

# STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

## ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

9 SEPTEMBER 2021

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>GLOUCESTERSHIRE STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND</b>			
	To approve the Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground.			
<b>Decision(s)</b>	<b>The Committee RESOLVES to:</b> <b>a. approve the Draft Statement of Common Ground set out in Appendix A; and</b> <b>b. delegate to the Head of Planning Strategy, in consultation with the Chair of Environment Committee, the authority to approve minor amendments to the Draft Statement of Common Ground in the event that the final draft version is different to the version set out in Appendix A;</b>			
<b>Consultation and Feedback</b>	A Draft Statement of Common Ground has been through a number of iterations since an initial draft was produced in May 2020. Consultation has involved officers and leaders of the six local planning authorities, Gloucestershire County Council and GFirstLEP and reports have been considered periodically by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee and by a Leaders Board. Progress has been reported previously to Planning Review Panel.			
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<b>Options</b>	A number of options have been considered by Gloucestershire authorities to support the greater co-ordination of strategic planning matters across Gloucestershire, ranging from liaison on an informal basis, through the preparation of a non-statutory growth strategy to the preparation of a single Local Plan for Gloucestershire.			
<b>Background Papers</b>	Progress on duty to cooperate matters relating to the Local Plan can be found at <a href="http://www.stroud.gov.uk/localplanreview">www.stroud.gov.uk/localplanreview</a>			
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A – Draft Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground			
<b>Implications (further details at the end of the report)</b>	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

### 1. BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

- 1.1 It has been recognised for some time that a better coordinated approach to long term spatial planning in Gloucestershire would be beneficial. Stroud District Council has

therefore been working with neighbouring Gloucestershire local authorities to develop a strategic planning framework for future co-operation.

- 1.2** In March 2019 Environment Committee Council resolved to support the development of a broad Strategic Planning Framework for Gloucestershire to 2050 and beyond, through the preparation of a Statement of Common Ground, to be prepared by the six local planning authorities, Gloucestershire County Council and the GFirst LEP.
- 1.3** An initial Draft Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground (GSoCG) (May 2020) was produced by a Strategic Planning Coordinator for the County, appointed by the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC). Since May 2020, various revisions to the document have been subject to further discussions at a Leaders Board set up to progress strategic planning co-ordination across Gloucestershire and at GEGJC.

## **2. SUMMARY OF DRAFT STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND**

- 2.1** The GSoCG is intended to be a non-statutory document subject to regular updates which captures progress in working together.
- 2.2** The purpose of this statement is:
- To identify and demonstrate where common ground exists between the parties
  - To identify and agree an action plan on the strategic spatial planning matters in Gloucestershire that require collaborative working between the parties
  - To identify, in principle, the potential response to addressing the strategic spatial planning matters
  - To provide the basis for a 'live' document to allow for regular updates which capture progress against responding to the strategic spatial planning matters, acknowledging that responding to the Climate emergency will be the "Golden thread" that runs through the strategic planning activities and the outputs of this GSoCG
  - To meet (in part) the requirements placed on Local Planning Authorities from the National Planning Policy Framework to discharge the statutory 'Duty-to-Cooperate' as part of their local plan preparation
  - To respond to the GEGJC to develop a statement of common ground as the basis to consider the development of a Gloucestershire Spatial Development Strategy.
- 2.3** The GSoCG includes a series of 34 high level agreements dealing with a broad range of environmental issues and land uses matters including addressing the climate and ecological emergencies, housing and economic needs, transport provision and infrastructure delivery.
- 2.4** Reaching agreement on how to address these strategic planning matters is the start of the SoCG process. Action needs to be taken to address the matters arising from these agreements. The GSoCG proposes therefore that an Action Plan is developed to identify the actions to be taken, those responsible for taking that action, and a timeframe and budget to address the actions.
- 2.5** The long term intention is to explore the potential for the production of a Gloucestershire Spatial Development Strategy but at this stage whilst the essential purpose of the GSoCG is to promote joint action in addressing strategic issues, nothing in the GSoCG removes

the roles and responsibilities of the individual participating organisations in making decisions according to their statutory roles.

- 2.6** The draft GSoCG set out in Appendix A is, at the time of the publication of this report, yet to be approved by the Gloucestershire Leaders Board. In the event that the final draft GSoCG is amended by the Leaders Board, any changes will be reported to Committee. The recommendation seeks to delegate the approval of minor changes in the event that either the Leaders Board meets, or neighbouring local authorities seek to make minor changes through their decision making processes, after 9 September 2021.

### **3. NEXT STEPS**

- 3.1** Once the GSoCG has been approved by all signatory bodies the intention is that the Action Plan will be developed and reported to GEGJC. Progress on joint working will be reflected in future iterations of the GSoCG which should be kept up-to-date. Any proposals for changes to current strategic planning arrangements or changes to the GSoCG will be reported for decisions to future meetings of Environment Committee or to other meetings of this Council, as appropriate.
- 3.2** This GSoCG helps to discharge this Council's current responsibilities under the Duty to Cooperate. However, additional or supplementary SoCGs will be required between the District Council and neighbouring authorities and other prescribed bodies as part of the examination of the Draft Stroud District Local Plan. Following the recent Regulation 19 consultation on the contents of the Pre-Submission Stroud Local Plan, officers are discussing the contents of those agreements with the relevant parties and these SoCG will be submitted with the Draft Local Plan for examination to the Planning Inspectorate shortly.

### **4. IMPLICATIONS**

#### **4.1 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

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#### **4.2 Legal Implications**

Although this statement is a non-statutory document, it is intended to support the strategic development plan process and will therefore need to be referenced/considered in formal decisions relating to the strategic planning process.

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#### **4.3 Equality Implications**

An EqIA is not required because the Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground does not establish specific policies or procedures but only broad areas for seeking future agreement. However, statutory local plans and other planning policy documents prepared in the future to address strategic planning matters will be assessed for any equality implications.

#### **4.4 Environmental Implications**

There are no significant implications within this category as the Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground does not establish specific policies or procedures but only broad areas for seeking future agreement. However, statutory local plans are required to be subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) which will include assessing the contents against a range of environmental objectives.