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**GAPTC Devolution Consultation Report**

**Understanding Readiness, Risks and Priorities for Parish and Town Councils in Gloucestershire**

**Executive Summary**

In early 2025, GAPTC conducted a countywide consultation to understand how parish and town councils in Gloucestershire perceive and are preparing for potential changes under local governance reform and devolution. The consultation sought to explore councils' awareness of current proposals, assess their readiness to assume new responsibilities, identify priority concerns and shape the support required during this transition.

A total of **102 responses** were received, with **75 responses** verified as representing either full councils or the combined or individual input of officers and councillors. These 75 councils account for around **28% of Gloucestershire’s local councils**, providing a strong and diverse basis for assessing sector sentiment.

The findings suggest a complex and varied picture. While many councils express a willingness to collaborate and recognise the potential value of devolution, there are deep concerns about funding, staffing capacity, democratic legitimacy and the lack of clarity around what changes will entail. Smaller councils in particular highlight the risk of being left behind if resources and expectations are not appropriately matched.

Headline observations include:

* **Just over half are open to taking on new responsibilities**, but most qualify this with conditions around support and funding.
* **Two-thirds are concerned about the financial implications** of devolution, and many reject raising the precept without clear justification.
* **Over half say they do not currently have the capacity** to take on new functions without significant support.
* **The majority were unsure** what governance model they would prefer for future neighbourhood arrangements, reflecting widespread uncertainty.
* Councils overwhelmingly request **full funding for ongoing costs**, not just initial handovers, and raise concerns about double taxation and loss of local control.

Thematic insights drawn from open-text responses illustrate not only the diversity of council experiences, but also a shared desire for clearer communication, phased implementation and genuine engagement from higher-tier authorities.

This report offers both statistical summaries and qualitative insight to guide GAPTC, principal authorities and partners in building a more informed and equitable approach to local government reorganisation. The findings will inform GAPTC’s member support, shape conversations with county and district authorities and provide a robust evidence base for future planning.

While the findings cannot represent every council in Gloucestershire, the 75 verified responses offer a strong cross-section across all districts and council sizes

**Introduction and Context**

There are 267 local councils in the county (including 39 Parish Meetings), [how many residents they represent and what total value of precept raised], thus any future restructuring should require active participation from this tier of government.

The survey aims to:

1. **Assess the current level of preparedness** across the sector, including understanding, collaboration, service delivery capacity and governance preferences.
2. **Shape training and guidance** to help councils adapt to new responsibilities;
3. **Support engagement** in Gloucestershire’s evolving Place Model by identifying capacity and interest at a local level;
4. **Ensure local councils’ voices are represented** in county and district conversations around devolution and unitary transition.

A total of **102 survey responses** were received. For the purpose of analysis, 75 responses have been grouped into two datasets to reflect different levels of formality and representation:

* **Primary dataset (34 responses)**: Full council submissions or collated input from multiple representatives of the same council (e.g. clerk and councillors). These tend to come from better-resourced or more actively engaged councils.
* **Secondary dataset (41 responses)**: Single submissions per council from clerks, other officers, or individual councillors without a formal full council mandate, but offering clear insight into capacity, delivery and concerns, providing valuable personal perspectives.

Together, the **75 unique council responses** represent around 28% of Gloucestershire’s local councils, offering a strong and diverse sample across the county.

This report provides quantitative figures drawn from all 75 responses to provide a countywide picture. Comparative breakdowns by council size and district are included in the appendix, along with a comparison between the Primary dataset and 75 Unique council responses.

Qualitative insights are drawn from open-text answers across all 102 entries and are grouped thematically to highlight recurring issues such as funding, governance, capacity and democratic legitimacy. Anonymised quotes are included to add depth and reflect the range of voices engaged.

This blended method offers both statistical clarity and narrative insight—grounding the findings in the organisational confidence of full councils while incorporating the lived perspectives of clerks and councillors.

**Thematic Analysis and Insights**

The following section presents a structured analysis of key themes emerging from the consultation, combining statistical responses with narrative insight from parish and town councils across Gloucestershire. Each theme is supported by relevant data and commentary on its implications for the sector’s readiness and support needs.

**Understanding LGR and Anticipated Impact on Communities**

This section examines how parish and town councils perceive the concept of devolution and the implications of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), and the proposed new unitary authorities.

As LGR conversations progress, understanding how councils interpret these shifts — and whether they anticipate material changes in their communities — is critical.

**Does your Council understand the concept of devolution of powers and responsibilities from principal authorities to Parish and Town Councils?**

This question tested baseline familiarity with the devolution agenda — the transfer of roles or services from district/county to parish level.

* **4 councils (5%)** – *Very familiar*
* **28 councils (37%)** – *Somewhat familiar*
* **39 councils (52%)** – *Aware, but unclear on the details*
* **3 councils (4%)** – *Not familiar at all*
* **1 council (1%)** – *No response*

These figures suggest that over half of respondents have only a vague or unclear understanding of the term as used in policy or planning contexts — a key consideration for any future communication or consultation work.

**Does your Council anticipate that changes to local government structures (including potential future unitary authorities) could impact your community?**

This question explored whether councils foresee material effects on their area arising from structural reorganisation — including service changes, altered relationships, or shifts in local influence.

* **51 councils (68%)** – *Yes, changes are likely to impact their community*
* **12 councils (16%)** – *No, they do not anticipate an impact*
* **12 councils (16%)** – *Unclear, unsure, or did not provide a definitive answer*

Councils that answered "Yes" to anticipating local impact provided a broad range of reflections. Their responses coalesce around several recurring themes, many of which point to concerns about capacity, influence and service continuity:

**1. Increased Pressure on Parish and Town Councils**

Numerous councils noted that structural change at the county/district level could result in responsibilities being cascaded down to them — without commensurate resources.

**2. Opportunities to Gain Local Influence**

Some saw LGR as a chance to strengthen local voices and take ownership of services more relevant to their communities.

**3. Uncertainty and Ambiguity**

Several councils expressed uncertainty about what LGR entails or were wary of potential disruption without clear plans or communication.

**4. Concerns about Service Delivery and Representation**

Others expressed worry that communities might become overlooked under larger unitary structures, particularly rural or smaller parishes.

Drilling down into identities, councils were asked: **Do you feel your Council’s rural or urban character creates specific challenges or opportunities regarding devolution?**

* **46 councils (61%)** responded *Yes* — acknowledging their geographic character has a direct bearing on how they might experience or respond to devolution.
* **27 councils (36%)** responded *No* — indicating they do not see their rural or urban setting as having a distinct impact.
* **2 councils (3%)** left the question blank or were unclear.

Those that responded “Yes”, gave the following reasons:

* **Capacity and Scale**: Many small rural councils noted having limited administrative capacity, often with part-time clerks, making it difficult to absorb new responsibilities.
* **Isolation and Connectivity**: Councils flagged poor transport links and digital exclusion as barriers to wider community engagement and collaboration.
* **Strong Identity, Weak Influence**: Some rural respondents expressed concern that their needs are overlooked compared to urban areas, despite being tightly knit communities with strong local identities.
* **Land Use and Development Pressures**: A number of parishes referred to specific planning challenges — e.g., gravel extraction, housing expansion — that strain resources but offer scope for local control.
* **Opportunities for Coordination**: Larger or urbanised councils noted stronger capacity and a potential to lead local collaborations, especially in more populated areas.
* **Shared Services Viability**: Some identified economies of scale as a benefit of their setting, citing joint procurement and facility sharing as feasible options.

**5. Preparedness Depends on Local Capacity**

Several responses highlighted the **divide between well-resourced, proactive councils and smaller councils with limited capacity**, suggesting unequal readiness for reform.

Councils were asked whether they would benefit from more information or training on devolution and the potential impact of LGR, and if so, what format would best suit their needs.

**Would your council like more information or training?**

* **52 councils** said **Yes** – showing strong demand for structured support
* **18 councils** were **Unsure** – suggesting uncertainty about what devolution may entail or a lack of clarity about their own capacity
* **4 councils** said **No** – either confident in their understanding or currently uninterested

**Preferred Training Formats (multiple selections allowed):**

* **Online via Zoom** – selected by **42 councils**
* **Written materials** – preferred by **32 councils**
* **At your council (bespoke/localised)** – favoured by **30 councils**
* **In-person sessions** – chosen by **29 councils**

This indicates a preference for a blended approach, with digital delivery slightly leading but strong interest in tailored, face-to-face engagement, whether hosted locally or centrally.

**Preferred Governance Models for Neighbourhood Arrangements**

To further explore how councils see themselves participating in a restructured local governance system, respondents were asked what governance model they would support for any new neighbourhood arrangements. This question aimed to explore how local councils envision collaboration and representation within a potential devolved or reorganised structure.

The responses revealed a clear desire for retaining a voice, though also reflected the uncertainty seen throughout the section:

* **41 councils were unsure** — a figure that echoes the broader hesitation expressed in qualitative responses, particularly around the unclear shape, responsibilities, and authority of any proposed neighbourhood tier.
* **29 councils favoured direct representation** — emphasising a preference for preserving democratic legitimacy and ensuring local views are not lost within larger joint structures.
* **2 councils supported shared structures** such as **committees, joint boards or working groups** — suggesting limited but present interest in formalised collaboration mechanisms.

This mix of uncertainty and guarded interest in direct representation reinforces a theme repeated in final comments: councils are willing to engage, but need clearer guarantees on autonomy, resourcing and influence if new governance models are to succeed.

**Delivering Local Services: Capacity, Confidence and Support Needs**

This section explores the ability and preparedness of parish and town councils to deliver services, and what support they might need to do so effectively under a devolved model. This insight captures councils’ current involvement in local service provision, their openness to taking on more, and the types of support they would require to deliver new responsibilities confidently.

**Services Currently Delivered by Councils**

Almost all councils reported delivering at least one local service, with the vast majority managing multiple responsibilities. These services range from traditional statutory functions to broader community-focused initiatives. The most frequently mentioned categories are:

* **Green and Open Space Management**:  
  Nearly all councils carry out some form of *grass cutting*, *hedge maintenance*, or *grounds upkeep*. Many also maintain *closed churchyards*, *cemeteries*, *memorial gardens*, *village greens*, *nature reserves*, and *conservation areas*.
* **Facilities and Infrastructure**:  
  Councils frequently manage *play areas*, *sports fields*, *Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs)*, *skate parks*, and *community halls*. Others maintain *bus shelters*, *benches*, *noticeboards*, *defibrillators*, and *street furniture*.
* **Burial and Allotment Services**:  
  A significant number serve as *burial authorities* or manage *cemeteries* and *closed churchyards*. *Allotments* are also widely managed, with some councils running multiple sites.
* **Community Engagement and Social Provision**:  
  Many councils provide or fund *youth clubs*, *holiday play schemes*, *community safety schemes* (including Speed Watch and ANPR cameras), *food banks*, *health and wellbeing services*, and even *community grants*.
* **Administrative and Liaison Functions**:  
  Almost all act as *statutory consultees on planning*, liaise regularly with *principal authorities* and *local policing teams*, and serve as points of contact for community issues. Others take responsibility for *newsletters*, *websites*, and *reporting infrastructure faults*.
* **Event Organisation and Cultural Services**:  
  Several councils host *festivals*, *markets*, *social events*, and *community capacity-building activities*. Some run or support *arts venues*, *heritage assets*, and *tourist information* functions.

This wide-ranging portfolio reflects both the diversity and commitment of parish and town councils to meeting local needs. However, it also highlights disparities in capacity, with smaller councils often reporting limited services due to a lack of assets, staffing, or funding. This variation is a key consideration in any future devolution discussions.

When asked ***Does your Council currently have capacity (staff, skills, funding) to take on additional responsibilities?*** the results are as follows:

* **22 councils** responded **Yes**
* **22 councils** responded **No**
* **31 councils** responded **Unsure**

This evenly split profile underscores the importance of targeted support. When asked what they would require in order to take on more services under LGR, most cited multiple reasons, namely:

* **Training** – mentioned by **66 councils**
* **Funding** – mentioned by **68 councils**
* **Staffing** – mentioned by **53 councils**
* **Legal Advice** – mentioned by **47 councils**
* **Other** – mentioned by **12 councils**

“Other” reasons included:

* **Office space constraints**: Multiple councils highlighted physical limitations, such as working out of very small offices or shared buildings, with inadequate space for additional staff or record storage.
* **Lack of clarity on responsibilities**: There was a consistent call for more information about what services might be devolved. This uncertainty makes it hard for councils to plan staffing, training or budgeting.
* **Financial and risk concerns**: Some councils expressed the need for financial underwriting or guarantees when taking on high-liability assets like contaminated land or derelict buildings. There was also interest in ensuring income-generating assets accompany any responsibilities transferred.
* **Realistic planning time**: Several councils noted they would need time and transitional support to restructure, resource, and prepare for expanded duties.
* **Partnership infrastructure**: A few councils suggested creating or subscribing to shared business support services (e.g. for HR, legal, estate management) as a way to build collective capacity.

**Understanding Financial Readiness and Support Needs**

This section explores how parish and town councils perceive the financial implications of devolution, including whether they anticipate a financial impact on their operations, their willingness to raise the precept, and what types of financial support they believe would be necessary to take on additional responsibilities. The data provides a clear indication of both financial caution and practical considerations councils are already weighing as part of any transition. It highlights not only budgetary pressures, but also the need for transparent funding arrangements and accessible financial support mechanisms.

**How concerned is your Council about the financial impact of taking on new responsibilities?**

* **36 councils** said they are **Very concerned**
* **33 councils** said they are **Somewhat concerned**
* **4 councils** said they are **Not concerned**
* **1 council** (consolidated response) gave a range of answers varied from “not concerned” to “very concerned”

In response to whether councils would be willing to raise their precept to fund new responsibilities:

* **17 councils** said **Yes**
* **14 councils** said **No**
* **42 councils** said they were **Not sure**
* **2 councils** did not respond

This reveals considerable uncertainty across the sector.

**Reluctance and Uncertainty Around Raising the Precept**

Among councils that answered **“No”** or **“Not sure”** to raising the precept, the reasoning points to several key themes:

1. **Double Taxation and Redistribution of Savings**  
   Many councils emphasised that savings from principal authorities (e.g. district councils) should be passed down alongside responsibilities, rather than expecting parish and town councils to raise additional funds. There was strong resistance to any scenario that would result in perceived double taxation.
2. **Affordability and Socio-Economic Sensitivity**  
   Concerns were raised about the financial pressure this would place on residents, particularly in smaller or socio-economically diverse communities. Some noted that even significant increases in the precept would raise only modest sums, limiting their viability.
3. **Demand for Clarity and Justification**  
   A common response was that without detailed information about what services might be devolved, councils could not justify a tax rise to their communities. Several also stressed the importance of clearly demonstrating tangible benefits to residents if such increases were to be considered.
4. **Council Capacity and Visibility of Effort**  
   There was a concern that added responsibilities might result in unseen administrative burdens that residents wouldn’t recognise, making it harder to justify the cost. Some suggested that responsibilities should be funded directly by higher tiers of government.
5. **Conditional Willingness**  
   A few councils indicated they might be willing to raise the precept — but only if offset by reductions in wider Council Tax bills, or if residents had a clear understanding of the trade-offs involved.

This commentary reflects a tension between local willingness to do more and the limitations of community capacity, transparency and financial fairness.

Here is the breakdown of responses to **What level of financial support would your council require to take on additional services?**

* **Full funding to cover all ongoing costs** – 36 councils
* **Not financially viable under any model** – 3 councils
* **Partial funding, if the council can raise the difference (e.g. via precept)** – 8 councils
* **Some felt initial set-up costs only, others full funding to cover all costs** – 1 council (consolidated response)
* **Support for set-up or transition only, then self-funded** – 1 council
* **Unsure / would need to see a business case** – 26 councils

**Collaboration & Community Engagement**

This section explores how parish and town councils perceive their own levels of community engagement and who they currently collaborate with. The findings reflect a broad spectrum of experience and capacity. Given the aspirations of the emerging Place Model — particularly its emphasis on neighbourhood-level working and shared leadership — these insights are vital. They reveal not just willingness, but existing capabilities and local conditions that could either support or hinder future models of collective governance.

Councils were asked to rate their current level of community engagement and provide detail on any existing collaborative arrangements, including with neighbouring councils, principal authorities and community organisations. Their responses highlight varying degrees of readiness and willingness to participate in broader locality governance structures.

**How Engaged Councils Feel They Are with Their Communities**

* **20 councils (27%)** rated their engagement as **Excellent**
* **33 councils (44%)** rated their engagement as **Good**
* **19 councils (24%)** rated engagement as **Fair**
* **3 councils (4%)** described engagement as **Poor**

**Collaboration with Neighbouring Parish or Town Councils**

* **42 councils (56%)** said they collaborate **informally only** – suggesting occasional or issue-specific cooperation, without structured arrangements.
* **23 councils (31%)** confirmed they **formally collaborate** with neighbouring councils – indicating sustained working relationships or joint initiatives.
* **10 councils (13%)** reported **no collaboration** at all – often due to geographical isolation, lack of capacity, or limited interest.

**Forms of Formal Collaboration Identified**

**Named Groups or Forums:**

* Severn Voice, C5 Councils, Coleford Area Partnership, and the GAPTC Cotswold Hub 1 are specifically mentioned.
* These groups are typically used for sharing strategic priorities, preparing for devolution, and collectively engaging with district or county authorities.

**Regular Meetings Between Councillors and Clerks:**

* Several councils refer to “regular meetings of councillors,” “frequent contact between clerks,” or “occasional joint council meetings” — highlighting operational alignment.

**Topic- or Issue-Specific Collaboration:**

**Planning and Development**  
The most frequently cited area of collaboration, appearing in over 30 responses. Councils referenced Local Plan consultations, housing development objections, major applications, and the use of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) as a framework for both strategic collaboration and public engagement.

**Traffic, Speeding, and Road Safety**  
At least 25 councils mentioned speeding, MVAS signage, speed control, or broader traffic safety concerns. Collaboration efforts included community Speed Watch groups, joint pressure on Highways authorities, and neighbourhood traffic calming measures.

**Flooding, Drainage, and Water Management**  
Over 10 responses referenced surface water drainage, flooding consultation, or partnerships with water utilities (e.g. Thames Water Joint Working Group). Natural flood management and related infrastructure concerns feature prominently in areas with past events or high risk.

**Youth Engagement and Provision**  
More than 8 councils cited projects around youth infrastructure, consultation on services, support for youth clubs, and skate parks. Some councils framed these as part of broader community development efforts or funding partnerships.

**Environmental and Biodiversity Projects**  
Councils referenced green space protection, biodiversity initiatives, tree planting, and climate-focused activity (e.g. Climate Change Guides). Several entries indicated working jointly on bio-corridors, conservation areas, or local nature partnerships.

**Highways, Transport, and Connectivity**  
Joint working on highways issues was reported by at least a dozen councils, particularly relating to the A38, school footpath improvements, signage, or poor public transport. Other themes include emergency planning, parking, and mobility infrastructure.

**Community Assets and Infrastructure**  
Collaboration has supported the development or management of play parks, Multi-Use Games Areas (MUGAs), cemeteries, community rooms, and telephone boxes repurposed as book shares. Councils shared examples of jointly planning or aligning projects to avoid duplication of provision.

**Social and Health Projects**  
A smaller but notable number of councils referenced local food banks, dementia-friendly initiatives, support for older residents, and social housing consultation. These projects often involved external partners but were cited as community-driven.

**Civic and Cultural Life**  
Councils cited working with others on Summer Fairs, music festivals, litter-picking days, and tourism-related events. These activities were less formal but still framed as important expressions of collaboration and shared community pride.

**Neighbourhood Governance**  
NDPs, shared clerk networks, emergency groups (like Fairford Emergency Action Group), and parish forums are referenced as governance-lite vehicles that support joint decision-making, even where formal legal partnerships do not exist.

**Who Else Do Councils Collaborate With?**

The most frequently cited types of collaboration partners (in order of prominence) are:

* **Local voluntary and community sector organisations** – referenced in at least **36 responses**, often working on community wellbeing, local events, or outreach.
* **Civil society organisations** (e.g. churches, community trusts) – mentioned in at least **33 responses**, frequently partnering on neighbourhood support or facilities.
* **Local primary or secondary schools** – cited in at least **28 responses**, often for youth engagement, climate projects, or facility sharing.
* **Police or neighbourhood watch groups** – identified in **24 responses**, largely in connection with community safety or anti-social behaviour.
* **Youth groups or services** – included in at least **22 responses**, typically around engagement, social mobility, or outreach.
* **Health and wellbeing groups or services** – reported by **19 councils**, especially for memory cafés, mental health initiatives, or older adult support.

These numbers reflect combinations of multiple partnersper council, rather than exclusive selections, **49 councils** explicitly cited **working with three or more external partners**.

When asked **Would your Council be open to collaborating with neighbouring councils to manage new responsibilities?**

* **Yes** – 57 councils
* **Unsure** – 14 councils
* **No** – 4 councils

This indicates strong openness to collaboration. The number of unsure responses also suggests there is scope to shape and support inter-council partnerships through further dialogue and clear models.

Many councils that responded “yes” to the possibility of collaborating with neighbouring councils cited shared resources, cost efficiencies, and improved outcomes as compelling reasons to work together. Several comments emphasised the opportunity to reduce duplication and enhance service quality through joint contracting or shared facilities — especially for services like **grass cutting, open space management, community buildings, event planning, street cleansing** and **transport infrastructure**.

Some noted that collaboration could provide a **more viable tax base** and support a **more integrated approach** to addressing cross-boundary issues such as **anti-social behaviour**, **nature connectivity** and **active travel**. A few councils referenced the potential of **amalgamating smaller councils** or collaborating “where the economics of scale would benefit all”.

Councils that were unsure often based their hesitation on a **lack of clarity** about the proposed responsibilities or structures. However, even these responses sometimes included willingness to explore collaboration **“as required”** or in areas like **leisure services, planning, highways** or **waste management** if the model was clearly defined and appropriately funded.

**Final Reflections from Councils**

In addition to the structured survey responses, councils were invited to share further thoughts at the end of the consultation. These reflections offer valuable insight into the broader hopes, hesitations, and practical concerns shaping views on LGR and devolution. While the detail is varied, several key themes emerged consistently across the dataset.

**1. Lack of Clarity and Timing**

Many respondents felt that the consultation was premature, expressing frustration at the absence of clear proposals or definitive structures for consideration. This lack of clarity was seen to undermine the value of their input and inhibit meaningful planning:

*“This questionnaire is premature. Chicken and egg. Commenting in the dark until the exact form of reorganisation is decided.”*

*“It is very difficult to comment on anything having no idea how the devolution of powers will look and with so much speculation in local media on how the Councils will be split/amended.”*

*“We need help with exactly what the parish council should be considering at this stage.”*

**2. Concern Over Sustainability of Small Councils**

Several councils voiced concern that smaller parish councils would be disproportionately affected. There was widespread anxiety about limited capacity, councillor and clerk burnout, and the challenge of taking on responsibilities previously managed by paid officers:

*“You cannot expect volunteers to run services like basic planning etc. which is managed by paid officers and members who receive an allowance.”*

*“We are a small rural parish with very few capital assets and it’s doubtful we could take on many/any new responsibilities.”*

*“The fear is that the county/district will devolve services whilst retaining funding in order to balance their books – creating major issues for the Parish & Town Councils.”*

**3. Requests for Guarantees on Funding**

Respondents reiterated throughout the survey the need for adequate financial support. These open comments reinforced that call, with many urging firm guarantees on ongoing costs and fair precept arrangements:

*“The only legitimate basis for devolving responsibilities to Parish Councils has to be that this is a more efficient and cost-effective way of addressing community needs – and this must be fully funded.”*

*“If we do the work, we are saving someone else from doing it – so we will just take those funds, please.”*

*“Our principal concerns rest in the lack of a clear process or engagement plan with principal authorities and the lack of resourcing within them to support these discussions.”*

**4. Governance and Decision-Making**

A number of councils raised concerns about governance structures and the democratic legitimacy of any new arrangements. Questions about how neighbourhood groups would operate, be constituted, and be funded featured prominently:

*“Neighbourhoods appear to have no status except as lobbying or consultative groups. They cannot have a statutory role without proper governance.”*

*“Governance needs to ensure that decision making affecting rural areas is not dominated by the priorities of large urban areas.”*

*“Clarity is needed on how decisions will be made, how assets will be managed, and how responsibilities will be divided.”*

**5. Democratic Legitimacy and Local Voice**

Several councils worried that their voices – and those of their residents – would be diluted in any future unitary authority model. These concerns were particularly acute among smaller or rural councils:

*“Our parish is so small, we would only be able to raise a very small amount of money by increasing the precept significantly.”*

*“There is a danger councillors will become too overloaded with work, so the number has to be greatly increased over GCC levels.”*

*“The concern is that a unitary authority will be remote and not fully represent the needs of the community.”*

**6. Practical Proposals and Cautions**

Some councils shared specific ideas or warned of unintended consequences. Several called for engagement with MPs, open information sharing, and more modelling of success in other areas:

*“It would be beneficial if a Member of Parliament would talk to parish and town councils about the three options for devolution.”*

*“GAPTC and local parishes need to remain on the front foot – it’s still all to play for.”*

*“The GAPTC paper doesn’t give much indication of how well the suggested models have worked in other areas.”*

These reflections offer a sobering but constructive picture. They show that while many councils are open to change in principle, there are still fundamental concerns around fairness, funding, and clarity that will need to be addressed if LGR and devolution are to succeed in Gloucestershire.

**Appendix**

**Highlights**

To assist readers in interpreting the detailed tables provided, this summary outlines key patterns and points of interest across council size, district and dataset groupings.

**Variation by Council Size**

* **Larger councils** (e.g. those with higher precepts or staffing) were significantly more likely to express **interest in taking on additional responsibilities**, particularly where they already manage assets or services.
* **Smaller councils** often raised concerns about **councillor capacity, office space, and administrative burden**, and were more likely to state that new responsibilities would not be viable without full financial support.
* Willingness to collaborate with neighbouring councils was **highest among mid-sized councils**, who recognised the benefit of shared infrastructure without being overwhelmed by scale.

**Notable District Trends**

* **Cotswold and Stroud districts** returned a greater number of formal or consolidated council responses (primary dataset), and their feedback often included **detailed commentary on governance structures and neighbourhood arrangements**.
* **Forest of Dean and Tewkesbury** councils more frequently voiced **concerns around funding inequalities** and the **risk of rural areas losing out** in any reorganisation.
* **Urban-edge parishes** commonly questioned whether proposals would improve local voice or result in added layers of complexity.

**Differences Between Datasets**

* The **primary dataset** (34 responses) formed the foundation for headline statistics and showed a higher level of confidence in understanding and readiness for change.
* The **expanded dataset** (75 responses) added nuance, particularly around **individual officer or councillor concerns**, highlighting more uncertainty and variable awareness of devolution plans.
* Key divergences appeared in questions about **raising the precept and capacity to deliver**—with individual clerk and councillor respondents more cautious or uncertain.

This snapshot should help readers navigate the detailed tables that follow and better understand the diversity of views across Gloucestershire’s local councils.

**Full Dataset Tables**

The following tables present detailed response data from the 75 verified council entries. These tables allow for comparison by council size, district, and type of respondent. The tables are organised to reflect the order of key themes addressed in the main report, including:

* Understanding and attitudes toward devolution
* Capacity, service delivery, and governance
* Collaboration and willingness to raise the precept
* Support needs and expectations
* Preferences for neighbourhood arrangements

These tables are best read alongside the “Appendix Highlights”, which summarise key variations and trends across groups.

**Primary (34 respondents) vs Full Verified (75 respondents) Dataset Comparison**

| **Question Area** | **Response Option** | **Count (Primary)** | **% (Primary)** | **Count (Full)** | **% (Full)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Interest in Taking on Responsibilities** | Yes | 15 | 44% | 24 | 32% |
|  | Not sure | 16 | 47% | 41 | 55% |
|  | No | 3 | 9% | 10 | 13% |
| **Capacity to Take on Responsibilities** | Yes, we have the staff, skills, and funding | 1 | 3% | 3 | 4% |
|  | Yes, but only with additional support | 20 | 59% | 41 | 55% |
|  | No, we do not currently have capacity | 13 | 38% | 31 | 41% |
| **Concern About Financial Impact** | Very concerned | 16 | 47% | 36 | 48% |
|  | Somewhat concerned | 16 | 47% | 34 | 45% |
|  | Not very concerned | 1 | 3% | 3 | 4% |
|  | Not concerned at all | 1 | 3% | 2 | 3% |
| **Willingness to Raise Precept** | Yes | 9 | 26% | 15 | 20% |
|  | Not sure | 17 | 50% | 40 | 53% |
|  | No | 6 | 18% | 15 | 20% |
|  | Already at financial limit | 2 | 6% | 5 | 7% |
| **Openness to Neighbour Collaboration** | Yes | 14 | 41% | 28 | 37% |
|  | Possibly | 19 | 56% | 46 | 61% |
|  | No | 1 | 3% | 1 | 1% |
| **Governance Model Preference** | Representation by parish and town councils | 9 | 26% | 19 | 25% |
|  | Joint committees with district/county | 2 | 6% | 5 | 7% |
|  | New representative body | 4 | 12% | 9 | 12% |
|  | Not sure | 18 | 53% | 40 | 53% |
|  | Other (unspecified) | 1 | 3% | 2 | 3% |

**Council Size Breakdown**

Understanding how views differ by council size is essential in tailoring support and planning devolved functions. Smaller councils often face unique challenges related to capacity and governance, while larger councils may be better resourced but face more complex service expectations. This breakdown explores how interest, capacity, financial concern and collaboration attitudes vary between small, medium, and large councils.

\*Full verified response dataset used to gain a broader picture.

| **Question Area** | **Response** | **Small (1–6)** | **Medium (7–14)** | **Large (15+)** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Interest in Taking on Responsibilities** | Yes | 4 | 14 | 6 |
|  | Unsure | 8 | 26 | 7 |
|  | No | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| **Capacity to Take on Responsibilities** | Yes | 0 | 2 | 0 |
|  | With additional support | 5 | 22 | 11 |
|  | No | 12 | 21 | 2 |
| **Concern About Financial Impact** | Not concerned | 1 | 2 | 1 |
|  | Somewhat concerned | 9 | 19 | 5 |
|  | Very concerned | 7 | 24 | 5 |
| **Willingness to Raise Precept** | Yes | 4 | 10 | 3 |
|  | Not sure | 11 | 23 | 7 |
|  | No | 2 | 12 | 0 |
|  | Unsure | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **Openness to Collaboration** | Yes | 5 | 16 | 6 |
|  | Possibly | 11 | 25 | 7 |
|  | No | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| **Preferred Governance Model** | Direct representation by parish/town councils | 4 | 16 | 2 |
|  | Joint committees with district/county | 0 | 1 | 1 |
|  | New representative body | 2 | 3 | 1 |
|  | Direct model (unspecified) | 0 | 3 | 0 |
|  | Direct model with clarity/models needed | 0 | 0 | 1 |
|  | Unsure | 11 | 22 | 8 |

**District Breakdown**

Different districts face different demographic, geographic, and institutional contexts, which shape how councils perceive and prepare for devolution. This breakdown reveals district-level trends in council confidence, concerns, and preferences — providing a valuable lens for targeting conversations with principal authorities and shaping place-based support models.

\*Full verified response dataset used to gain a broader picture.

*Note*: There is only one parish in Gloucester City, and five in Cheltenham Borough.

CB = Cheltenham Borough

CD = Cotswold District

FoDD = Forest of Dean District

SD = Stroud District

TB = Tewkesbury Borough

| **Question Area** | **Response** | **CB** | **CD** | **FoDD** | **Gloucester** | **SD** | **TB** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Interest in Taking on Responsibilities** | Yes | 2 | 8 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 6 |
|  | Unsure | 0 | 15 | 9 | 0 | 13 | 8 |
|  | No | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| **Capacity to Take on Responsibilities** | Yes | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
|  | With additional support | 2 | 7 | 9 | 1 | 12 | 7 |
|  | No | 1 | 15 | 4 | 0 | 6 | 9 |
| **Concern About Financial Impact** | Not concerned | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
|  | Somewhat concerned | 2 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 11 | 9 |
|  | Very concerned | 0 | 15 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 6 |
| **Willingness to Raise Precept** | Yes | 1 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 5 | 1 |
|  | Not sure | 2 | 15 | 4 | 1 | 11 | 8 |
|  | No | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 6 |
|  | Unsure | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Openness to Collaboration** | Yes | 1 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 10 | 7 |
|  | Possibly | 2 | 16 | 7 | 1 | 9 | 8 |
|  | No | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| **Preferred Governance Model** | Direct | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
|  | Direct representation | 2 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 7 |
|  | Direct + clarity/models needed | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
|  | Joint committees with district/county | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
|  | New representative body | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
|  | Unsure | 0 | 12 | 8 | 1 | 12 | 8 |