

To Jim McMahon OBE MP

Dear Minister McMahon

Thank you for your letter dated 16th December to Two-Tier Council Leaders in England. We, the undersigned, are Leaders of District Councils in Gloucestershire. We understand that the Leader of Gloucestershire County Council, Cllr Stephen Davies, is writing to you seeking to defer the 2025 Gloucestershire County Council elections.

The purpose of this letter is to set out that we strongly oppose this move and believe that elections should continue as planned.

We welcome aspects of the English Devolution White Paper, and are keen to see the devolution of powers, functions and resources from Whitehall to local government.

We are open to discussing options for simpler structures to enable the delivery of high-quality public services, and to exploring how we may combine with neighbouring authorities to deliver the strategic partnerships set out in the White Paper.

However, Gloucestershire is not yet ready for delivering devolution on an accelerated timeframe.

- Gloucestershire's District Councils and County Council have not yet had any meaningful discussions with each other, or potential partners, as to what the best form of Combined Strategic Authority for our place might be. Indeed, options in all compass directions are still on the table and potentially possible.
- Whichever Strategic Authority option we decide to pursue, local government reorganisation will not be needed as a pre-requisite.
- Gloucestershire's District Councils and County Council have not yet had any meaningful discussions with each other about what form of local government reorganisation would work in the best interests of our residents, nor what parish, town and neighbourhood structures will be required.
- There have not yet been any council meetings or public consultations on the topic of local government reorganisation or the proposals in the White Paper.
- Unlike other upper tier authorities, Gloucestershire County Council has chosen not to hold a Council meeting to seek the views of members on its request to you, to defer County Council elections by one year.

It is clear that Gloucestershire is not yet ready to bring forward proposals to meet the ambitious timeline of the Devolution Priority Programme, set out in the White Paper.

We therefore ask you to allow the Gloucestershire County Council elections to proceed this year as democratically required.

This will allow the time required for local leaders to undertake initial engagement with our public sector partners, residents and businesses, to respond to the White Paper proposals and to consider what structures would best deliver for our communities.

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Hilton, Leader of Gloucester City Council



Joe Harris, Leader of Cotswold District Council



Catherine Braun, Leader of Stroud District Council



Rowena Hay, Leader of Cheltenham Borough Council



Adrian Birch, Leader of Forest of Dean District Council

January 2025