

District Councillor Report – September 2026

For Standish Parish Council

Cllr Mark Ryder

1. Play Area Location – Green Walk Development

Planning awaits any suggestions for an alternative location.

2. Local Plan Update

There has been little movement on the current draft Local Plan. The Council is still awaiting confirmation from the Planning Inspectors, but the remaining examination hearings are now expected to commence from mid-October onwards.

At the same time, officers are progressing the replacement Local Plan by reviewing consultation responses and beginning preparation of the supporting evidence base.

What this means locally

- Two planning processes are effectively running in parallel: the existing draft Local Plan must complete its examination while the next Local Plan is already being developed.
- Important to continue monitoring both processes because future housing, employment, infrastructure and settlement policies may be affected.

3. Community Governance Review (CGR)

I have submitted a consultation response to the review. I am on the working group that will consider the current CGRs and our first meeting will be October 5th.

4. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Following confirmation that Gloucestershire will move to a single unitary authority, the countywide LGR programme is in a reset phase. Consultants are reviewing workstreams, interdependencies, priorities and delivery requirements.

Gloucestershire County Council will not be a 'preparing authority'. This means County Council staff will transfer to the new authority under TUPE arrangements, creating a substantial HR and workforce-planning exercise.

Current priorities

- Ensuring the new authority can operate successfully from Day One.
- Establishing the Shadow Council and appointing an interim Chief Executive and senior leadership team.
- Developing future service-design principles and subsequent organisational structures.
- A service-design event involving around 175 senior managers is scheduled for 22 September.
- An LGR Joint Scrutiny Panel is being established to scrutinise major decisions.

Why Parish Councils should engage now

The design of the new authority will affect how local services, community engagement and relationships with town and parish councils operate in future. This is therefore an important period for the sector to identify what should remain local, what could be devolved and how communities should access the new Council.

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5. Spatial Development Strategy (SDS)

Gloucestershire is awaiting a government decision, expected this autumn, on whether it will receive Foundation Strategic Authority status and be able to prepare its own SDS, or whether it will be required to work with neighbouring authorities.

Gloucestershire has restated its preference for a strategic relationship with the West of England Combined Authority (WECA). The County Council is continuing preparatory work despite the absence of final regulations and confirmation of the future geography.

Proposed engagement

Subject to forthcoming legislation, a six-week informal engagement exercise is planned from 2nd November to 14th December 2026. This is intended to seek views on the overarching vision and objectives for the SDS.

- I suggest the Council prepare to identify strategic local priorities before the engagement opens.
- Particular attention should be given to housing growth, employment, transport, infrastructure and the relationship between strategic development and existing communities.

6. Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The revised NPPF has now been issued by government, and this does fundamentally change the local engagement on planning decisions and planning processes, favouring a greater emphasis on default permissions within criteria set by government to promote new housing development.

- More decisions will be considered by officers rather than committee.
- Material planning considerations for refusal have been tightened.
- Scope for call-in requests to DCC Committee has been reduced.

SDC councillors have received new guidance and briefings on the NPPF changes. Parish Councils will be able to access updates and guidance via GALC and NALC. I can forward guidance if that would help.

Cllr Mark Ryder
6th September 2026