Gloucestershire County Council Liberal Democrat Group

Council Size Submission

[Gloucestershire County Council

Contents

How to Make a Submission

It is recommended that submissions on future governance arrangements and council size follow the guidance provided and use the format below as a template. Submissions should be treated as an opportunity to focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. **Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal and why you have discounted them**.

The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses be unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.

'Good' submissions, i.e. those that are considered to be most robust and persuasive, combine the following *key success components* (as set out in the guidance that accompanies this template):

- Clarity on objectives

- A straightforward and evidence-led style

- An understanding of local place and communities

- An understanding of councillors' roles and responsibilities

About You

The Liberal Democrat Group on Gloucestershire County Council. We have 16 Members spread across the six Districts that make up Gloucestershire.

The Context for your proposal

We strongly believe that the County Council needs to grow its number of Councillors from 53 to 63 Members. This would reflect the growing number of electorate due to population growth (we calculate based purely on numbers the correct number would be 58 Members), but also to add capacity to the Council to fulfil its role by allowing Members to be accountable, demonstrate community leadership, and improve governance to an excellent standard. We have considered making no change (remaining at 53); we have considered an increase purely based on population growth (up to 58); and believe both of these to be a weaker model for the County. The "County Deal" that is over the horizon strengthens our resolve that we need to add capacity for our Members to fulfil their vital role.

Based purely on the number of the electorate, we calculate that the electorate in Gloucestershire will have gone up by 9% between 2017 and 2029. Taking into account that the last boundary review was implemented in 2013 (and therefore looking at 2017 figures), and we are now looking at 2029 projections, it is clear that not only has the population in Gloucestershire *grown*, but it has also shifted. Tewkesbury Borough in particular has grown at a faster rate than other areas, but it is in the rural area that this population growth and

shift has most affected our Members. We believe it is a given that more Members will be needed to grow in line with population increase, but throughout this paper we will argue that the spread of the population, alongside governance issues, require a bigger increase than based purely on the rising population.

The Council shrank dramatically in 2013, from 63 Members to the current 53. This followed a Cabinet system being introduced in 2001. This has had a major and, in our opinion, negative impact on Members' ability to fulfil their role successfully. Divisions became much larger and cumbersome, giving some Members huge swathes of area to cover. We have colleagues in the Cotswolds covering 20 and 21 Parishes respectively – this limits their role as Community leaders and as representatives of their residents. It has also put huge pressure on Members to attend multiple scrutiny committees, which do not have large enough membership to cope with the inevitable absentees. Put simply we do not have enough Members to cover current Committee roles let alone the new ones that will be necessary with devolution. This has meant we have created a *democratic deficit* where power has been concentrated into the hands of the few Members who are in the Cabinet, with not enough checks and balances that lead to good governance.

At present, national policy affects us through the "levelling up" agenda. Money is released by central government on this agenda, but the work is simply handed to Officers with very little involvement from Members – there cannot be the right level of involvement due to our stretched model. With a Level Two devolution deal being tabled, the additional powers and responsibilities that comes with this are going to be impossible for Members to be involved in without an increase in capacity. We cannot deliver on the "Localism agenda" as Members are too busy with casework and committee work to fulfil that role properly.

The devolution "Level Two" increases responsibilities on the Council to include place making and economic regeneration, responsibilities handed down from central government to a County level. Integrated strategic boards on health means that Members are attending scrutiny committees but in addition they have more to do in efforts to join up social care and health. Boards such as the "Children's Improvement Board" is a welcome addition but, again, this is another committee that Members actively want to be part of.

Increasing the number of Members to 63 will give us much more scope to provide scrutiny, community support, and (vitally) to encourage a wider breadth of councillor. The demand on Councillors is such that it basically excludes working people, parents, mothers and carers (which disproportionately affects women). By increasing the number of Members we could give a more balanced work load and encourage a wider representation of people to stand for their Community.

The number of 63 also future proofs the Council. We are aware that a change of government could well mean further devolution, with even more power and responsibilities laid at the County's door. It would be irresponsible to ignore this eventuality and to carry on with a "skeleton staff" of Members, barely able to keep up with the huge geographic areas and multiple committees they already serve on.

We have clearly outlined why staying at 53 Members is not viable. We believe a small increase (say to 58) would not resolve the issues we have laid out. Five new Members would mean one Districts did not get a new Member, and we would be unhappy with the even number giving disproportionate power to a deciding chair. We assume that the area which would not get a new Member would be in one of the two main urban areas

(Cheltenham or Gloucester) but this does not then respect the growing populations in these two areas. It would also not help with capacity issues in committees (which we outline below). The VERY minimum would be one extra Member per District (59 Members) but even this would leave colleagues in rural areas with very large geographical areas, thus the suggestion to bring the number up to 63.

Local Authority Profile
Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics. This should set the

Geography
Gloucestershire is a predominantly rural county with two urban centres, Gloucester and Cheltenham that serve as the main business and commercial heartland. The urban settlements are complemented by vibrant market towns that act as valuable employment hubs and key providers of services. The development of the County has been strongly influenced by connectivity to the Midlands and South West via the M5 corridor and to London, the South East and Wales via the M4 corridor. While the M5 and M4 provide connectivity to surrounding areas they also act as a natural barrier for residents impacting the community identity of the surrounding areas. The River Severn which runs through the county, provides a similar barrier.

Just over half (51.4%) of the County is designated as an AONB. There are three AONBs in Gloucestershire, the Cotswolds AONB, Malvern Hills AONB and Wye Valley AONB. In addition to the three AONBs, Gloucestershire is also home to the Royal Forest of Dean, which covers an area of 9,064 hectares (35 square miles) and is situated between the Rivers Wye, Leadon and Severn in West Gloucestershire. The presence of three AONBs and the Royal Forest of Dean, can be seen as a barrier to growth, as it places constraints on development in rural areas. However, this environmental quality makes Gloucestershire an attractive area for businesses and residents to locate and also attracts large numbers of visitors.

The county has a strong sense of place and is fairly unique in that its county boundaries are coterminous with the boundaries for the LEP, Police Force Area and Integrated Care Board. This strong sense of placed is reinforced by the fact that in 2011 83.1% of Gloucestershire residents also worked within the county[1], meaning it is a strong functional economic area in its own right.

Demography

In 2021 the population of Gloucestershire was estimated to be 645,076. Gloucestershire accounted for around 11.3% of the population of the South West and 1.1% of the population of England and Wales. Within the county, Gloucester district had the largest population with approximately 132,416 people or 20.5% of the county's population, followed by Stroud

---

[1] 2011 Census, ONS

(18.8%), Cheltenham (18.4%), Tewkesbury (14.7%), Cotswold (14.1%) and finally the Forest of Dean (13.5%)[2].

There were 243 residents per square kilometre in Gloucestershire in 2021. This was lower than the national average of 395 residents per square kilometre in England and Wales but in line with the regional average of 239 residents per square kilometre. Across the county there is considerable variation in population density, the urban districts of Cheltenham and Gloucester have densities of 2,549 and 3,267 residents per square kilometre respectively. In contrast, Cotswold district has a density of 78 residents per square kilometre, which puts it in the 10% most sparsely population district and unitary authorities in England and Wales. These differences become even more pronounced at a small area level, the county's most densely populated Lower Super Output Area was St Paul's 4 in Cheltenham which had a density of more than 14,600 people per hectare, in contrast Northleach 2 in Cotwold had a density of 17 people per hectare. These extremes pose challenges for service delivery[3].

The population of Gloucestershire increased by 48,092 people (8.1%) between 2011 and 2021. The rate of growth in Gloucestershire was higher than nationally, with the population of England and Wales increasing by 6.3% between 2011 and 2021. Growth across the county has been uneven, population growth was greatest in Tewkesbury, with the population increasing by 15.8% from 2011 (a gain of approximately 12,951 people). As well as being the district with the highest growth in Gloucestershire, Tewkesbury has had one of the highest growth rates nationally, it was ranked 8th out of 331 district and unitary authorities in England and Wales. Cheltenham saw the smallest population growth in Gloucestershire, with the population increasing by 2.7% since 2011 (a gain of 3,104 people). This puts Cheltenham in the bottom 25% of district and unitary authorities in England and Wales in terms of population growth[4].

Gloucestershire's main source of population growth is internal migration, between 2019 and 2020, internal migration increased Gloucestershire's population by 0.51%. There were also more people immigrating to Gloucestershire than emigrating, which increased the population by 0.16%. In contrast there were more births than deaths meaning natural change reduced the county's population by 0.14%[5].

Gloucestershire has an older population than nationally, with those aged 65+ accounting for 21.7% of the population, higher than the national average of 18.6%, conversely it has a lower proportion of people aged 0-15 and 16-64. In the county's more rural districts of Cotswold and the Forest of Dean the older population is even more pronounced than the county average with more than 25% of the population being over 65[6]. There are several universities and colleges in the county, which result in pockets of high student populations. This is particularly noticeable in Gloucester and Cheltenham, Hartpury in the Forest of Dean and around Cirencester in Cotswold district.

Population projections suggest the population in Gloucestershire will rise by 50,291 between 2018 and 2028, rising from 633,558 to 683,849. This increase of 7.9% on the 2018 projections is substantially higher than those for England (5.0%). Within the county,

---

[2] 2021 Census, ONS
[3] Ibid.
[4] 2021 and 2011 Census, ONS
[5]5 Mid 2020 Population Estimates, ONS
[6] 2021 Census, ONS

Tewkesbury and Cotswold are projected to have the largest percentage increases in population over the next 25 years (16.4% and 14.0% respectively). Cheltenham is projected to have the smallest increase (1.8%)[7].

The notable feature of the projections is the sharp increase in the population aged 65 or over, which is projected to increase from 134,973 in 2018 to 167,288 in 2028. The percentage increase of 23.9% over this period is higher than the national average for England (19.6%). As a result of this growth the proportion of people in Gloucestershire who are aged 65 or over is predicted to rise to 24.5% of the population by 2028, while the proportion of people aged 0-19 and 20-64 is projected to fall. Considerable percentage increases in the 65+ age group are predicted in all districts. The increase is predicted to be greatest in Cotswold (65.1%) and lowest in Cheltenham (45.5%)[8].

Community characteristics

In general, Gloucestershire is not a very deprived county. An average IMD rank for each of the six districts in Gloucestershire shows that even the most deprived districts (Gloucester City, and Forest of Dean) fall in the middle quintile (middle 20%) for deprivation out of 317 English authorities. Tewkesbury, Cotswold, and Stroud districts are in the least deprived quintile, with Cheltenham in the second least deprived quintile. However, there are pockets of deprivation, 12 areas of Gloucestershire are in the most deprived 10% nationally for the overall IMD. These 12 areas are predominantly located in Gloucester, with two in Cheltenham and one in the Forest of Dean[9].

In 2021 93.1% (600,314 people) of Gloucestershire's population identified as "White". Gloucestershire was less diverse than the national average, with 81.7% of residents across England and Wales identifying as "White". However, in and around the urban districts of Gloucester and Cheltenham and around the market towns of Cirencester, Bishops Cleeve and Stroud the population is more diverse. The areas making up Barton and Tredworth in Gloucester are the most diverse in the county, with three LSOAs having less than half their population identifying as "White".

Economy

The total GVA of the Gloucestershire economy was approximately £18.3 billion in 2020, representing 13% of the value of output in the South West and 0.9% of the UK economy. According to latest figures, GVA per head in Gloucestershire was £28,600, which was above the South West (£24,965) and below the UK average (£29,063)[10].

There are around 28,835 businesses in the county[11] supporting a workforce of approximately 307,000 people[12]. The majority of the businesses in the county are small, with 85% employing less than 9 people; this reflects the picture at national level[13]. Both manufacturing and health are significant sectors in terms of employment accounting for

---

[7] 2018 Based Sub National Population Projections, ONS
[8] Ibid.
[9] Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG
[10] Regional gross value added (balanced) per head and income components, ONS
[11] UK Business Counts – Local Units 2022, ONS
[12] Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS
[13] UK Business Counts – Local Units 2022, ONS

10.4% and 14.0% of employment respectively[14]. Other major sectors include education, accommodation and food services and wholesale and retail. The cyber sector is also important to the county due to the presence of GCHQ in Cheltenham, the importance of the sector is expected to grow in coming years due to the creation of a Cyber Central Business Park in Cheltenham, at the heart of this park will be the National Cyber Innovation Centre, the UK home of the cyber, digital and creative sectors.

There is a positive entrepreneurial culture in Gloucestershire, businesses starting up have very high survival rates with 90.3% of businesses born in 2019 surviving 1 year and 45.4% of business born in 2015 surviving 5 years, this compares to a national average of 88.3% and 39.6% respectively. The unemployment rate is also consistently lower than the national and regional average. However, the ageing population, higher than average job density ratios and record job postings may pose challenges for future growth[15].The cost of living crisis is also an issue impacting the county and elsewhere, causing future uncertainty particularly for those residents living with a poverty premium.

Accessibility

The rural nature of the county means accessibility is a challenge for many residents. Around 19% of residents in Gloucestershire live in neighbourhoods in the most deprived 20% nationally in terms of the IMD Domain Barriers to Housing and Services, this increases to over 40% of residents in Cotswold district[16]. Access to superfast broadband and good quality mobile signals can also be a barrier for residents particularly in the more rural parts of the county.

---

[14] Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS
[15] Business Demography, ONS
[16] Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019, MHCLG

Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role. These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership**. Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		
Governance Model	*Key lines of explanation*	The Council is currently operating with a Cabinet Model. Currently there are 10 Cabinet portfolios. - Leader of Council - Finance and Change - Adult Social Care Commissioning - Adult Social Care Delivery - Children's Safeguarding and Early Years - Education, Skills and Bus Transport - Environment and Planning - Fire, Community Safety and Libraries - Highways and Flooding - Public Health and Communities There are currently the following scrutiny committees: - Children and Families O&S - Corporate O&S - Environment O&S - Gloucestershire Economic Growth O&S - Adult Social Care O&S - Fire and Rescue Scrutiny - Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel - Health O&S The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee is particularly unwieldy, with a huge remit covering multiple functions of Council business. To deal with this issue (and to improve the quality of scrutiny) we would enlarge and add to the scrutiny committees in the following ways:

		- Add additional responsibility for Fire to include Public Protection Scrutiny, and subsequently increase membership up 7 to 11 - Introduce a Land & Buildings Scrutiny (rural estate and county land & buildings) with nine Members. - Increase membership to 11 on Adults Social Care and Children and Families and Environment. - Create a Public transport scrutiny committee of 9 Members. - This is clearly an increase in Members workload, which would be manageable with an additional 10 Members. Presently strategic and operation policies are drawn up by Cabinet and senior Officers, and in most cases these are bought for consultation with scrutiny committees. We believe "consultation" to be at the weak end of involvement and would much prefer a better oversight process to allow and enable more input in formulating these strategic objectives for Members from all groups.
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Portfolios	*Key lines of explanation*	There are currently 10 portfolios: - Leader of Council - Finance and Change - Adult Social Care Commissioning - Adult Social Care Delivery - Children's Safeguarding and Early Years - Education, Skills and Bus Transport - Environment and Planning - Fire, Community Safety and Libraries - Highways and Flooding - Public Health and Communities Portfolio holders have responsibility for their specific areas and work with senior officers on relevant strategies. They are currently Full-Time positions. Cabinet Members can currently take individual Cabinet Member decisions. We would like to increase the quality of scrutiny on these decisions by increasing capacity to O&S committee structure.
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Delegated Responsibilities	*Key lines of explanation*	Currently Decisions are taken by Cabinet as a whole or by individual Cabinet Members.

		Our proposal is to "beef up" the scrutiny committees to provide better, more consistent and more helpful scrutiny to these decisions.
	Analysis	At present a disproportionate amount of decision-making power lies in a very small group of Cabinet Members. This is because there are not enough scrutiny groups and also those committees that do exist are overworked, meaning that often very important business is not given the attention it deserves.

Accountability

Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.
Key lines of explanation	Scrutiny at Gloucestershire County Council is carried out by themed scrutiny committees and task and finish groups. Each committee is supported by a senior officer and Democratic Services Officer. The relevant Cabinet Member is invited and regularly attends. However, the committees often have very packed agendas meaning that vitally important business is rushed through. They lack capacity to provide proper scrutiny to major decisions. There are currently eight committees – Corporate, Children's, Environment, Health, Adult Social Care, Economic Growth, Fire, Police and Crime Panel. As above, we would add the following: - Add additional responsibility for Fire to include Public Protection Scrutiny, and subsequently increase membership up 7 to 11 - Introduce a Land & Buildings Scrutiny (rural estate and county land & buildings) with nine members - Increase membership to 11 on Adults Social Care, Children and Families and Environment - Create a Public transport scrutiny committee of 9 Members This is an increase of 26 Committee places. This would mean that each of the new Councillors was taking on two committee roles. It would give more capacity to existing groups and also, crucially, allow much greater scrutiny in areas of great public interest. We do not prescribe the number of task and finish groups. These would be set up when needed. There are currently two task groups in progress and one completed earlier in the year. These have also been flexible in terms of approach. (i.e some one-day scrutiny reviews and some with four or five meetings over a number of months).

		We would increase the number of scrutiny groups, and in some places the number of Members on them, to allow greater input from all Councillors. We are concerned too much power lies in the hands of a small number of Cabinet Members and we would like to see capacity added to allow all Members to be more involved. Currently political balance as well as sufficient member resource to properly scrutinise the subjects at hand has been behind the decisions around numbers. However, we feel this is not enough. Members being absent from meetings leave large gaps, and sometimes agendas are so full that the scrutiny the public deserve is not given full and proper attention.
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Statutory Function		This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?
Planning	*Key lines of explanation*	The County Council is responsible for strategic planning decisions around waste, schools and infrastructure. There is a County Council Planning Committee which has 15 Members on it currently.
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Licensing	*Key lines of explanation*	The County Council is not the licensing authority, this function is dealt with at District Council level.
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Other Regulatory Bodies	*Key lines of explanation*	The County Council deals with Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's), currently 9 Members sit on a regulatory Committee that deals with applications. We also have the responsibility for mapping rights of way, but this tends to be delated to Council officers in most cases.
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
External Partnerships		Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.
Key lines of explanation		
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.

Community Leadership

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties? The Commission also wants to see a consideration of **how the use of technology and social media by the council as a whole, and by councillors individually, will affect casework, community engagement and local democratic representation. Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic		Description
Community Leadership	*Key lines of explanation*	The way Members carry out their representational role in Communities varies, but has certain themes in common: 1) Where the area a Member covers has Parishes in it, there is a role in working with the Parishes, both in attending Parish Council meetings and in working with the Members on areas of joint interest. One Member's area covers 20 Parishes, and her time is mainly spent attending and/or writing reports for those parishes. 2) Casework, including visiting members of the public who have specific issues, or visiting sites where these issues are raised (for example a road junction, or to view parking outside a school) 3) Working with local residents to take part in the democratic process – for example in asking questions at Council, or filing petitions. 4) Case work with Officers to try to resolve the issues that residents bring to Members. This can be done by phone, or remotely in almost all cases, but most of our Members will periodically drive around their area with Highways Officers looking at problems and solutions. The Council has a suite of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, which meet bi-monthly. They are: • Children and Families O&S • Corporate O&S • Environment O&S • Gloucestershire Economic Growth O&S • Adult Social Care O&S • Fire and Rescue Scrutiny • Gloucestershire Police and Crime Panel • Health O&S

		There is also a Cabinet; Audit and Governance Committee; Constitution Committee; Pensions Committee; Commons and Rights of Way Committee; Planning Committee; Safety and Licensing Committee; Traffic Regulation Committee; Health and Well Being Board; and Children's Services Improvement Board. Councillors Communicate with their communities in a variety of ways. Many hold regular surgeries; many deliver bi-monthly newsletters; a lot have a presence on Social Media and communicate with their communities through that method. There are no mechanisms in place for Members to engage with young people and those in minority groups. The engagement with young people is extremely poor, and is limited by the time of Members and the ambition of the Council. Members often attend multiple Parish meetings. In the rural areas this can be extremely time consuming, both in distances travelled and the pure number of Parishes some Members cover. Expectations from Parishes vary, with attendance a bare minimum, some waning a verbal report and some a written report. Our group Members produce an update for annual Parish meetings in May
	Analysis	Click or tap here to enter text.
Casework	*Key lines of explanation*	Members deal with casework in a variety of ways. Some simply pass on issues and concerns to Officers, whilst others will take a more hands on approach. The ability to do this is severely limited by time and capacity. Members receive support from DSU and our own political assistant. If we need to find an officer or the correct department, they tend to be very helpful in that process. The technology that is given to Members is extremely poor (although the support from the IT department very good and responsive). Members email systems are often unusable, and we do not routinely get given mobile phones. This is quite an issue which means our personal numbers are often in the public domain. A lot of Members have a presence on Social Media, with some using it very successfully in community groups and forums

		The Council is not set up to do hybrid meetings or remote meetings very well (apart from in a few large meeting rooms) which inhibits this form of working.
		The Council provides some virtual platforms for residents to engage with their services. Most notably for Members there is a Highways portal that allows people to report defaults in the road network. It is the experience of our Members that this is not taken up as widely as it could be, with many people choosing to raise these with Members directly (and then we can fill it in, or speak to our Highways manager). With some large-scale Highways schemes Members become, by default, the receptacle for all complaints, thoughts and ideas, serving as a triage service for Officers in taking the complaints, filtering them and then feeding them back to the correct Officers.
		There also structural and cultural issues that mean Members need to spend more time on casework: • Reduced staffing in council departments has increased the time it takes to solve problems and therefore has increased the time a councillor has to spend on oversight and responding to inquiries from the public about when a problem is going to be fixed. • The outsourcing of services now makes it more difficult for elected members to resolve a problem that once was managed in house and is now out to contract. • The ease of communicating by email and social media has increased the volume of correspondence that a member now has to deal with from their constituents.
	Analysis	It is extremely difficult for Members to be as involved in our communities as we would like due to the restraints of time and capacity. In rural areas where Members cover multiple Parishes they have to make tough decisions about what meetings they will attend and which they won't. In terms of casework and community involvement we often have to withdraw due to the pressure of time, particularly at certain times of the year when there is a glut of meetings.

Other Issues

Respondent may use this space to bring any other issues of relevance to the attention of the Commission.

Summary

In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future.

Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

Our group has spent a lot of time and discussion looking seriously at this topic, and conclude that the most effective number of Councillors moving forward would be 63. The key considerations are:
- Reflecting the growing and shifting population in Gloucestershire
- Shrinking some of the rural areas to allow our Members to be more fully engaged with their residents and parishes
- Adding capacity to current committees, and adding new committees to increase the scrutiny on decisions and moving away from the decision-making responsibilities sitting disproportionately with a few Cabinet Members
- Being ready to accept devolved powers from Central Government as a Level Two devolution deal.
- Future-proofing the Council for any potential change of government which promises more, rather than less, devolved power and responsibility on Members.

Staying the same at 53 Members is not tenable due to the rise in population and electorate. Going up in line with that increase (to 58) would leave an imbalance between the districts and not help improve governance and scrutiny. Only by going up to 63 can all of these be taken into account and improved in a significant way.