding arrangements in place for the Town Council; and
- e)** The Council will make a consequential recommendation to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for related alterations to the district ward boundary between Kingswood and Wotton-under-Edge so that the hamlet of Wortley is transferred to Wotton-under-Edge district ward.

CL.020 RECOMMENDATION FROM STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 11 JULY 2019

Unite Construction Charter

Councillor Cornell outlined the above report that the Monitoring Officer had presented at Strategy and Resources Committee and had been debated at length. Fifty-four other local authorities had already signed up to the Charter, including Bristol and Birmingham. A copy of both reports (the full report from Strategy and Resources Committee which formed background papers for the Council report and the Council report itself) had been circulated to all Members prior to the meeting. The Charter would avoid bad practice, ensure workers on our sites were skilled and reinforce health and safety. The Motion was seconded by Councillor Hall.

In reply to Members' questions, Councillor Cornell confirmed the following:-

- Exceptions could be made on a case by case basis.

- If a contractor did not want to work with our policies then we did not want to work with them.
- The reports from Strategy and Resources Committee are in the public domain.

Councillor Hurst proposed an amendment, for the inclusion of a new paragraph 3:-

“3. Agrees that the Charter should NOT be applicable to any work required to deliver the Brimscombe Port project.”

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Davies.

Councillor Hurst stated that he was worried that the Charter may affect the Brimscombe Port project going forward, which was crucial for our Council. He did not have a problem with the Charter, but felt it was inappropriate for this particular project.

Councillor Cornell asked what evidence did Councillor Hurst have to draw him to this conclusion. Other Councils had signed the Charter.

Councillor Hurst would have liked feedback from the other 54 Councils who had signed the Charter. A discussion ensued whereby Councillor Hurst stated that the Council already had clear protocols in place when working with developers, eg policies and the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Councillor Braun read out the legal implications from the report (p.77).

During debate some Members stated that a contractor should be prepared to support the Charter. As a Council we are looking for partners who share our values.

The seconder, Councillor Davies acknowledged that we already had laws on Health and Safety and Fraud. This was not a unique amendment and fitted in with paragraph 1.4 of the Strategy and Resources Committee's report.

Councillor Hurst in summing up confirmed that he had spent 45 years in the construction industry and most contractors are reputable, with a few exceptions. These reputable contractors would possibly be removed from potentially bidding due to an extra layer of administration which would add extra cost to the contract. Brimscombe Port is a flagship project and we do not want another layer of control that might compromise viability.

Prior to voting Councillor Hurst read out his amendment:-

“3. Agrees that the Charter should NOT be applicable to any work required to deliver the Brimscombe Port project.”

On the amendment being put to the vote, the amendment was LOST.

Councillor Davies asked the question why we were adopting the Charter, outlining his reasons and suggested that we move into debate.

Councillor Hall supported the Motion which was for fairness, dignity and respect at work, and health and safety at work.

Councillor Cornell, in summing up stated that there was no evidence why Members should not support the Charter and felt that the Council would be sending out a poor message if the Charter was not supported.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was CARRIED.

**RESOLVED 1. To adopt the Unite Construction Charter, and
2. Request the Leader to sign the Charter on behalf of the Council.**

CL.021 MINCHINHAMPTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Councillor Pickering, Chair of the Environment Committee presented the above report and thanked the people of Minchinhampton for working together on their Neighbourhood Development Plan. This was seconded by Councillor Hurst.

During debate Members supported the Plan.

Councillor Hurst encouraged all parishes to sit down with their communities and shape their future by producing a neighbourhood plan. At Minchinhampton there had been significant debate whilst shaping this Plan.

In summing up, Councillor Pickering stated that the Plan allocated areas where Minchinhampton wanted to see future development and urged Members for their support.

On being put to the vote the Motion was CARRIED.

**RESOLVED 1. That the Minchinhampton Neighbourhood Development Plan is made part of the Development Plan for Stroud District.
2. To delegate to the Director of Development Services, in agreement with the Qualifying Body, the correction of any further minor spelling, grammatical or typographical errors together with any improvements from a presentational perspective.**

CL.022 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

a Housing Committee – 11 June 2019

ai Annual Report to Council

Councillor Townley, the Chair of Housing Committee presented the first Annual Report to Council from Housing Committee, as outlined in the Council's Constitution. This was seconded by Councillor Miles.

Councillor Cornell thanked the Housing Committee and Officers for all of their work.

On being put to the vote the Motion was unanimously CARRIED.

RESOLVED That the Annual Report is approved.

At 9.45 pm the Chair announced that the meeting would adjourn and it reconvened at 9.52 pm.

In accordance with the Council's Constitution (Section 3: paragraph 6) Members voted unanimously to continue with the meeting.

b Strategy and Resources Committee – 13 June 2019**bi Adoption of the Revised Procurement Strategy**

Councillor Cornell confirmed that the report had been discussed at Strategy and Resources Committee and thanked the Principal Procurement Officer for a good clear and concise strategy. This was seconded by Councillor Townley.

In reply to questions from Councillor Studdert-Kennedy, Councillor Cornell confirmed that the Modern Slavery Charter 2015 had been agreed at Council following the submission of a Motion. Regarding European law, if we left the European Union, the Council would continue to follow best practice and adhere to relevant legislation.

During debate Councillor Studdert-Kennedy welcomed the Revised Procurement Strategy which was clearly set out and would be easy to audit and check.

On being put to the vote the Motion was unanimously CARRIED.

RESOLVED That the revised Procurement Strategy is adopted.

bii Community Services Vehicle Replacement

Councillor Cornell confirmed that with the switch over to electric vehicles there would be long term savings, with no road tax, reduced fuel bills and lower servicing charges. This was seconded by Councillor Pickering.

In reply to Member's questions confirmation was given that:-

- All monies saved would be ring fenced and used for replacement vehicles.
- In the future the Council would be looking at battery storage and solar panels at EV charging points.
- It would take between 5-10 years to install more electric points.
- Smart technology is developing at a fast pace.
- There will be co-ordination around the District with partner organisations' installations.

In summing up Councillor Pickering stated that this was a wise use of Council money and also would contribute to our carbon neutral ambitions.

On being put to the vote the Motion was unanimously CARRIED.

RESOLVED That a Capital Budget of £257k is approved, funded from the Business Rates Reserve, to purchase a new low carbon fleet.

biii Military Covenant – Member Champion

Councillor Cornell confirmed that a lot of work had been undertaken by the Head of Housing Services, who had circulated an email to all Members outlining the role of the Member Champion.

Councillor Cornell proposed an amendment to the recommendation, recognising that this role would more appropriately continue to be a civic duty and should be undertaken by either the Chair or Vice-Chair of Council. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Townley.

Councillor Davies thanked the Head of Housing Service for all of his work and supported the amendment.

In summing up Councillor Cornell stated that after serving for their country ex-service personnel may need that extra support.

On being put to the vote the amendment was CARRIED.

The substantive Motion was voted upon and was also CARRIED.

RESOLVED To appoint the Chair and Vice-Chair of Council as the Member champion(s) to support the Military Covenant.

CL.023 **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

Questions were submitted by Councillors Davies and Marjoram. They were answered by the Leader, Councillor Cornell. Supplementary questions were also asked and answered. (Refer to the [Council's webcast](#) and Item 9).

The meeting closed at 10.25 pm.

Chair

Report Title	EXTENSION TO DESIGNATION OF MONITORING OFFICER
Purpose of Report	To extend the designation of the current interim Monitoring Officer.
Decision(s)	Council RESOLVES to designate Patrick Arran as Monitoring Officer until 31 March 2020.
Consultation and Feedback	None
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Andrew Cummings, Section 151 Officer Tel: 01453 754115 Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk
Legal Implications	There is a legal requirement for the Council to designate an officer as Monitoring Officer (who cannot be the chief finance officer or head of paid service). All further legal implications are set out in the report. Craig Hallett, Solicitor & Deputy Monitoring Officer Tel: 01453 754364 Email: craig.hallett@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive Email: kathy.o'leary@stroud.gov.uk
Options	The Council may wish to appoint a different officer but there is a legal requirement to designate an officer as Monitoring Officer.

1. Under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended) the Council has a duty to designate one of its officers as Monitoring Officer.
- 1.2 The Monitoring Officer has a number of statutory duties and responsibilities which include ensuring that the Council act lawfully and to avoid any maladministration. This includes advising on the lawfulness of decision making, applying and maintaining the Council's Constitution and arrangements for effective governance. The Monitoring Officer is also responsible for promoting high standards of conduct and ethical behaviour
- 1.3 At the Council meeting on 25 April 2019, Patrick Arran was appointed to the role of Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer until 28 September 2019. Mr Arran's contract has been extended until the 31 March 2020 to enable him to complete the review of Legal Services and it is necessary to formally designate him as Monitoring Officer until that date.

CIVIC TIMETABLE 2020/21

All meetings will be held in the Council Chamber	Community Services & Licensing Thu 7pm	Environment Thu 7pm	Housing Tue 7pm	Strategy & Resources Thu 7pm	COUNCIL Thu 7pm	Audit & Standards Tue 7pm	Development Control Tue 6pm
May 2020					21 (AGM)		
June 2020	11	04	09	18			16
July 2020				09	16	29 Wed	21
Aug 2020							
Sep 2020	10	03	08				01
Oct 2020				08	22	06	13
Nov 2020	26 (Budget)					17	24
Dec 2020		03 (Budget)	08 (Budget)	10	17		
Jan 2021	21			28 (Budget)		26	05
Feb 2021		04	02		25 (Budget/Council Tax)		23
Mar 2021	25		23	04			30
Apr 2021		20 Tues		22	29	27	
May 2021					20 (AGM)		

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
COUNCIL

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

17 OCTOBER 2019

9a

Report Title	LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME
Purpose of Report	To set a Council Tax Support Scheme for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.
Decision(s)	It is RECOMMENDED that Council:- a. Adopts the current default scheme for 2020/21, keeping the scheme unchanged. b. That during 2020/21 a full review and modelling will be carried out.
Consultation and Feedback	Consultation took place between 22 July 2019 and 30 August 2019.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	The current costs of the default scheme are included within the Medium Term Financial Plan. Andrew Cummings, Interim Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) Tel: 01453 754115 Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk
Legal Implications	Since 1 April 2013 local authorities in England have been responsible for administering their own Council Tax Reduction Schemes subject to the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements) (England) Regulations 2012. An authority is able to adopt the default scheme provided for in the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Prescribed Requirements and Default Scheme) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/2886). Patrick Arran, Interim Head of Legal Services Tel: 01453 754369 Email: patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Simon Killen, Revenue and Benefits Manager Tel: 01453 754013 Email: simon.killen@stroud.gov.uk
Options	Council could choose to adopt a local scheme that reduces the Council Tax support that working age claimants receive.
Performance Management Follow Up	Scheme impact and costs will be monitored on an on-going basis and any significant changes will be reported to the committee.
Background Papers/ Appendices	Appendix A – Summary of Scheme

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 abolished Council Tax benefit. Section 10 of the 2012 Act added a new section 13A to the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 so that, in respect of dwellings in England, a person's liability to pay Council Tax is reduced in accordance with the billing authority's Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Liability may be reduced "to such an extent as the billing authority thinks fit." Billing authorities can apply a reduction in particular cases or by determining a class of case. Liability for Council Tax can be reduced to nil.
- 1.2 Each billing authority is required to develop a local Council Tax Support scheme each year for working age people.
- 1.3 Since 2013/14 the Council has adopted the Governments default scheme which has meant no changes or reduction in the support we provide.
- 1.4 Council Tax Support is provided to around 5.700 households at an annual cost of £5.8m which includes both working age and pension age claimants.
- 1.5 Within Gloucestershire some of our neighbouring authorities have reshaped their schemes to an income banded scheme whilst others are consulting on changes for 2020/21 to include a minimum payment.
- 1.6 As the billing authority we must consult with our major preceptors, as the majority of Council Tax collected is on their behalf, they are most affected by any changes.
- 1.7 Between 22/07/19 and 30/08/19 a consultation was carried out on the council's website. This was seeking views from residents, as well as interested parties such as Citizens Advice, on the Council Tax support scheme and banded scheme. The consultation provided very little feedback.
- 1.8 Residents over state pension age are protected from any changes.

2. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 2.1 Since 2013/14 the funding from central government to support the local working age scheme has continued to reduce in line with other central funding cuts. The council has so far absorbed any shortfall in funding assisted by utilising our local powers to reduce council tax discounts on empty properties, along with a premium charge.
- 2.2 To reduce costs to the council, changes would have to be made to the level of support provided to working age claimants.
- 2.3 There is a need to modernise and make changes to the current scheme so that it works together with the changes that are being made at national level with Universal Credit. Currently those claimants may have their entitlement recalculated each month taking into account fluctuations in income. This

results in revised changes to council tax instalments every month which can be confusing and make budgeting difficult.

- 2.4 There is a risk that the cost on maintaining the current local scheme will increase if the number of claimants increases due to the state of the local and national economy.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 This report, which was considered by Strategy and Resources Committee on 3 October 2019 recommends that the council continues with the existing scheme for 2020/21. This will allow the council to continue to provide up to a maximum 100% support, whilst protecting the most vulnerable residents in the district.
- 3.2 The wider introduction of Universal Credit will impact on how Council Tax support is administered and consideration should be given to an alternative scheme for futures years.
- 3.3 During 2020/21 a full review and modelling will be carried out and new proposals brought forward for consideration to change the scheme from 2021/22. Any future scheme will need to provide protection for the most vulnerable claimants as well as aim to be cost neutral.

Council Tax Support Scheme

Summary of the proposed scheme for Pension Credit Age persons and Working Age persons 2020/21

Introduction

The current Council Tax Support Scheme will end on 31st March 2020 and, from 1st April 2020, Councils will put in place (if necessary) a new local Council Tax Support scheme. Stroud District Council is proposing to continue the qualifying criteria from the current Council Tax Support Scheme as our local scheme. This means that all entitlements will remain the same. A consultation process in relation to this proposal was carried out between 22/07/2019 and 30/08/2019.

The purpose of this document is to give a high level overview of the current scheme, so that it is clear what we are proposing to continue. This document will also highlight any differences between the current scheme and the new local scheme that will take effect from 1st April 2020.

The Council Tax Support Scheme for Pensioners

The Government has protected Pensioners (i.e. those who have reached the age at which Pension Credit can be claimed) from change within local schemes. For Pensioners, the rules under the new local scheme will therefore be very similar to those of the current Council Tax Support scheme. An overview of the three basic types of qualification follows:

To qualify for Council Tax Support the person must:

- a. have attained the qualifying age for state Pension Credit,
- b. not be somebody with a partner of Working Age in receipt of Income Support, income- based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance and Universal Credit ,
- c. be liable to pay Council Tax for property in which they are resident,
- d. not have capital and/or savings above £16,000, and
- e. have made a valid application for a Council Tax Support.

The three types of qualification are summarised as follows:

1. Where an applicant meets all of the criteria (a-e above) and receives a level of weekly income which is less than or equal to the living allowance set by Central Government (known as the `applicable amount`); that person qualifies for 100% reduction on their Council Tax and has nothing to pay. However, this may be reduced if they have another adult living with them who is not their partner (this is known as a Non-Dependant Deduction).
2. Where an applicant meets all of the criteria (a-e above) and receives a level of weekly income which is above their applicable amount; the level of reduction will be calculated by taking 20% (known as the taper) of the difference between the income and the applicable amount away from their weekly Council Tax liability. Therefore, dependant on the level of income, the support could be

anywhere between 0% and 100%. Again, this may be reduced if they have another adult living with them who is not their partner (this is known as a Non-Dependant Deduction).

3. Where the applicant meets all of the criteria, apart from the capital limit (a, b, c & e above) and has another adult living with them who is on a low income or on state benefits (who is not their partner and does not pay rent to them); they may qualify for a reduction (known in the current Council Tax Benefit scheme as 'Second Adult Rebate'). Dependant on the level of income received by the 'second adult' this could give a reduction of up to 25%. This may be up to 100% for qualifying student applicants.

The Council Tax Support Scheme for Working Age claimants

As with the current Council Tax Support qualifying criteria, to qualify for Council Tax Support the person must:

- a. be someone who has not reached Pension Credit age, for whom a Council Tax Support claim can be calculated, unless they have a partner who is of working age,
- b. be liable to pay Council Tax for property in which they are resident,
- c. not have capital and/or savings above £16,000,
- d. have made a valid claim for Council Tax Support.

The three types of qualification are summarised as follows:

1. Where an applicant meets all of the criteria (a-d above) and receives a level of weekly income which is less than or equal to the living allowance set by Central Government (known as the 'applicable amount'); that person qualifies for 100% reduction on their Council Tax and has nothing to pay. However, this may be reduced if they have another adult living with them who is not their partner (this is known as a Non-Dependant Deduction).
2. Where an applicant meets all of the criteria (a-d above) and receives a level of weekly income which is above their applicable amount; the level of reduction will be calculated by taking 20% (known as the taper) of the difference between income and applicable amount away from their weekly Council Tax liability. Therefore, dependant on the level of income, the support could be anywhere between 0% and 100%. Again, this may be reduced if they have another adult living with them who is not their partner (this is known as a Non-Dependant Deduction).
3. Where the applicant meets all of the criteria, apart from the capital limit (a, b & d above) and has another adult living with them who is on a low income or on state benefits (who is not their partner and does not pay rent to them); they may qualify for a reduction (known in the current Council Tax Benefit scheme as 'Second Adult Rebate'). Dependant on the level of income received by the 'second adult' this could give a reduction of up to 25%. This may be up to 100% for qualifying students.

Legislation

It is proposed that eligibility under the new local scheme mirrors what is already set out in legislation relating to the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme. Our scheme will mirror any changes made to the HB regulations after the CTB regs ended including.

- Removal of the family premium from 01 May 2016 for new claims and changes of circumstances for existing claimants who have a child or become responsible for a child after 30 April 2016
- Match the removal of allowances for third and subsequent children born after April 2017
- The restrictions in tax credits for two children and the removal of the family element from 2017
- Restrictions for those claimants leaving the UK for longer than one month
- Exception will be that Backdating will be limited to a maximum of three months for all CTS claimants

For reference these regulations are;

- The Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992,
- The Social Security Administration Act 1992,
- The Council Tax Benefit Regulations 2006
- The Council Tax Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state Pension Credit) Regulations 2006,
- The Housing Benefit Regulations 2006,
- The Housing Benefit (Persons who have attained the qualifying age for state Pension Credit) Regulations 2006.

These regulations set out how Council Tax Benefit was claimed, calculated and paid. The local Council Tax Support scheme will mirror all of these criteria and a summary of the key factors follow:

Applicable Amount

This is the living allowance that determines the financial needs of claimants. These are determined annually by Central Government and the local scheme will use the same figures in line with Social Security benefits. As shown in the detailed qualifying criteria above, they are used to determine your entitlement. Generally, if your income (including benefits and assumed income from capital) is lower than your applicable amount you will receive full support (less any deduction for any non-dependants living in your household). If your income is higher than your applicable amount then you will receive less than 100% support.

Applicable amounts are calculated by making allowance for your personal needs, any children in the household, as well as premiums for certain household circumstances; for example if there is a disabled person within the household.

Income and Capital

Income is all of the money that the applicant (and other members of their household) have coming in from earnings, social security benefits, maintenance payments, pensions and other sources. Some forms of income will have what is known as a

'disregard' applied to them. This means that, for the purposes of calculating Council Tax Support, they may be partially or fully ignored.

Any capital that the applicant has (for example savings, shares or other property) will contribute to the calculation as well as their income. The Council will work out an assumed weekly income from the applicant's capital/investments (known as tariff income) and this will be used to calculate a total income figure, so that this can be used to calculate entitlement. Again, some capital will be disregarded within the calculation.

Evidence

The Council will, as with the current Council Tax Support scheme, require all applicants to provide evidence of most forms of income and capital. The Council will also require evidence of applicant's identity upon making a claim for Council Tax Support.

Change of Circumstances

Recipients of Council Tax Support must notify the Council immediately if there are any changes that might affect their right to, or the amount of, Council Tax Support received.

This will include where they live; who they live with; changes in earnings, benefits and capital; the employment status of everyone in the household; a member of the household leaving or going into hospital or prison. Applicants will have a duty to notify the Council of any change of circumstances that they might reasonably be expected to know might affect their Council Tax Support entitlement.

Payment and Notification

All awards of Council Tax Support will be credited direct to the applicant's Council Tax account. Applicants will be notified in writing about their weekly award and how it was calculated or (where they are not entitled) that their claim has been unsuccessful. Where Council Tax Support is awarded the applicant will also receive a new Council Tax bill with their reduced liability (even where they are entitled to 100% support and the bill is zero).

Overpayments

As with the current Council Tax Support scheme, where an applicant has been awarded support and it is later determined that they should not have been entitled, an overpayment will have occurred. In most instances, where this is the applicants error, this overpayment will be added to their Council Tax account and collected as normal. Where this is not possible (for example if the account is now closed because the applicant has moved) normal recovery actions will be undertaken. The Council will be able to get an attachment to that benefit to recover Council Tax; which is possible within the current arrangements.

Claiming

Currently claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support are made on the same form. It is proposed that this will remain the same when the new local Council Tax Support scheme is introduced. Minor adjustments will need to be made to take account of the change in the name of the scheme (for example); however it is anticipated that a very similar form will be used and be available in exactly the same formats as with the current scheme. A shortened claim form has been introduced for use by claimants who are claiming and / or receiving Universal Credit.

Moving Over to the New Scheme

The Council will not be asking existing Council Tax Support recipients to make a fresh claim for Council Tax Support. As the same qualifying criteria will apply, we will simply transfer all Council Tax Support claims in payment on 31st March 2018 to the new scheme.

Universal Credit

Full service was rolled out across the district for a broader range of claimants from 4th October 2018. It has become more widely available for couples and families but only for new claims or where there is a significant change of circumstances.

The impact of Universal Credit will be monitored with a view to introduce a “tolerance level” of income change which would mean we ignore changes of less than a certain per cent or a certain amount.

Where claimants are employed and receiving Universal Credit, their net wage after tax, national insurance and pension deductions will be used in the assessment.

Where claimants are self-employed and are or were receiving Universal Credit, we will follow Universal Credit and use the relevant national minimum wage to make an assessment on their income where they have declared no profit.

It is proposed that eligibility under the new local scheme mirrors what had already been set out in legislation relating to the old Council Tax Benefit scheme, other than the annual uprating of premiums, allowances, non-dependant deductions and any changes to the national pension age scheme that need to be reflected in the local working age scheme.

Our scheme will also mirror any changes made to the HB regulations after the CTB regs ended including:

- Removal of the family premium from 1 May 2016 for new claims and changes of circumstance for existing claimants who have a child or become responsible for a child after 30 April 2016.
- Match the removal of allowances for third and subsequent children born after April 2017
- The restrictions in tax credits to two children and the removal of the family element from 2017

- Restrictions for those claimants leaving the UK for longer than one month
- Exception will be that backdating will be limited to a maximum of three month for all CTS claimants.

HBRO = Housing Benefit Run On, an additional award of benefit for the first four weeks of employment where the customer was previously unemployed for a continuous period of 26 weeks

CTS = Council Tax Support

Taper = the rate at which benefit is reduced as income increases

Second Adult Rebate = an award of benefit based on the income a second person in a property

What are the differences between the old Council Tax Benefit Scheme and the new local Council Tax Support Scheme?

There are some things, aside from the name, that will be different under the new local scheme. However, these are factors that will not generally affect the main qualifying criteria.

These differences are:

- **Discretionary Housing Payments** – Where someone did not receive full benefit (Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit) and there was the risk of financial hardship; the Council had a discretionary budget that it could use to top up Housing and/or Council Tax Benefit. Under the new local Council Tax Support scheme this discretionary allocation of money is not available and there will not be any payment of discretionary support. This has not caused wide-ranging difficulties as we have been operating a Council Tax Support Scheme since April 2013.
- **Fraud** – The previous Council Tax Benefit scheme operated under Benefit Legislation and the Council had powers to investigate and prosecute fraudsters accordingly. The new scheme is not a benefit. It is a discount under Council Tax legislation and benefit investigation powers do not apply. However, under the Fraud Act 2006 the Council has very similar powers to investigate and prosecute those that fraudulently claim Council Tax Support.
- **Appeals** – The current appeals system (and processes) changed from those we had in place in relation to Council Tax Benefit. The Valuation Tribunal Service will be responsible for hearing appeals against Council Tax Support.
- **Universal Credit** – The introduction of Universal Credit may change the level of evidence and information that we require from applicants. Currently, for claimants of such benefits as Income Support and Job Seeker's Allowance, we receive information from the Department for Work and Pensions that reduces the duplication for the claimant. The DWP will only tell us of Universal Credit amounts if the claimant gives their permission, otherwise we will need to contact them like any other claimant.

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
COUNCIL

**AGENDA
ITEM NO**

17 OCTOBER 2019

9b

Report Title	BUDGET STRATEGY 2020/21 TO 2023/24
Purpose of Report	To set out the assumptions that will be used when preparing the upcoming Medium Term Financial Plan
Decision(s)	It is RECOMMENDED that Council approves the Budget Strategy 2020/21 to 2023/24 as set out in this report.
Consultation and Feedback	Formal budget consultation is currently taking place in the form of a telephone survey of local council tax and business rate payers.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report, but it does summarise the financial position over the medium term, and the measures that have been taken to mitigate the impact of reduced funding levels. Andrew Cummings – Interim Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) Tel: 01453 754115 Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. The implications of any of the measures referred to below will need to be considered at the point of implementation. Craig Hallett, Solicitor & Deputy Monitoring Officer Tel: 01453 754364 Email: craig.hallett@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Andrew Cummings – Interim Director of Resources (Section 151 Officer) Tel: 01453 754115 Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk
Options	To review assumptions made in funding. To challenge long term cost projections and budget adjustments.
Performance Management Follow Up	The budget and savings proposals for the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund will be considered by Service Committees in November and December 2019 and Strategy and Resources Committee in January 2020, with Council budget approval meeting in February 2020.
Background Papers/ Appendices	Appendix A – Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2020/21 to 2023/24 Appendix B – Current assumptions on budget changes Appendix C – Proposed review of reserve balances

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This report, which was considered by Strategy and Resources Committee on 3 October 2019 sets out the current assumptions on funding available throughout the period 2020/21 to 2023/24, and initial estimates of the level of cost pressures and savings that the Council may expect. That information forms the basis for the detailed budget setting process now taking place throughout the Authority. Officers are reviewing all expenditure and income budgets to determine appropriate levels and identify savings where possible.
- 1.2 The Council's General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budgets for 2020/21, including the budget proposals of the administration, will be presented to full Council at their meeting on 20 February 2020. Proposed budgets will have first been reviewed by service committees.
- 1.3 This strategy represents the first stage of the budget setting process for 2020/21 and many of the figures involved will be subject to significant review in the coming months before final Council budget approval. They are, however, based upon the most up to date assumptions at the current stage which have been used to prepare a draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) as shown at Appendix A.
- 1.4 At the time of writing matters relating to Britain's exit from the European Union remain uncertain. As part of the Council's risk assessment around Brexit a number of financial impacts have been considered including increased costs of labour and supplies as well as the possibility of reduced income from taxation or investments. With the current uncertainty no adjustments have been made in the budget strategy for these items.

2. General Fund Budget Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan Funding Projections

- 2.1 The current financial year represents the final year of the government's four-year settlement offer and the period after, beginning from 2020/21, has been the subject of considerable uncertainty. Council noted this uncertainty when agreeing the current MTFP in January 2019.
- 2.2 The Chancellor of the Exchequer unveiled a one-year Spending Review on September 4th covering spending totals across Central Government. The key areas relating to district Councils were;
 - A reset to the baselines in the business rates retention system expected in 2020 is now deferred to 2021.
 - Baselines for business rates will instead grow by inflation in 2020.
 - The "fair funding review" considering how local government funding is allocated between Councils is deferred to 2021
 - National funding for New Homes Bonus remains in 2020/21.
 - The core level of Council Tax rises assumed is 2%

The uncertainty previously noted therefore remains, although now moves a year later as the fair funding review and business rates resets have both been deferred.

- 2.3 It is not possible to make a definitive estimate at this stage of what the impact of these reviews will be upon the Council. It is anticipated that there will be a general movement in funding from lower to upper tier authorities and it is highly probable that funding for Stroud will reduce. The MTFP currently assumes the full impact of a baseline reset.

New Homes Bonus

- 2.4 New Homes Bonus (NHB) has been a declining source of funding for the Council for some years having reduced from £3.2m in 2016/17 to only £1.7m in 2019/20. This reduction is expected to reduce until the point at which the grant is completely eliminated.
- 2.5 The reason for this is that 2019/20 was the final year in which there is nationally agreed funding for NHB which currently costs the government £918 million a year. The expectation had been that after this year only payments relating to “legacy” growth will be made and no additional NHB will be agreed. NHB rewards housing growth in a particular year by giving an agreed annual amount for the following four years.
- 2.6 The government has now committed to maintaining a national total of £900m for New Homes Bonus in 2020/21. There has been no announcement as yet as to how this will be distributed. It is possible that an additional years housing growth will be rewarded for 2018/19 and this grant may be paid for four years but there is no clear indication of this at this stage. The tables below show two possibilities for NHB. The Budget Strategy assumes that there will be no additional growth awarded, i.e. the first table.

Table 1 – NHB Forecast 2019/20 to 2023/24 (MTFP assumption)

Year of Reward	2019/20 (£'000)	2020/21 (£'000)	2021/22 (£'000)	2022/23 (£'000)	2023/24 (£'000)
2014/15	933				
2015/16	238	238			
2016/17	337	337	337		
2017/18	218	218	218	218	
TOTAL NHB	1,726	793	555	218	0

Table 2 – NHB Forecast 2019/20 to 2022/23 (if additional year awarded)

Year of Reward	2019/20 (£'000)	2020/21 (£'000)	2021/22 (£'000)	2022/23 (£'000)	2023/24 (£'000)
2014/15	933				
2015/16	238	238			
2016/17	337	337	337		
2017/18	218	218	218	218	
2018/19		250	250	250	250
TOTAL NHB	1,726	1,043	805	468	250

Business Rates

- 2.7 The amount of business rates collected by the authority is expected to grow gradually over the next four years. The amount the Council retains in its budget is determined by a baseline set by Central Government. It has long been planned that these baselines would be “reset” in 2020. This would have the affect of stripping growth from authorities which have seen rises in business rates collected in recent years, to redistribute to those authorities which had seen falls. This reset is now expected in 2021 and at the current time is estimated to reduce business rates retained by approximately £1 million p.a.
- 2.8 The deferral of the reforms to the Business Rates system mean that it is highly likely that the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pool will continue to operate in 2020/21. This generates a small additional income to the Council in addition to our core business rates position. As in previous years an income of £100k p.a. is included in the base budget. Should additional funding be generated this will be reported through the Outturn process at the end of the financial year.

Council Tax

- 2.9 For the last two years the Government allowed Council Tax increases of up to 2.99% for District Councils and this was the increase agreed by Council for 2019/20. The MTFP then assumed that districts would return to an annual £5 increase limit for all years after that point.
- 2.10 As referenced earlier in the report the government assumption is now of an increase of just 2%. Informally the Council’s funding advisors have suggested that a £5 limit for District Councils is again likely (approximately 2.4% for Stroud) and therefore the MTFP continues with this assumption. In line with previous years an annual growth in tax base of 1.5% is assumed at this stage. The actual tax base growth will be incorporated in the final budget report.

3. Budget Assumptions

Pay and Price Inflation

- 3.1 Inflation linked increases will be added to budgets for spend with external partners. At the time of writing the CPI inflation rate in the UK is 1.7%. The Budget Strategy and Draft MTFP currently plans to allow for annual inflationary increases of 2% on contract sums but this will be updated to reflect the September CPI during the budget setting process.
- 3.2 At this point there is no agreement on a local government pay award after 2019/20. In June 2019 the government announced that there will be pay increases of above inflation for many public sector workers including police officers at 2.5% and teachers at 2.75%. Decisions on local government pay are made separately but these other awards are seen as an indication that the award is likely to be above 2%. At this stage an award of 2.5% is estimated for the purposes of the budget strategy. An update will be included in the budget setting report but it is likely that the final position will still not be known at that stage.
- 3.3 Inflation will not be included on budgets which are not related to salaries or contracts. It is anticipated that efficiencies will be used to maintain expenditure within existing budgets. This approach represents a small but significant way that the Council can achieve some real terms savings in expenditure.

Local Government Pension Scheme

- 3.4 In previous years the MTFP has assumed an annual increase in pension contributions in line with the requirements of the fund actuary. This position is re-evaluated every three years and 2020/21 is the first year of the new valuation period. The actuaries have indicated that as a result of the funding level of our pension scheme no increase will be required during the course of the next MTFP and the annual increase is therefore removed. The previous increase in the MTFP was £150k p.a. so over a four year MTFP this amounts to a £600k p.a. saving.
- 3.5 In the three year period ending in 2019/20 the Council has benefited from reduced contributions as a result of paying some of its contributions up front in a lump sum. The saving ends in 2020/21 with the new valuation period. However, officers are exploring the possibility of following the same lump sum payment option and therefore at this point the MTFP remains based on the reduced sum. This position will be updated before Council in February 2019.

Interest Rates & Investment Income

- 3.6 There have been no changes to the Bank of England base rate since the increase to 0.75% in August 2018.
- 3.7 In February 2019 the Council approved a new investment strategy permitting investments in a wider variety of funds. A cross party member working group has been putting together a fund selection process working with the S151 Officer and

our external treasury advisors. Investment decisions are likely to be made in October. Having considered likely yields from those investments, annual increases in investment income of £150k are included for each year of the MTFP.

Table 3 – Assumptions included within the Strategy

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Band D Council Tax Increase	£5	£5	£5	£5
Tax Base Increase	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%	1.50%
Contract Inflation	2%	2%	2%	2%
Pay Inflation	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%

Borrowing and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)

- 3.8 The General Fund requirement for borrowing to fund past capital works currently stands at £15.726 million (decreased from 16.622 million the year before) This creates a need for a Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) to repay that borrowing. This was budgeted at £981k million in 2019/20. The current capital programme, as reported to Strategy and Resources Committee on 13th June 2019, includes £11.163 million of borrowing for General Fund capital purposes, with the largest uses being the Canal, Brimscombe Port and Ubico Fleet vehicles.
- 3.9 The expected MRP over the life of the MTFP and capital programme will be reviewed during the budget setting process. Where possible the capital reserve will be used instead of borrowing to limit MRP exposure. At this stage it is considered that the current annual MRP budget is sufficient at the current time with a potential increase of £100k built into the later years of the plan.
- 3.10 This strategy does not consider the detail of the capital programme which will be included within the full budget report.

Fees & Charges

- 3.11 The Council has previously adopted a piecemeal approach to budgeting for fees and charges. In many cases they have been considered on an individual basis. The new budget strategy mandates that all income budgets relating to fees and charges will rise by 2.5% unless charges are set by statute or if increasing charges would lead to an excessive surplus. The primary driver of Council costs is salaries and therefore it is reasonable to link fee increases with assumed increases in salary costs of 2.5%. This increase is currently anticipated to yield an extra £50k per year which is included in the Draft MTFP.
- 3.12 There is not currently in place either a comprehensive list of Council fees and charges or an overall charging policy. These issues need to be addressed if the Council is going to develop a more commercial approach to funding its services. For the 2020/21 budget, lists of fees and charges will be presented to service committees and an overall fees and charges policy will be included in the budget papers in February 2020. The policy will include the rationale for setting and

approving Council charges as well as any policies around discounts and exemptions.

Longer Term Budget Adjustments

- 3.13 The following paragraphs set out those items in the draft MTFP which represent significant changes from the previous MTFP agreed by the Council. Details of budget adjustments are shown at Appendix B.
- 3.14 The significant change for the current year's budget was to work in partnership with Ubico to produce a balanced budget for that contract. At the time of writing this can be deemed a success. The External Auditors are now satisfied with the Value for Money arrangements and the contract is currently expected to be underspent in 2020/21. Therefore at this time no further adjustment, save for that included within the contractual inflation allowance is required.
- 3.15 The Work Force Plan previously being followed by the authority had a further savings target to be achieved of £500k. This has been partially covered by releasing £120k of pension savings, previously held in reserve, resulting from previous staff changes. The remaining balance of the target is achieved by the removal of the £150k p.a. annual pension increase.
- 3.16 The WFP is not continuing with its target of reducing 20% of the workforce. When the new Senior Leadership Team is in place Council structures will be considered, taking into account Council objectives as well as the revenue budget position.
- 3.17 The report to Strategy and Resources Committee setting out the new Senior Management structure included an estimated cost of £45k. This will be split between the General Fund and the HRA with the current GF impact currently being estimated at £30k.
- 3.18 The Council has been aware in recent years of a risk relating to the income stream from Gloucestershire County Council incentivising food waste collections. This source of funding was worth £380k to SDC in 2018/19. Formal notice has now been received that the incentive payment arrangements will change for the 2020/21 year. The final scheme details are not known at the time of writing but a reduction in funding of £200k p.a. is currently anticipated and has been built into the draft MTFP.
- 3.19 In January 2019 Council agreed a one off budget of £60k in 2019/20 for scoping works around the Council's commitment to making the District carbon neutral by 2030. This funding has been partly used to recruit a Carbon Neutral Officer to co-ordinate the multiple work streams of this project. This budget strategy turns the one off budget into a recurring annual sum, effectively increasing the investment in carbon neutrality by a minimum of £240k over the four year MTFP.

4. General Fund Medium Term Financial Plan Use of Reserves

- 4.1 The Council continues to use a strategy of using the “General Fund equalisation reserve” to bridge the gap between forecast expenditure and funding over the life of the MTFP. As at the end of the 2018/19 year the balance in this reserve was £6.09 million. This strategy allows the Council time to deliver budget savings and also protects the General Fund Balance, and levels of Council services, during fluctuations in funding levels. The deferral of the government reviews, covered earlier in this strategy, support this continued approach.
- 4.2 Where the Council has specific reserves which have been established to cover risks these will be released into general balances over the life of the MTFP where appropriate. This strategy identifies two reserves where this approach is used. The “Business Rates Safety Net” reserve has been established to soften the impact of the baseline reset. In accordance with this purpose this reserve is released in the years after the baseline reset in 2021. The “Waste and Recycling” Reserve will be used to fund the costs of new collection rounds due to property growth and to mitigate the impact of the reduction in the food waste incentive payments.
- 4.3 The balance of General Fund earmarked reserves, excluding the capital reserve, at the end of 2018/19 was £12.53 million, including the £6.09 million General Fund equalisation reserve. This is in addition to the General Fund balance of £2.169 million which this Strategy recommends be held at that level.
- 4.4 As part of producing this Strategy the allocation of reserves has been reviewed by the S151 Officer, the Senior Leadership Team and Alliance Members at a budget workshop. The revised plans for use of reserves are shown at Appendix C.
- 4.5 The table below shows the current forecast of General Fund equalisation Reserve over the life of the draft MTFP.

Table 3 – Forecast level of General Fund equalisation reserve

	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2023/24 £000
Estimated Surplus / (Deficit)	141	(397)	(809)	(1,249)
GF equalisation reserve				
Opening	6,722	6,863	6,466	5,657
Change	141	(397)	(809)	(1,249)
Closing	6,863	6,466	5,657	4,408

5. Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

- 5.1 In common with the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) faces financial pressures over the medium term plan period. HRA balances and reserves at the end of 2018/19 were relatively robust at £3.386 million in general reserves and £4.094 million in earmarked reserves.
- 5.2 The proposed Budget and Rent Setting 2020/21 Report will be presented to Housing Committee in December, followed by Strategy and Resources Committee in January 2020.
- 5.3 It is not currently anticipated that a deficit will be identified over the MTFP period, and therefore Members are unlikely to be presented with a savings plan for 2020/21. However, there are a number of significant risks and uncertainties which should be considered when allocating resources across the medium and long term position of the HRA.
- 5.4 For example, the Carbon Neutral 2030 commitment will have a significant impact on both major works needed on existing stock and the build costs for new build housing. This additional cost may not be fully known for this budget setting round.
- 5.5 2020/21 is the first year of permissible rent increases following the four year rent reduction set out in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. Based on national rent guidance, rents are assumed to increase by CPI+1% for five years.
- 5.6 The total borrowing incurred for the HRA is £103.274m incl Littlecombe depot at 525k. As the debt cap has been removed, the HRA's new build programme has been extended over the MTFP period, utilising this power to increase borrowing.
- 5.7 All the external debt is at fixed rates and so there will be no fluctuations in interest payments for current borrowing over the medium term. There may be opportunities to re-schedule the debt to take advantage of lower rates and this will be kept under review. Of the borrowing, £5.287 million is internally borrowed, utilising HRA balances over the short term. This will continue to be reviewed as balances reduce, in line with the Treasury Management Strategy.
- 5.8 The HRA MTFP includes an annual contribution towards repaying borrowing. This base amount will increase by inflation each year, with additional amounts added to reflect any new borrowing for the new build programme.

MTFP 2019/20 to 2022/23

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Budget					
Opening Budget	14,514	14,492	14,595	14,912	15,289
<u>Recurring Changes</u>					
Pay Increases	196	240	240	240	240
Fees and Charges Growth		(50)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Pensions Increases	203				
Contract Increases	224	180	180	180	180
Revised Budget	15,137	14,862	14,965	15,282	15,659
Proposed Budget Adjustments	(645)	(267)	(53)	7	7
Revised Budget	14,492	14,595	14,912	15,289	15,666
Funding					
Council Tax	9,189	9,552	9,923	10,303	10,693
Prior year CT surplus	186	0	0	0	0
Business Rates (incl grants)	3,900	4,161	3,107	3,229	3,294
Other Grant	67	30	30	30	30
New Homes Bonus	1,726	793	555	218	0
Total Funding	15,068	14,536	13,615	13,780	14,017
Surplus / (Deficit) before Reserves Movements	576	(59)	(1,297)	(1,509)	(1,649)
Reserves Movements					
Business Rates Reserve	400		(700)	(500)	(400)
Waste and Recycling Reserve		(200)	(200)	(200)	
Estimated Surplus / (Deficit)	176	141	(397)	(809)	(1,249)
GF equalisation reserve					
Opening	6,091	6,722	6,863	6,466	5,657
Change	176	141	(397)	(809)	(1,249)
Reserve Review	455				
Closing	6,722	6,863	6,466	5,657	4,408

MTFS Changes

	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000	2022/23 £000	2022/24 £001
Pressures					
Historic Budget Adjustments					
Ubico inflation catch up	352				
Corporate Change Team	100				
Planning Salaries	45				
Reshaping comms team	40				
Old Town Hall Income	33				
Community Safety Income	32				
	602	0	0	0	0
New Pressures					
Additional Recycling Round	95	55		150	
Food Waste Income		200			
Senior Management Structure		30			
IT Salaries	75				
Temporary accommodation to prevent homelessness	50				
Carbon reduction scoping	60				
Car Parking	54				
Revs and Bens Grant Reduction	89				
HRA Share of Increased investment income	6				
Drainage Board Levy	7	7	7	7	7
	436	292	7	157	7
Total Pressure	1038	292	7	157	7
Savings					
Achieved					
MRP	(310)		100		
Workforce Plan	(491)				
Debt Repayment (Pulse)		(35)			
General Fund Contingency	(66)				
Pension Prepayment - One Year Saving	(154)				
Insurance Premium	(55)				
Homelessness Grant	(69)	69			
Joint Use Sports Centres	(50)				
Pulse Income	(284)				
	(1,479)	34	100	0	0
To be achieved					
Workforce Plan - Pension Savings		(120)			
Sub Rooms transfer		(226)			
TIC Closure	(67)	(14)			
Littlecombe Business Units Income	13	(73)			
Car Parks - Inflation on existing charges	(50)				
Kingshill House - Asset Transfer		(10)	(10)		
Increased Investment Income	(100)	(150)	(150)	(150)	
	(204)	(593)	(160)	(150)	
Total Saving	(1,683)	(559)	(60)	(150)	0
Net Changes	(645)	(267)	(53)	7	7

Budget Strategy - Reserves Review

Appendix C

Name of Reserve	18/19	Results of evaluation	Balance held in reserve
Group A - Reserve balances unchanged by the review and expected to be used in full in 2019/20			
Carry Forward Reserve	422,500	Represents funding carried forward from 18/19 to 19/20. Will be replaced this year with funding to be carried forward into 2020/21.	422,500
PDG Reserve	49,700	To be used in full in 2019/20 towards Local Plan review costs	49,700
Welfare Reform Reserve	30,000	Reserve not required - use in 2019/20 to fund £30k welfare reform grants	30,000
Neighbourhood Planning Grant Reserve	47,100	To be used in full in 2019/20 towards Local Plan review costs	47,100
Homelessness Prevention Reserve	97,500	Funding is being used for part time fixed posts and will be released to the general fund budget. Any remaining will be used to compensate for loss of grant funding.	97,500
Brexit Costs Reserve	17,500	To be used in full in 2019/20	17,500
Street Cleaning Funding	20,000	To be used in full in 2019/20	20,000
	684,300		684,300
Group B- Reserve balances to be held to meet future unforeseen costs			
Legal Counsel Reserve	50,000	Valid Reserve - Maintain to protect against unforeseen costs	50,000
Opportunity Land Purchase Reserve	250,000	Reserve to be held for land purchase opportunities	250,000
Planning Appeal Costs Reserve	100,000	Maintain to protect against unforeseen costs	100,000
Redundancy Reserve	488,000	Reserve was originally created during the 20% workforce plan cuts. No longer required to be maintained at this level although a reserve should still be held. A balance of £250k is recommended at this stage with the remainder being transferred to the transformation reserve.	250,000
Building Control Shared Service Reserve	224,000	To be invested into the Building Control Service - Plans are currently being developed	224,000
Repairs and replacement reserve	200,000	Reserve to be built upon each year and to be used for replacement of fleet vehicles and building repairs as necessary. Ebley Mill repairs funding transferred in.	260,000
Investment Risk Reserve	100,000	Reserve to be added to from future investment gains to protect against capital value changes	100,000
	1,412,000		1,234,000
Group C - Reserves with an identified use for some or all of the funding over the MTFP			
Capital Reserve	5,417,096	Continue to program future capital programme costs against the reserve. The current budgeted uses are: Stratford Park Lido £200k, Cycling and Walking Schemes £300k, Canal £1m, IT £1.8m. Approximately £1.7m only now remains unallocated which will be use to prevent borrowing on capital schemes.	5,417,096
Waste Management	600,000	Reserve to be used over the life of the MTFP to offset the impact of new recycling/waste rounds. Allocated in its entirety in the MTFP.	600,000
Business Rates Safety net	1,346,000	Has been established to protect against the "cliff edge" of baseline reset. The reset is now expected in 2020/21 with the reserve to be released to the GF after that point. Allocated in its entirety in the MTFP.	1,346,000
MTFP Equalisation Reserve	6,091,447	Reserve gives Council time for making budget savings and allows services to be predicted. Once predicted future revenue funding gap is closed the reserve becomes available for general use. Anticipated use is £2.4m over the life of the MTFP	6,546,547
Climate Change	200,000	Funding available for projects reducing carbon emissions	200,000
CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) Reserve	217,600	Environment Committee has approved a policy for allocation of CIL funding	217,600
Culture, Arts and Leisure Reserve		Will be used to fund projects across the District including studies around Stratford Park	130,000
Transformation Reserve	400,000	Funding transferred from invest to save and redundancy reserves. Likely to be used in full during the life of the MTFP.	678,000
Business Rates Pilot Reserve	897,000	£307k has already been allocated from this pot.	897,000
	15,169,143		16,032,243
Group D - Reserves no longer required			
Pension Fund Reserve	205,100	This reserve is no longer required. To be transferred into the equalisation reserve	0
Efficiency & Invest to Save Reserve	100,000	£60k relates to Ebley Mill refurbishment and transferred to repairs reserve. £40k relates to invest to save and transferred to transformation reserve	0
Dursley Pool Reserve	130,000	Reserve held to cover risk of income shortfall. Now consolidated into Culture and Leisure Reserve to help fund future projects across the District	0
MRP/Vol MRP Equalisation Reserve	250,000	MRP budget has been stabilised. Funding transferred to Equalisation Reserve	0
	685,100		0
Total Earmarked Reserve	17,950,543		17,950,543

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

17 OCTOBER 2019

AGENDA
ITEM NO

9c

Report Title	VISION 2050 SEVERN VALE DELIVERY BOARD
Purpose of Report	To set out the background to the setting up of the Gloucestershire Vision 2050 Severn Vale Board, to agree the Terms of Reference for the Board set out at Appendix 1 and the participation of Stroud District Council in the activities of the Board.
Decision(s)	<p>It is RECOMMENDED to Council that:</p> <p>(1) The Terms of Reference for the Severn Vale Board set out at Appendix 1 are agreed; and</p> <p>(2) Stroud District Council participates in the activities of the Board.</p>
Consultation and Feedback	Consultation on a Vision 2050 for Gloucestershire was carried out in 2018, and in the same year the public sector organisations that make up Leadership Gloucestershire agreed to a vision underpinned by eight ambitions, and to a concordat to set up three Boards to deliver the vision and ambitions.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	<p>There are no direct financial implications arising from participating in the membership of the board.</p> <p>Any future projects to be led by the board which may require funding would be reported at point in which funding is needed.</p> <p>Andrew Cummings, Interim Director of Resources & S151 Officer Tel: 01453 754115 Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Legal Implications	<p>There are no legal implications arising from this report.</p> <p>Patrick Arran, Interim Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer Tel: 01453 754369 Email: patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk</p>
Report Author	<p>Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive Tel: 01453 754780 Email: kathy.oleary@stroud.gov.uk</p>

Options	The Council is a partner in Leadership Gloucestershire, which itself has no decision-making powers. These remain with the constituent public sector organisations. While the Council does not have to agree to participate in the Severn Vale Board and agree to its Terms of Reference, if it does not do so it will lose the opportunity to strategically influence the work of the Board and benefit the residents of the district.
Performance Management Follow Up	The progress of the Severn Vale Board will be overseen by Leadership Gloucestershire and reported back to this Committee as appropriate.
Background Papers/ Appendices	Vision 2050 and Concordat 2018 Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1 A project to develop a vision for Gloucestershire began in 2016. In 2018 Leadership Gloucestershire ran a county-wide conversation to explore ideas to shape the long-term future. The consultation ran from 1 February 2018 to 31 July 2018 and approximately 2,500 responses were received. Following this, a vision and a concordat were developed. The purpose of the concordat was to record the commitment of Leadership Gloucestershire to develop work to actively create a positive future for the county, and the Council, alongside all councils and other public sector organisations in Gloucestershire, agreed to welcome and note both the vision and concordat.
- 1.2 The vision endorsed by Leadership Gloucestershire is ‘Gloucestershire: a great place to live, work and do business, with a thriving future.’
- 1.3 The thriving future is underpinned by eight ‘ambitions’:
- a) **An inclusive county:** we will ensure that the economic and social benefits of growth are felt by all.
 - b) **A magnet county:** we will see a growing working age population, by keeping and attracting more 18-40 year olds with high level qualifications, who want to live and work in the county.
 - c) **An innovative county:** we will see more businesses starting up, growing, and investing in research and innovation.
 - d) **A skilled county:** we will see more people with high-level skills and jobs in skilled occupations.
 - e) **A prosperous county:** we will see rising productivity and household income, offering higher living standards.
 - f) **A healthy, happy and safe county:** we will ensure people have a good work/life balance and see improved health and wellbeing.
 - g) **A connected county:** we will see improved transport and internet connections so that people and businesses can connect with each other more easily.
 - h) **A sustainable county:** we will see more efficient use of resources and more use of sustainable energy.

- 1.4 The 2018 concordat set out that Leadership Gloucestershire agreed to scope further the establishment of Boards for three projects. Each Board was to consider how to frame its scope so that it best delivered against each of the above eight ambitions.
- 1.5 Further discussions on establishing the three Boards have been held during the course of this year. The three Boards are:
- Central Gloucestershire Board
 - Rural Ambitions Board
 - Severn Vale Board
- 1.6 The purpose of the Central Gloucestershire Board is to provide the vision and strategic context for the area currently covered by the Joint Core Strategy: this includes Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury Borough. The concordat states that it is important that this vision covers all aspects of community life and business ambition, rather than just a development focus.
- 1.7 The concordat sets out that the Rural Ambitions Board should be looking for a positive vision of a vibrant rural economy, which allows market towns and villages, communities and businesses to be as proud of their contribution to Gloucestershire as they are already proud of their landscape. It should be looking at ways in which a vision for our rural assets compliments the vision for growth elsewhere in the County.
- 1.8 Stroud District Council is likely to be asked to participate in all three Boards, with a leading role in the Severn Vale Board.

2. THE SEVERN VALE BOARD

- 2.1 The concordat sets out that the Severn Vale Board should consider infrastructure and connectivity of the vale beyond the county including such issues as rail improvements, M5 corridor upgrade (and particularly junction capacity at 12, 13 and 14) and wider national transport links. It should also consider all aspects of community life and business ambition rather than just focus on infrastructure.
- 2.2 In addition to upgrading existing infrastructure, Vision 2050 considered the potential role of a third crossing of the River Severn between the Forest of Dean and Stroud districts.
- 2.3 The focus of the embryonic Severn Vale Board has shifted with the launch of 'A Powerhouse for the West' at the House of Lords on 8 July 2019. In terms of developing connectivity, the launch document refers to a third Severn estuary crossing at Lydney/Sharpness to improve rail resilience. Gloucestershire and in particular the Severn Vale is geographically pivotal (a conduit) to the east-west and north-south connectivity of the Western Powerhouse. The Severn Vale Board therefore needs to aim to position itself to derive maximum mutual benefit for local communities and the Western Powerhouse in terms of strategic and local connectivity, prosperity, sustainable tourism and clean growth.

- 2.4 Subsequently, further discussions have been held to scope the Terms of Reference and the membership of the Severn Vale Board. These discussions have been led by the Leaders and Chief Executive / Head of Paid Service of Stroud and Forest of Dean District Councils, charged by Leadership Gloucestershire with establishing this particular Board.
- 2.5 The 'Powerhouse for the West' report directly mentions the possibility of a third Severn estuary crossing at Lydney-Sharpness to improve rail resilience, given the potential risk of inundation of the Severn tunnel in the event of pump failure and the inability to electrify the line that passes under the Severn. Electrification of the railway lines that link London and the different parts of the Great Western Powerhouse through to South Wales is important to regional economic growth and carbon reduction.
- 2.6 Work to explore the feasibility of a rail crossing has been incorporated into the brief for the GCC Rail Investment Strategy, with funding from the Gloucestershire Business Rates Pilot Pool likely to be agreed by the County Council next month. The role of the County Council as strategic transport authority necessitates close involvement in the Severn Vale Board.
- 2.7 A rail bridge might also present an opportunity to provide better pedestrian and cycling links between existing / new communities on either side of the Severn. The bridge's potential to harness natural energy (tidal, wind and solar) could be explored given the strategic and local emphasis on clean energy and working towards carbon neutrality by 2030 / 2050 in the wake of declared national and local climate change emergencies.
- 2.8 A road bridge is not currently under consideration. The Halcrow report that was jointly commissioned by GCC, SDC and FODDC to explore the potential of a third Severn crossing road bridge identified that the need for a road bridge to solve an existing problem was at best unclear. While the bridge was advocated on the basis of creating opportunities through infrastructure investment, this is clearly not how funding flows. The likely cost of the bridge would necessitate levels of development which while untested would be likely to be at a level that would be unpalatable to councils and communities on both sides of the river if not physically unachievable.
- 2.9 The emerging view is that the Severn Vale and Gloucestershire more generally should seek to derive maximum benefit for its communities from improved strategic connectivity through the activities of the Severn Vale Board. This is in terms of improving local connectivity to link either side of the Severn, as set out above, and also in terms of an increased emphasis on improving local public transport to facilitate improved prosperity and reduced isolation for local people, as well as a focus on clean growth and sustainable tourism. A focus on relieving current congestion at Chepstow would provide improved connectivity into and out of the Forest of Dean and look to maximise opportunities arising from the removal of the Severn Bridge tolls. Joint work is already underway between GCC, Monmouthshire CC and FoDDC using the Welsh Government's weITAG/WebTAG methodology.

- 2.10 The river itself can be regarded as a major asset and resource as much as a barrier to connectivity and growth, not just because of its energy potential but also its role as a rich ecological resource and tourist destination in itself. An innovative bridge design could add to that.
- 2.11 There is a potential overlap between the ambitions of Vision 2050 and the evidence-based statutory plan-making process which the work of the Gloucestershire Planning Co-ordinator seeks to bring together in a series of evidence-based 'Statements of Common Ground' in accordance with the revised NPPF. This provides a potential mechanism for agreeing and implementing a Gloucestershire-wide spatial commitment beyond the JCS authorities.
- 2.12 Current statutory evidence-based plan-making work across the county is likely to support the ambitions of Vision 2050 and will be important in the delivery of a number of them, not least the strategic infrastructure required to deliver improved connectivity. The Severn Vale Board aims to complement rather than duplicate existing work.
- 2.13 The Terms of Reference for the Severn Vale Board drafted at the meeting of the embryonic Board on 3rd September are set out at Appendix 1. It is proposed to set up further meetings to establish the Board and make further progress.

3. **CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 This report was considered by Strategy and Resources Committee on 3rd October 2019 where it was resolved to recommend to full Council that Stroud District Council participates in the work of the Severn Vale Board and endorses the Terms of Reference for the Board drawn up at the meeting on 3rd September 2019.

The Severn Vale Board

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

This Board is a high level multi-agency strategic partnership focussing on infrastructure and connectivity for Gloucestershire.

2. The Area Covered

The Severn Vale Board area extends from the southern fringe of Gloucester incorporating the administrative areas of Stroud and Forest of Dean District Councils on the east and west sides of the River Severn. This area is key to connecting Gloucestershire with Bristol and Cardiff and other centres along the M4 and M5 motorways and rail network.

3. Context

The Board is established by Leadership Gloucestershire as set out in the Gloucestershire Vision 2050 Concordat 2018. In its formation it has also had regard to the later emergence of the Gt Western Powerhouse and the climate emergency declarations of the local authorities in Gloucestershire. Leadership Gloucestershire will act as the sponsoring body for the board.

The Board will report progress periodically to Leadership Gloucestershire as required to ensure consistency with the delivery of other Vision 2050 actions.

These terms of reference require approval by member organisations as part of the wider Vision 2050 adoption. Future actions and priorities of the Board may also require adoption by member organisations.

The terms of reference will be subject to future review and amendment as required.

4. Membership

Member organisations are:

- Stroud District Council
- Forest of Dean District Council
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Stroud Local Strategic Partnership
- Forest of Dean Economic Partnership and Bridges and Borders Sub Group
- GFirst LEP
- Transport representatives (as required including Network Rail, Highways England, Welsh Government, Transport for Wales)
- South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (SGS)
- Gloucestershire College
- Monmouthshire County Council

5. Aims

The Board will:

1. Develop a long term, strategic vision for the future of the Severn Vale which supports the eight Ambitions of Gloucestershire Vision 2050 and recognises the climate emergency.
2. Champion that shared vision inside and outside Gloucestershire.
3. Lobby and bid for funding and support via government growth and funding programmes to support the delivery of the Board's ambitions.
4. Identify and promote infrastructure and wider connectivity requirements to ensure that Gloucestershire is able to attract inward investment and support its growth ambitions.
5. Work closely with the Severn Vale communities, businesses and agencies to engage them in the generation and delivery of the vision.
6. Work with partners to ensure the Severn Vale vision can guide future strategic spatial and infrastructure plans.
7. Integrate the Severn Vale Vision to ensure it supports all relevant place making strategies for the wider area.
8. Ensure the development of a Severn Vale Vision complements other visioning and strategic planning development.

6. The Vision and Associated Tasks

The Severn Vale Board will promote this part of the county not just as a destination in its own right but also a new gateway to South Wales, the West of England, and the West Midlands. Key to achieving this is engagement with the emerging 'Great Western Powerhouse'.

Work will examine the critical infrastructure necessary to achieve the physical and digital connectivity required to support the County's growth ambitions and take advantage of the opportunities provided by the Great Western Powerhouse and new working relationship with neighbouring authorities.

There will be examination of the potential for a new crossing of the Severn River with specific emphasis on rail, cycle and footpath links, making links to the metro systems around Bristol and South Wales and providing resilience to the national rail network.

The Board will develop a work programme initially aimed at delivering the Vision. The initial Annual Work Programme will be completed by April 2020. Post April 2020 the Board will produce an Annual Work Programme which will incorporate the actions planned to deliver the aims of the Board.

The Board will seek agreement from partners and other sources to secure the funding required to support the work programme from April 2020 onwards. Funding may be sourced from one or more partners or other sources by agreement. The Board will establish appropriate arrangements through one or more of its member organisations for managing funds and if necessary staff support as required.

Once the Vision is in place the Board will work to secure its delivery and inclusion in spatial and other strategic plans and keep progress under review.

The Board will actively promote the Vision and work to secure support and funding as required to deliver the aims set out. This work will be included in the Annual Work programme.

7. Governance Arrangements

Member organisations will have one representative each plus one officer in support. For local authorities this will normally be the Lead Member and a Senior Officer of the Council. Substitutions are permitted if required.

The Board may invite partner organisations or relevant individuals to attend meetings and may appoint independent board members who have relevant expertise or interest. All invitees and or appointments are wholly at the board's discretion and will be reviewed at least annually.

The Board may elect to invite additional organisations to become member organisations on a fixed period or permanent basis.

The Board will elect a Chair and Vice Chair annually. The Board may elect to appoint a suitable person as an independent Chair.

The Board will seek to operate by general consensus and cannot make any decision which is binding upon any member organisation. All partnership agreements including those relating to staffing and finances will require the formal agreement of the member organisations affected.

The Board recognises that there are many key stakeholders who will need to be fully engaged in its work. The Board will establish methods to secure the engagement of these stakeholders who include:

- Young people and schools
- Universities
- Businesses
- Developers
- Parish Councils
- Community Organisations
- Other Gloucestershire Districts and Vision 2050 Boards

The Board may establish sub-groups/task groups as required.

Exclusions:

- The Board will not take responsibility for strategic spatial planning, development management decision making or local transport planning which will remain the responsibility of the local planning and transport authorities.
- The Board will operate as a partnership and will not be an independent legal entity and will not have devolved decision making powers.
- Administration, fund holding and staff provision cannot be held by the Board and will be allocated to one or more partner bodies and jointly funded.