



MINUTES OF COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

DATE: Wednesday 24 May 2023 TIME: 10.00 am

VENUE: Council Chamber - Shire Hall, Gloucester

Present

Membership:

Cllr Carole Allaway-Martin	Cllr Joe Harris	Cllr Sajid Patel
Cllr Matt Babbage	Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Cllr Alan Preest
Cllr Paul Baker	Cllr Colin Hay	Cllr Philip Robinson
Cllr John Bloxson	Cllr Alex Hegenbarth	Cllr Steve Robinson
Cllr David Brown	Cllr Jeremy Hilton	Cllr Vernon Smith
Cllr Alastair Chambers	Cllr Stephen Hirst	Cllr Lisa Spivey
Cllr Cate Cody	Cllr Paul Hodgkinson	Cllr Lynden Stowe
Cllr Linda Cohen	Cllr Nick Housden	Cllr Wendy Thomas
Cllr Stephen Davies	Cllr Beki Hoyland	Cllr Brian Tipper
Cllr David Drew	Cllr Mark Mackenzie- Charrington	Cllr Pam Tracey MBE
Cllr Ben Evans	Cllr Chris McFarling	Cllr Chloe Turner
Cllr Stephan Fifield	Cllr Paul McLain	Cllr Robert Vines
Cllr Bernard Fisher	Cllr Dr Andrew Miller	Cllr Roger Whyborn
Cllr Andrew Gravells MBE	Cllr Graham Morgan	Cllr Kathy Williams
Cllr David Gray	Cllr Dom Morris	Cllr Susan Williams
Cllr Terry Hale	Cllr Gill Moseley	Cllr Suzanne Williams
Cllr Rebecca Halifax	Cllr Emma Nelson	Cllr Dr David Willingham
Cllr Tim Harman	Cllr David Norman MBE	

2. ELECTION OF CHAIR

- 2.1 Cllr Alan Preest shared these past two years as Chair had been a privilege, honour, and pleasure. He had travelled the length and breadth of the county meeting many tremendous and inspirational people within our communities and reflected on the many visits and ceremonies he had been privileged to be a part of. Cllr Preest paid tribute to his colleague, mentor, and friend Cllr Phil Awford who had passed earlier this year. He paid thanks to many colleagues within the Gloucestershire Lieutenancy, Gloucestershire Academy of Music, Democratic Services, Senior Management, and officers across the Council with whom he had worked as Chair. A special thank you was paid to Cllr Stephen Hirst for being a brilliant and first-class Vice-Chair. Finally, he thanked members across the Chamber for their support throughout Council meetings, his family, friends, and work colleagues. Cllr Preest was immensely proud to have had this opportunity.

- 2.2 Members from across the Chamber paid thanks to Cllr Preest for his fair, patient, modest and considerate Chairing over the last two years. They were very grateful for his honest and upfront nature during management of Council meetings. It was recognised that these meetings were only a small part of the role as Chair and members congratulated Cllr Preest for doing his county proud, being a marvellous ambassador for Gloucestershire and representing the council in many ceremonies and royal visits.
- 2.3 As his final act as Chair, Cllr Preest presented Mr Bungard, Chief Executive of the Council, with his long service award for 25 years of service to the Council. He thanked Pete for all his support and the work he continued to do on behalf of the Council and people of Gloucestershire.
- 2.4 Tributes were paid to Pete from across the chamber, members thanking him for the years of service he had dedicated to the council, the support he had shown to members and for the great leadership he had shown through some very turbulent times. Although reflecting that members might disagree in the council chamber, they were all very aware of the excellent senior team who were working hard in the background and delivering on behalf of residents.
- 2.5 Cllr Preest invited nominations for the position of Chair of the Council for 2023/24.
- 2.6 Cllr Vernon Smith was proposed and seconded. In their nomination, the Leader and Deputy Leader highlighted that Cllr Smith was a dedicated, passionate, and enthusiastic councillor who was a true advocate for his communities and ambassador for the Council.
- 2.7 There being no other nominations it was:

RESOLVED that *Cllr Vernon Smith be elected as Chair of Council for the 2023/24 civic year.*

Cllr Vernon Smith made the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

- 2.8 Cllr Smith shared that he was very honoured and humbled to become the next Chair of Council and would endeavour to show the same level of commitment and fairness as his predecessor. He thanked members for their support.

3. ELECTION OF THE VICE CHAIR

- 3.1 Members paid similar tribute to Cllr Stephen Hirst for his commitment, diligence and passion given to his role as Vice-Chair. Similar to the Chair, there was a lot more to the role than managing Council meeting and Cllr Hirst had given a lot of dedication to his civic duties.
- 3.2 The Chair invited nominations for Vice-Chair of Council for the 2023/24 civic year.

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3.3 Cllr Susan Williams was proposed and seconded. In their nomination, the Leader and Deputy Leader emphasised the diligence and passion Cllr Williams gave in her role as a councillor. She was a very generous and kind person which would hold her in good stead to be a super ambassador for the Council and its communities.

3.4 There being no other nominations it was:

RESOLVED that Cllr Susan Williams be appointed Vice-Chair of Council for the 2023/24 civic year.

Cllr Williams made the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

3.5 Members congratulated both Cllr Smith and Cllr Williams on their election and wished them luck for their time in the roles.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

6. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Coronation Celebration

6.1 Along with the rest of the UK, the people of Gloucestershire came together on the bank holiday weekend of 6 May 2023 to celebrate the Coronation of HM King Charles III and Queen Camilla, and to mark this historic occasion in a variety of community gatherings and events.

6.2 Street Parties, Big Lunches and the Big Help Out on Monday 8 May not only provided the opportunity to reflect on the work and service of His Majesty the King, but to also showcase the value and importance of volunteering within our communities.

6.3 In partnership with the Gloucestershire Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) Alliance, local volunteers were invited to join HRH The Princess Royal, Bishop Rachel and the Lord-Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, at a County Coronation Service at Gloucester Cathedral on Monday 8 May in recognition of their work and to highlight the positive impact of community volunteering. The people of Gloucestershire not only came together in celebration, but

also, in appreciation of those who contribute so much to the wellbeing of our communities.

- 6.4 The Chair welcomed everyone to the new 'Carolean Era' - God Save The King.

Coronation Champions

- 6.5 Earlier in the year, Buckingham Palace announced the launch of 'The Coronation Champions Award for Volunteers' as an official Coronation Project to celebrate the extraordinary work of volunteers from across the country. In Gloucestershire, 3 volunteers were recognised and awarded the title of Coronation Champion. They included; Hashim Norat from Gloucester, Michael Charlton-Hubble from Lydbrook in the Forest of Dean and Lesley Greene from Stroud.

- 6.6 The Chair congratulated all three Champions.

Kings Award for Enterprise (Gloucestershire) Recipients 2023

- 6.7 Prior to 2023, Queen's Award for Enterprise were awarded annually by HM The Queen in recognition of, and to encourage, outstanding achievements in the fields of international trade, innovation, sustainable development and promoting opportunity, (through social mobility). Announced on 21 April 2023, (HM The Queen's Birthday), 148 organisations were recognised in this, the first iteration of the King's Award for Enterprise, with 148 organisations recognised, including 3 Gloucestershire based organisations.

- 6.8 On behalf of the Council, the Chair congratulated:

Doddl, Gloucestershire (awarded the Kings Award for Innovation)
Formed in 2017, this Nailsworth-based business distributes children's cutlery to more than 30 countries.

Trackwise Designs PLC (awarded the Kings Award for Innovation)
Founded in 1989, this Tewkesbury based firm uses printed circuit technology to develop products for the aerospace, automotive, medical and scientific sectors.

Advanced Innergy, (AIS) (awarded the Kings Award for International Trade)
Based in Quedgeley, Marine manufacturer, Advanced Innergy, (trading as AIS), is a leading provider of subsea products, insulation and fire protection systems.

Mike Williams

- 6.9 Mike Williams former councillor and honorary alderman sadly passed away last week. Mike sat on the council between 1977 until 1993 before once again being elected between 2009 and 2013.
- 6.10 Mike sat on Planning Committee and Environment and also served on Stroud District Council.
- 6.11 The Leader paid tribute to Mike for his length of service representing Stroud at both district and county level. He was always a real gentleman, he had a huge amount of knowledge and understanding and was dedicated to serving his communities. Members would mark his loss and thank him for his service.
- 6.12 Cllr David Drew also paid tribute to Mike for his determination during his role as a councillor, representing his residents to the best of his ability. It would be a very sad loss for many.
- 6.13 Members stood in a 1-minute silence as a mark of respect for Mike.

7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Forty-four public questions had been submitted prior to the meeting. The following supplementary questions were asked:

Question 3 – Paul Lilly stated that from his and the community’s perspective, the current Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) was not fit for purpose. He asked whether the Cabinet Member would agree to a site visit to resolve residents’ issues.

Cllr Dom Morris agreed to visit the site and suggested inviting representatives from the police to discuss enforcement.

Question 4 – David Redgewell asked whether a date had been set for a bus forum consultation with passengers.

Cllr Philip Robinson said that a date had not been set and that a draft Enhanced Partnership Agreement would need to be published in advance of any such consultation. He explained passenger groups would certainly be involved in the Enhanced Partnership Forum once established.

Question 5 – David Redgewell asked whether it would be possible to talk with South Gloucestershire Council and the Mayor for West England about the 84 and 85 bus services.

Cllr Philip Robinson explained they were looking into the 84 and 85 service problems. He could liaise with the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), but it was ultimately their decision what happened with the services. The Cabinet

member was hopeful that new funding could be used to support initiatives in the local area, but he could not make any commitments at this time.

Question 6 – David Redgewell raised concern over the nearly £30,000 worth of damage that had been done to bus infrastructure in Cheltenham in the last 2 months. He asked whether more conversations could be had around prosecuting those causing this damage.

Cllr Philip Robinson explained he was disheartened to see this behaviour, particularly given budget restraints. He explained it was a matter for the police and he would seek to have a conversation with the Police and Crime Commissioner about solutions.

Question 7 – David Redgewell asked whether the lost bus link from Tewkesbury to Worcester could be looked at again.

Cllr Philip Robinson explained that the service had ended several years ago. The Cabinet Member's focus was on maintaining the current network rather than expanding it. He also explained that the train from Ashchurch to Worcester would reduce the feasibility of re-introducing a Tewkesbury-Worcester bus service.

Question 9 – David Redgewell asked what progress was being made on Mass Rapid Transit across the County.

Cllr David Gray explained that the County Council had made funds available to study Mass Rapid Transit and that public consultation would be carried out in due course.

Question 10 – David Redgewell asked whether more effort could be made to market transport links, perhaps in co-ordination with tourist organisations.

Cllr Philip Robinson explained that as the train companies were privately owned, they were primarily responsible for their own marketing. Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) did try to signpost and promote services and he was happy to explore what more could be done.

Question 23 – Anthony Smith explained that the 781bus service was not sufficient for residents and asked whether it could become a regular timetabled service. He also asked if Cllr Robinson would agree to meet with residents to discuss this further.

Cllr Philip Robinson explained that he had spoken with local Councillors on this matter. Following the recent Stagecoach service withdrawals, resources needed to be focused on areas that had absolutely no alternative transport. This was already creating an overspend of £1.1 million. The Robin service was there to support residents and officers were looking at re-routing the 27 bus route to pass through the villages of Ruspidge and Soudley for better connection once it no longer needed to serve the Dilke Hospital.

8. COUNCIL COMMITTEES

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Members considered the attached report on Committee membership and the decisions outlined at 2.1 and 2.2.

On being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED

- a) To increase the size of the Environment Committee from nine to eleven members.
- b) To appoint members to the committees and other bodies shown from A1 to A12.
- c) To elect the chairs and vice-chairs of scrutiny committees as shown in 2.3.

9. CORPORATE PARENTING

- 9.1 Cllr Stephen Davies, Cabinet member for Children's Safeguarding and Early Years, presented the report. Members heard that the recent care leavers awards evening at Kingsholm was a great success and turnout. Thanks was given to all who helped to set up the event and congratulations to those who won awards. The success of this event had led to review of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Cllr Davies looked forward to reporting back on this soon.
- 9.2 Since this report had been published, there had been a successful visit from the Care Leavers National Adviser and the Venture Community Hub, which was part of the Holiday Activity Fund Programme, had been recognised as 1 of 2 Southwest regional champions which was very well deserved.
- 9.3 The report reflected that Childrens Services were now seeing some consistent improvement across the service, although did not suggest there would not still be challenges ahead. There was general agreement that the Service as a whole was in a different place and the improvement journey continued.
- 9.4 Noting from the report that 25% of children in care were persistently absent from school, it was queried what in particular was being done to tackle this and whether there was a correlation between that and the number of care placement changes. The Cabinet Member confirmed he would provide a written response on this.
- 9.5 In response to a question, it was explained that the emphasis behind the Corporate Parenting Strategy was to make it clear what councillors could do within their role as a Corporate Parent. This largely related to oversight, ensuring every decision was made with care leavers in mind, it was not the purpose to individually know each child within their divisions. The point was taken however that it would be beneficial for care leavers to know how to contact their local councillor on any issues they may experience.

10. PETITIONS

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10.1 A petition from Cllr David Drew on the Stroud Parking Permit Scheme was presented to Cllr Dom Morris.

10.2 A petition from Cllr Rebekah Hoyland on Stagecoach's Removal of Bus Route 24 was presented to Cllr Philip Robinson.

11. MOTIONS

Motion 916 – Gloucestershire biodiversity week

11.1 Cllr David Gray proposed, and Cllr Chloe Turner seconded the following motion (this also reflected a friendly amendment from the Labour Group):

In 2019, this council declared a climate change emergency and committed to a carbon action plan. We believe that in addition to reducing our carbon outputs, ensuring the resilience of our ecosystem is essential to maintaining a healthy planet.

Council notes:

- *Biodiversity is essential for keeping our county's unique and beautiful wildlife healthy, sustainable, and productive.*
- *Biodiversity is relevant to many Council services and functions, such as planning, highways, and land/property management.*
- *Tenants in our rural estates are already leading the way in ecological and biodiverse innovation.*

The new obligations given to the county council under the Environment Act 2021. Specifically:

- *The introduction of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, for which the county council is the lead authority.*
- *The requirement for a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gains from all new development from 2023.*
- *The county council is a member of Climate Leadership Gloucestershire which has identified biodiversity as well as food and farming as two of its strategic thematic priorities.*

Therefore, Council resolves to:

- *Pass a declaration recognising the importance of biodiversity and committing all council decisions to give the same level of consideration to biodiversity as carbon when determining environmental impacts.*
- *Call Cabinet to commit the Council to Hosting a Gloucestershire biodiversity week in which we can actively promote ways in which*

residents, schools, businesses and Parish and Town councils can get involved to help maintaining the biodiversity of our county.

We in turn commit to lead by example and follow good biodiversity practices when ~~choosing our Highways Local schemes~~, supporting Parish and Town councils and other community groups. We also endeavour to pursue a biodiversity net gain on council land wherever possible, including opportunities for offsetting credits for supply to developers under the Gloucestershire Climate and Nature Fund. To emphasise the importance of biodiversity in our corporate decision making, we will include ecological impact assessments alongside climate change implications assessments in cabinet reports.

- 11.2 Cllr Gray was very pleased to bring this motion today, reflecting on his recent viewing of the David Attenborough programme where Gloucestershire's wonderful countryside was well represented. Whilst an enjoyable programme, it very much highlighted how much biodiversity the UK had lost, with many species extinct or in serious and rapid decline.
- 11.3 He highlighted that GCC had not been idle in the face of the global climate crisis. It had been 4 years since its climate emergency declaration, which had resulted in great progress against its Climate Change Action Plan. These actions included the planting of 130,000 trees to date, designing and beginning to build the 26-mile cycle spine, the replacement of fleet vehicles with electric, installation of electric vehicle chargers and the establishment of Climate Leadership Gloucestershire.
- 11.4 It was recognised that nature recovery required a broader approach than one that just focused on carbon, putting biodiversity on the same level in terms of decision making and action, with GCC stepping up and showing leadership as it had on carbon reduction. The benefits of improving biodiversity would be felt across the county through healthier soil, more secure food systems, cleaner water, better flood management and attractive tourism. He felt it was our duty to pass on a healthier and more biodiverse landscape to future generations.
- 11.5 Cllr Turner reserved her right as seconder.
- 11.6 Cllr Hay proposed the following amendment:
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- *Call Cabinet to commit the Council to Hosting a Gloucestershire biodiversity week in which we can actively promote ways in which residents, schools, businesses and Parish and Town councils can get involved to help maintaining the biodiversity of our county.*
- ***That the Cabinet comes forward with a biodiversity strategy by the end of this year (2023) to be incorporated into the 'Council Strategy/Corporate Plan' with a vision of where we want to be in the next 5 and 10 years. This will include annual targets with annual goals set by Council in order to monitor progress.***

We in turn commit to lead by example and follow good biodiversity practices when supporting Parish and Town councils and other community groups. We also endeavour to pursue a biodiversity net gain on council land wherever possible, including opportunities for offsetting credits for supply to developers under the Gloucestershire Climate and Nature Fund. To emphasise the importance of biodiversity in our corporate decision making, we will include ecological impact assessments alongside climate change implications assessments in cabinet reports.

- 11.7 In proposing the amendment, Cllr Hay welcomed the opportunity to discuss a very important issue but stressed that it was big subject that no one was likely to get right the first time. The additional resolution proposed therefore allowed for a continued review process.
- 11.8 The Chair adjourned the meeting for 15 minutes for members to consider the amendment, following which, an agreement was reached. The following amendment was accepted by the proposer and seconder of the original motion and became the substantive motion:

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- Call Cabinet to commit the Council to Hosting a Gloucestershire biodiversity week in which we can actively promote ways in which residents, schools, businesses and Parish and Town councils can get involved to help maintaining the biodiversity of our county.*
- **Ask cabinet to consider how to best include biodiversity as part of our annual climate strategy review.***

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- 11.9 Several members spoke of the biodiversity emergency currently unfolding. The UK was one of the most nature depleted countries in the world, it had the lowest levels of biodiversity in the G7 and was 3rd lowest across Europe. As well as astronomical species decline, the UK was regularly losing vast amounts of tree cover and continued to pump tonnes of sewage into its rivers every day.
- 11.10 They also highlighted the importance of the Council's role in helping to address this emergency. For example, it had an opportunity to consider the soil health in all its land management from roadside verges to its current 7,000 acres of rural estate, as well as putting more emphasis on improving biodiversity within all its decision making. As with the Climate Change Strategy, members recognised the Council could not do everything on its own, but it could be a leader in coordinating, promoting, raising awareness, and encouraging action within its communities.
- 11.11 It was recognised that communities in Gloucestershire were already doing a lot in this area, which should be celebrated and shared, but there also remained a level of resistance. Members shared examples of residents complaining about not mowing community areas during the wildflower season. There needed to be a wider cultural shift across the Council, its partners, and communities.
- 11.12 Cllr Hawthorne, Leader of Council, felt this motion spoke to the heart of what the Council did, working to change minds and attitudes about the role our communities could play in improving biodiversity. It could work to encourage the acceptance that there were different ways of doing things and ways that would often lead to greater benefit.
- 11.13 Members also spoke of some of the challenges around this motion. It was recognised that the resolutions did not come with additional funding and would therefore need to be absorbed into an already strained budget. It was felt that some of these issues were so big, it would need Government and even worldwide governments to take drastic action before any real progress could be made. Some members felt that this motion did not go far enough to address the extent of the challenge faced.
- 11.14 In terms of the rural estate and farmland in Gloucestershire, a member raised that farmers and rural communities faced a huge strategic crossroad, they were being asked to produce more food, under increasing financial pressure as well as trying to improve practises to reduce their impact on the environment.
- 11.15 In seconding the motion, Cllr Turner endorsed comments made around the scale of depletion this country had faced, reflecting that nature had been squeezed, stressed, and polluted out of our lives, but hoped with hard work, that space could be created again. She recognised the new responsibilities for local authorities deriving from the Environment Act, and GCC's role as the Nature Partnership lead. It was stressed that this work needed to be

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properly resourced and supported by Council. Improvements to biodiversity would lead to huge benefits not just for the environment but economic, social, and health too. She looked forward to contributing to this council's work on this vital area.

11.16 In summary, Cllr Gray thanked members for their contributions and broad support for the motion. He felt communities would welcome this commitment to lead from the Council and encouraged members to make such this continued to be in action and not just words.

11.17 The substantive motion was then put to the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

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residents, schools, businesses and Parish and Town councils can get involved to help maintaining the biodiversity of our county.

- *Ask cabinet to consider how to best include biodiversity as part of our annual climate strategy review.*

Motion 917 – Gloucestershire County Council to enshrine being a Care Leaver as a Protected Characteristic

11.18 Cllr Rebecca Halifax proposed, and Cllr Ben Evans seconded the following motion (this also reflected a friendly amendment from the Conservative Group):

This Council Notes:

- 1. The Independent Review of Children’s Social Care, published in May 2022 (The “MacAlister review”), recognised the often negative outcomes for people with care experience and recommended that the government should make ‘Care Experienced’ a protected characteristic.*
- 2. That there is a range of barriers and discrimination care leavers can face throughout life, including but not limited to:*
 - a. 70% of people who have been in care die earlier than would otherwise be expected*
 - b. Over half of those in custody up to the age of 21 have been in care*
 - c. A quarter of the homeless population in England and Wales has experienced of the care system.*
- 3. That many care experienced people in Gloucestershire are among the most resilient and intelligent in the County, and that as corporate parents we should be nurturing and supporting their talents and potential*
- 4. Care experienced young people can face additional barriers in fulfilling their potential such as having moved multiple times, and the services supporting them face considerable pressures.*
- 5. The introduction of the Equality Act in 2010, enshrining ‘protected characteristics’ and outlawing discrimination on the basis of these characteristics*
- 6. The passing of a Motion or policy to consider ‘care experience’ or being a ‘care leaver’ as a protected characteristic at other local authorities, including Blackburn, Cumberland and Sutton.*

This Council Believes:

- 1. Care leavers often face societal barriers, discrimination and poorer life outcomes than their peers*
- 2. These impacts mean it would be appropriate to treat those with ‘care experience’ as having a protected characteristic in relation to access to the range of Council services*

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3. *The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, such as councils, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of people with protected characteristics.*
4. *We can play a role, both directly and through the Local Government Association (LGA), in calling for care experience to be included in future revisions of the Equalities Act **and in the meantime encourage partners in Gloucestershire to also consider 'care experience' as a protected characteristic to build a Gloucestershire 'corporate family'**.*
5. *Although what is included in the national legal definition is determined through the Westminster Parliament, as a Council we can adopt this as part of our own practices now*
6. *As corporate parents, we have a responsibility to do everything we can to support the best possible outcomes for our children*
7. *Councillors should be champions of the children in **and leaving** our care and challenge the negative attitudes and prejudice that exists in all aspects of society*
8. *In addition to considering care experience as a protected characteristic, where possible as a Council we should look to take additional steps to support our care leavers and level the playing field in relation to their future opportunities and outcomes*

This Council Resolves the following to be considered as part of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy

1. *That future decisions made and policies adopted by the council should be assessed through the Equality Impact Assessment to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience, alongside those who formally share a protected characteristic.*
2. *That in the delivery of the public sector equality duty the council includes care experience in the publication and review of equality objectives and the annual publication of information relating to people who share a protected characteristic in services and employment*
3. *That this council will treat care experience as if it were a protected characteristic*
4. *To write to and formally call upon other Councils **and partners** within Gloucestershire to treat care experience as a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation*
5. *Consider the viability of **extending the Council tax-exemption for our care-leavers from age 21 to 24** ~~being introduced~~ from the 2024-25 Budget onwards*
6. *To explore options ~~for making~~ **extending existing travel grants currently** available for 16-19 year old care-experienced young people **up to age 24 to help more of our care leavers** access support to access educational or training opportunities (for example support with the cost of bus travel) to be funded in the County council Budget from 2024-25 onwards.*

7. *To call on Cabinet to lead on facilitating an awareness campaign in the County about the discrimination care leavers can face, and promoting the **skills talent and potential** of our care leavers.*
 8. *To call on Cabinet to direct our economic development team to work with the LEP, Sixth Forms, Colleges, local apprenticeship providers and local employers to incentivise local businesses who find employment opportunities for our care leavers and to help ensure our care leavers are in meaningful education, employment or training up to the age of 19.*
 9. *To call on Cabinet to direct Children's Services to undertake some work on ensuring that the needs of care-leavers are given the appropriate priority within our assessments of and support offered for SEND.*
 10. *To request that the NHS locally to undertake a similar piece of work in regards to access to CAMHS, reporting back through the **new Corporate Parenting Group** joint boards that operate between all the local health partners.*
- 11.19 In proposing the motion Cllr Halifax referred to the Equality Act 2010 which recognised the unique ways that certain characteristics could make an individual vulnerable or subject to abuse if they were not afforded special protections by the law. This motion today gave members the opportunity to cover care leavers with this same special protection and begin to try and tip the scales a little way in their favour. The member highlighted that it was common for care experienced people to face stigma and prejudice in their daily lives.
- 11.20 Referring to the previous Corporate Parenting report in March, it was noted that 4 out of 5 of care experienced young people had up-to-date Pathway plans and 4 out of 5 care leavers had regular visits from a social worker. However, on the other end of the scale, only 5 out of 10 care experienced young people were in employment or training and just 27 care leavers had gone on to higher education out of a cohort of 500. Anecdotal evidence showed, over and over, that children in care were often let down by the education system and also faced discrimination in the workplace.
- 11.21 Cllr Halifax reflected on her own experience being a mother, knowing her daughter had the support of a loving family at every turn and how difficult it must be for a young person to navigate life without that. Whilst acknowledging the council could not hope to provide the level of support for care leavers the average parent gave their child, this motion would give legal protections to help them on their journey.
- 11.22 Cllr Evans, as the seconder, echoed all the comments made by the proposer, he emphasised the resilience, skill, and perseverance he had seen in working with care experienced young people and felt this further solidified these outcomes were due to system failure.
- 11.23 Cllr Stephen Davies, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, welcomed this motion which he felt showed an honest reflection of what the council did well, but also that there was much more that could be done. He shared some

details with members from the Care Leavers Offer which included things such as financial grants for driving lessons, emergency assistance with food, assistance with clothing for special occasions etc. and had been produced in conjunction with the care leaver ambassadors. It was reiterated that work was ongoing to expand the Corporate Parenting Strategy which this motion gave further support to continue. On a final point, it was acknowledged that better joined up working was needed from partners across the board and welcomed this being highlighted in the motion.

11.24 On being put to the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

This Council Notes:

1. *The Independent Review of Children's Social Care, published in May 2022 (The "MacAlister review"), recognised the often negative outcomes for people with care experience and recommended that the government should make 'Care Experienced' a protected characteristic.*
2. *That there is a range of barriers and discrimination care leavers can face throughout life, including but not limited to:*
 - a. *70% of people who have been in care die earlier than would otherwise be expected*
 - b. *Over half of those in custody up to the age of 21 have been in care*
 - c. *A quarter of the homeless population in England and Wales has experienced of the care system.*
3. *That many care experienced people in Gloucestershire are among the most resilient and intelligent in the County, and that as corporate parents we should be nurturing and supporting their talents and potential*
4. *Care experienced young people can face additional barriers in fulfilling their potential such as having moved multiple times, and the services supporting them face considerable pressures.*
5. *The introduction of the Equality Act in 2010, enshrining 'protected characteristics' and outlawing discrimination on the basis of these characteristics*
6. *The passing of a Motion or policy to consider 'care experience' or being a 'care leaver' as a protected characteristic at other local authorities, including Blackburn, Cumberland and Sutton.*

This Council Believes:

1. *Care leavers often face societal barriers, discrimination and poorer life outcomes than their peers*
2. *These impacts mean it would be appropriate to treat those with 'care experience' as having a protected characteristic in relation to access to the range of Council services*

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

- 3. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies, such as councils, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of people with protected characteristics.*
- 4. We can play a role, both directly and through the Local Government Association (LGA), in calling for care experience to be included in future revisions of the Equalities Act and in the meantime encourage partners in Gloucestershire to also consider 'care experience' as a protected characteristic to build a Gloucestershire 'corporate family'.*
- 5. Although what is included in the national legal definition is determined through the Westminster Parliament, as a Council we can adopt this as part of our own practices now*
- 6. As corporate parents, we have a responsibility to do everything we can to support the best possible outcomes for our children*
- 7. Councillors should be champions of the children in and leaving our care and challenge the negative attitudes and prejudice that exists in all aspects of society*
- 8. In addition to considering care experience as a protected characteristic, where possible as a Council we should look to take additional steps to support our care leavers and level the playing field in relation to their future opportunities and outcomes*

This Council Resolves the following to be considered as part of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy

- 1. That future decisions made and policies adopted by the council should be assessed through the Equality Impact Assessment to determine the impact of changes on people with care experience, alongside those who formally share a protected characteristic.*
- 2. That in the delivery of the public sector equality duty the council includes care experience in the publication and review of equality objectives and the annual publication of information relating to people who share a protected characteristic in services and employment.*
- 3. That this council will treat care experience as if it were a protected characteristic.*
- 4. To write to and formally call upon other Councils and partners within Gloucestershire to treat care experience as a protected characteristic until such time as it may be introduced by legislation.*
- 5. Consider the viability of extending the Council tax-exemption for our care-leavers from age 21 to 24 from the 2024-25 Budget onwards.*
- 6. To explore options extending existing travel grants currently available for 16-19 year old care-experienced young people up to age 24 to help more of our care leavers access support to access educational or training opportunities (for example support with the cost of bus travel) to be funded in the County council Budget from 2024-25 onwards.*
- 7. To call on Cabinet to lead on facilitating an awareness campaign in the County about the discrimination care leavers can face, and promoting the skills talent and potential of our care leavers.*
- 8. To call on Cabinet to direct our economic development team to work with the LEP, Sixth Forms, Colleges, local apprenticeship providers and local*

employers to incentivise local businesses who find employment opportunities for our care leavers and to help ensure our care leavers are in meaningful education, employment or training up to the age of 19.

- 9. To call on Cabinet to direct Children's Services to undertake some work on ensuring that the needs of care-leavers are given the appropriate priority within our assessments of and support offered for SEND.*
- 10. To request that the NHS locally to undertake a similar piece of work in regards to access to CAMHS, reporting back through the new Corporate Parenting Group.*

Motion 918 – The future of Community Meals services

11.25 Cllr John Bloxsom proposed, and Cllr David Drew seconded the following motion:

Council recognises and values the county council's Community Meals service which has been an essential service enabling older people and vulnerable adults to maintain or regain their independence and remain living in their own home for as long as possible.

This includes those who have just come out of hospital or need extra support to prepare a hot meal for a short period of time or who may need help longer term with preparing hot meals and may also need other support from adult social care.

We note that the countywide service delivered by the previous provider failed with no bids. We commend the work of staff, who at short notice, contacted recipients, carers, and family members to seek to put alternative arrangements in place.

Council notes, however, that there are now reported to be just 60 users of the County funded service whereas there were stated to have been 481 recipients of the GCC funded service at the time when the tender failed in December 2022.

Council further notes that there are a range of providers have been engaged on short contracts of between six and 12 months and that these include local charities, local community interest companies and local small businesses.

Council believes the service should meet the needs of recipients across Gloucestershire, be procured and funded on a sustainable basis, and to that end Council asks that the Scrutiny Committee to continue to receive updates.

We welcome an examination of the lessons learned for how the Council procures community meals and requests that the report, prepared for the Adult's Cabinet Members, with recommendations for how we procure community meals moving forward, be shared with the Scrutiny Committee.

- 11.26 Cllr Bloxsom stated this motion had been prompted by the recent demise of the community meals service which had been successfully delivered for many years, reaching a peak of 740 individuals in May 2021. This service had always been valued as a part of the hospital discharge care and support package, and was also offered to house bound or vulnerable adults. It was noted that contact with the staff delivering the meals may be the only social contact that individual received in a day. Members had heard directly from constituents who had real concern around the changes being made and had led to distress and uncertainty.
- 11.27 From its peak in May 2021, members had heard from recent reports to scrutiny that the most recent check now suggested only 65 residents needed to continue to receive this service. It was queried whether the council were satisfied that the need of the hundreds of residents now not in receipt of support was being adequately met. He felt this was an ongoing issue that scrutiny needed to monitor.
- 11.28 Cllr Drew reserved his right as seconder.
- 11.29 Cllr Spivey, Chair of the Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee, fully supported this motion and agreed with the need for scrutiny to continue to monitor this and report back if they felt further action was required. Whilst recognising officers had worked very hard to address the contract withdrawal, the numbers accessing the service had decreased dramatically which caused some concern.
- 11.30 Members noted that many communities had stepped up and offered hyperlocal solutions in place of the previous countywide contract, and that this should not be seen as a bad thing. Examples were given of local services who were now offering outstanding quality food from local producers and being delivered by local people. They felt the corporate response was not always the best response and really welcomed this unforeseen benefit.
- 11.31 Cllr Allaway-Martin, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care Commissioning, thanked members for the very considered motion and whilst sharing members surprise at the sheer drop in access to the service, offered reassurance that officers had made sufficient contact with every service user to address their needs. In some circumstances family had stepped in, some individuals had a change in circumstance, and some had chosen to access more local services. This was a working progress and welcomed the opportunity to bring a full report to scrutiny for sufficient review.
- 11.32 Cllr Drew, as seconder, echoed comments made by members and reinforced the importance of this motion. It concerned vulnerable residents who, in the short run, may have felt let down. There were certainly lessons to be learnt around contract management and re-procurement to ensure this situation did not happen again.

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

11.33 In summing up, Cllr Bloxsom thanked members for their responses and welcomed the constructive debate. The further investigations via scrutiny would enable members to ensure need was being adequately met, review the suitability of contracts and be clear on what the longer-term plan was.

11.34 On being put to the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED that

Council recognises and values the county council's Community Meals service which has been an essential service enabling older people and vulnerable adults to maintain or regain their independence and remain living in their own home for as long as possible.

This includes those who have just come out of hospital or need extra support to prepare a hot meal for a short period of time or who may need help longer term with preparing hot meals and may also need other support from adult social care.

We note that the countywide service delivered by the previous provider failed with no bids. We commend the work of staff, who at short notice, contacted recipients, carers, and family members to seek to put alternative arrangements in place.

Council notes, however, that there are now reported to be just 60 users of the County funded service whereas there were stated to have been 481 recipients of the GCC funded service at the time when the tender failed in December 2022.

Council further notes that there are a range of providers have been engaged on short contracts of between six and 12 months and that these include local charities, local community interest companies and local small businesses.

Council believes the service should meet the needs of recipients across Gloucestershire, be procured and funded on a sustainable basis, and to that end Council asks that the Scrutiny Committee to continue to receive updates.

We welcome an examination of the lessons learned for how the Council procures community meals and requests that the report, prepared for the Adult's Cabinet Members, with recommendations for how we procure community meals moving forward, be shared with the Scrutiny Committee.

12. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Sixty-one Member questions had been submitted prior to the meeting. The following supplementary questions were asked:

Question 1 – Cllr David Drew asked whether the Cabinet member would meet with Stroud District Council and Stonehouse Town Council to give clarity over plans for railway station development in the area.

Cllr David Gray agreed to meet with the local councils.

Question 3 – Cllr David Drew asked why the County was paying to repair a wall on Slad Road, and why it had led to the closure of the road for so long.

Cllr Dom Morris explained that the Council owned the wall and so it was our responsibility to fix it. The repair had taken longer than planned which is why the road closure had to be extended.

Question 5 – Cllr Graham Morgan raised concern that the lack of public transport in some areas was leading to the isolation of residents and asked how much of the 2011 decision by the Council to cut subsidies by 20% was affecting the issues seen today. He also asked the Cabinet Member to encourage Stagecoach to only use single-decker buses for routes on narrow country lanes.

Cllr Philip Robinson reassured that the council had already been encouraging Stagecoach to use suitable vehicles for the roads they travel, and that he and officers were constantly considering the wellbeing impact on residents of public transport changes.

Question 6 – Cllr Chris McFarling asked whether the Cabinet member would re-consider writing to central government to increase active travel investment. He also asked that such a letter emphasised the urgent need to decarbonise the transport sector in response to the climate emergency.

Cllr David Gray explained that Gloucestershire had been attracting a considerable amount of funding for active travel but agreed to consider writing further on this issue.

Question 7 – Chris McFarling asked if the Cabinet member would reassure Council that investment and promotion of jobs in the green economy would be budgeted for at the earliest opportunity.

Cllr Philip Robinson confirmed he could give that assurance and explained that the Employment and Skills Hub was already identifying skills and jobs in this area. He invited Cllr McFarling to visit the Hub to see the work already being done.

Question 8 – Cllr Chloe Turner asked whether additional data on other fines referred to in the Cabinet Member's written response could be shared.

Cllr Dom Morris agreed that he was happy to provide further data and reiterated that fines were acting as a successful deterrent to utilities companies overrunning their roadworks permits.

Question 14 – Cllr Wendy Thomas reiterated that her original question asked for data on the Forest of Dean Robin service as well as North Cotswold.

Cllr Philip Robinson apologised for the omission and agreed to send the data. He shared that anecdotally, feedback was very positive.

Question 18 – Cllr John Bloxsom asked for confirmation that the council representative on the Cotswold Canal Trust had changed and if so, asked for clarification as to why it was done through delegated authority rather than being brought to Council.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne explained that the urgency of making changes to appointments on outside bodies determined whether the delegated authority process was used. Given that there were several conversations ongoing at the time around finance, it was important to fill the vacancy as quickly as possible.

Question 20 & 21 – Cllr Rebecca Halifax raised concerns around newly developed schools in Cirencester taking students, and therefore funding, away from already established schools.

Cllr Philip Robinson explained that the school place planning team considered options very carefully and they would not have missed any causes for concern. He was happy to discuss it in more detail with the Member.

Question 23 – Cllr Rebecca Halifax asked for a date when the provision of Places of Safety in the County would increase to 36.

Cllr Stephan Fifield confirmed he would respond in writing to the Member.

Question 28 – Cllr Jeremy Hilton asked for a copy of the parking restriction proposal for the St Oswald's Park housing development d.

Cllr Dom Morris agreed to send a copy and added that he was happy to discuss in further detail if needed.

Question 29 – Cllr Jeremy Hilton asked when the Parking Manager role at GCC would be filled permanently.

Cllr Dom Morris explained that recruitment was ongoing for that position.

Question 31 – Cllr Paul Hodgkinson raised concern around the delay of reported road safety defect being fixed. He asked the Cabinet Member at what stage he would consider declaring a road emergency.

Cllr Dom Morris said Highways officers took road safety incredibly seriously and that he was happy to have a further discussion with the Member on this issue.

Question 32 – Cllr Paul Hodgkinson stressed that the road between Compton Abdale and Northleach had been waiting to be fixed for months and asked whether the Cabinet Member was aware of how dangerous it had been.

Cllr Morris explained that the road in question had now been resurfaced.

Question 34 – Cllr Paul Baker asked if GCC had experienced a significant cut in government capital grant for road infrastructure this year.

Cllr Dom Morris explained that he was unsure and would come back to the member with a response.

Question 35 – Cllr Roger Whyborn asked whether the fifteen-year timescale to institute the bus service would be accelerated.

Cllr Philip Robinson explained that he would make enquiries on the question raised.

Question 38 – Cllr Alex Hegenbarth asked whether the independent road safety audits in the Cabinet Member's answer could be made available to Members automatically rather than on request so they were equipped to reassure residents.

Cllr Dave Norman explained that he was regularly meeting with residents in his area to discuss audits supported by his Local Highways Manager and encouraged the Member to do the same.

Question 42 – Cllr Colin Hay raised concern over deficits. He asked whether the Cabinet Member thought it was a good idea to ignore the growing deficit, as advised by Government, and asked if the Cabinet Member thought the government would respond to the LGA and county treasurers who were asking about this issue.

Cllr Philip Robinson explained that was not a question he was able to answer.

Question 43 – Cllr Lisa Spivey said that some potholes were still yet to be repaired on the roads raised in her original question and asked whether the Cabinet member thought it was at the stage that residents had to take road safety into their own hands.

Cllr Dom Morris reiterated that Highways had spent 3 days making the site in question safe and they were currently identifying funding to make this site a longer-term resurfacing and drainage project. He disagreed with the comment on road safety.

Question 46 – Cllr Lisa Spivey asked if the Cabinet Member would join residents to see the current damage on their roads.

Cllr Dom Morris explained he was aware of the needs in that area and was working to get the roads in question resurfaced.

Question 47 – Cllr Lisa Spivey asked if the Cabinet Member was surprised that 99% of claims against the Council for vehicle damage were refused.

Cllr Dom Morris explained that this was a credit to the road safety policy team who were keeping the road networks as safe as possible.

Question 48 - Cllr Lisa Spivey asked whether the Cabinet Member thought the criteria for claiming vehicle damage compensation needed review.

Cllr Dom Morris said he was happy to discuss the issue further with the member.

Question 49 – Cllr Gill Moseley asked if any road safety bids had been submitted from other bodies such as community groups (particularly where the area was unparished), how many bids had been rejected, whether there was a predicted underspend for the Community Safety Fund, and, if there was an underspend, what proposals were there to allow for further bidding.

Cllr Dave Norman said that he would provide a written response to the Member.

Question 50 – Cllr Gill Moseley asked about the upkeep of Southend Lane in Newent. The Member asked why developer contribution had not been sought towards the resurfacing.

Cllr Dom Morris explained that the road had been resurfaced and would come back to the member with specific information about developer contributions.

Question 51 – Cllr Paul Hodgkinson asked whether the Cabinet Member was engaging a deliberate policy to allow minor roads to fall into disrepair in order to keep up with main road maintenance.

Cllr Dom Morris replied that that was not a deliberate policy.

Question 52 – Cllr Paul Hodgkinson asked why the Cabinet Member was not fulfilling his legal responsibility to keep the minor roads safe.

Cllr Dom Morris explained that he was carrying out his responsibility to keep the highways safe and was doing everything he could through the resurfacing programme to improve overall network standards.

Question 53 – Cllr Paul Hodgkinson asked whether the Council was doing anything to combat incidences of hate crimes against members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne agreed that it was an important concern and suggested it be brought to the attention of the Police and Crime Panel.

Question 58 – Cllr Paul Baker raised concern over a decline in attendance of state schools to the Cheltenham Festivals because of the requirement for them to have a license to attend. Volunteers were also having to spend a lot of time on licensing applications. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the approach of the County Council and asked if the Cabinet Member would agree to a meeting with himself, officers, and representatives from the performing arts.

Cllr Stephen Davies agreed to have that meeting and explained that they were following national guidance and would be happy to improve it if possible.

13. CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE, Chair of the Constitution Committee, introduced the item and referred to the recommendations made at the Constitution Committee meeting on 31 March 2023.

On being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED that the recommendations as set out in the Constitution Committee report be approved.

14. SCRUTINY REPORT

Minutes subject to their acceptance as a correct record at the next meeting

The report was noted.

15. APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODY

15.1 The Chair invited nominations for appointment to the Severn Estuary Partnership until May 2025.

15.2 Cllr Chris McFarling was proposed and seconded.

15.3 There being no other nominations it was:

RESOLVED that *Cllr Chris McFarling be appointed to the Severn Estuary Partnership until May 2025.*

16. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR 2024

RESOLVED to approve the calendar of meetings for 2024 as shown at Item 16 of the agenda.

CHAIRPERSON

Meeting concluded at 14:15.