



Changes of Political Leadership Golden Triangle Event

Welcome and thank you for attending

23 February 2026

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Welcome and Introductions

Ami Beeton

Senior Improvement Adviser, LGA

Introductions via Slido...

Objectives of today

- Hearing from peers on preparing, scenario planning, and responding to a change of political leadership.
- Focusing on the leadership, cultural and governance aspect of preparing for changes in political leadership.
- Considering the responsibilities of Statutory Officers and collectively as Golden Triangle teams.
- What can we learn about smooth transitions – a chance to share practice with other Golden Triangle officers across other councils.

Guest speakers

Perry Holmes, Monitoring Officer, Wiltshire Council

Nina Philippidis, S151 and Deputy CEX,
Gloucestershire County Council



Perry Holmes Monitoring Officer, Wiltshire Council

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Political Change

Best practice tips for statutory officers

23 February 2026

Perry Holmes
Director Legal & Governance
Monitoring Officer

Wiltshire

- Preparation before elections included
 - Statutory officer discussions
 - Scenario planning (more call ins, constitution being weaponised, changes in scrutiny, changes in relationships, impact on budget setting)
 - Cascaded by CEO, MO and S151 to Corporate Leadership Team, Extended Leadership Team and Heads of Service
 - CLT met with all the political groups regularly on live policy matters and any questions, to build relationships

Wiltshire

- Results day (Friday 2 May 2025): Confidential early indication from Lib Dems they had agreed supply and confidence deal with another group
- Saturday meeting (CEO and MO) with Lib Dems Leader, Deputy and proposed Finance Cab Member to start work towards Annual Council
- Weekend texts from politicians/village picnic chat
- In the period before Annual Council CEO, MO and S151 met all group Leaders – protocol was agreed for urgent decisions

What are some of the challenges of political change

- Lack of political input or leadership
- Show must go on
- Need to make some urgent decisions in the “interim” if delegation allows
- CEO/MO/S151 and CLT need to lead colleagues
- Need to manage staff and partner uncertainty
- Party rules/rulings
- Relationships
- Question about the form of governance (Leader & Cabinet, Committee, Mayoral)
- Paused decisions awaiting progress
- Business or Council Plan will change

How might you approach the challenge?

- Be patient
- Do your homework – provide a framework
- Provide the “runners and riders” list in good time
- Scenario plan
- Let the politicians work out the details
- Role of Chief Executive/Monitoring Officer/Section 151
- ELT away day
- Focus on the first AGM meeting
- Access external help and support

Tips and tricks

In the post election period

- ▶ Meet in pairs/share intelligence
- ▶ Make confidential notes
- ▶ Speak truth to power/challenge politicians to work it out
- ▶ Summarise all the options
- ▶ Continue to work up scenarios
- ▶ Access LGA guidance and support in good time
- ▶ Keep speaking to all the Group Leaders
- ▶ Observe
- ▶ Get information and intelligence where you can

Nina Philippidis
S151 and Deputy Chief Executive
Gloucestershire County Council

Breakout group

Possible scenarios

Instructions (20 mins)

- Introduce yourself and share political make up / history of your council
- Possible future scenarios / changes
- Feedback key themes into the chat



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Guest speaker
Denise McGuckin
Chief Executive, Hartlepool Council

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Hartlepool
Borough Council

CHANGES OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Guidance for Senior Managers

Denise McGuckin, Chief Executive
Hartlepool Borough Council
23rd February 2026

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL CHANGE PREPAREDNESS

Impact on Strategic Direction

Political changes influence organisational priorities, shifts strategy, resources and expectations

Leadership and Operational Adaptation

New leadership styles affect decision-making, scrutiny, and officer-member interactions, demanding operational flexibility. Managers must translate shifts into operational plans

Mitigating Anxiety Through Preparedness

Proactive communication and continuity planning reduces employee anxiety and maintains stability.

Ensuring Corporate Resilience

Robust governance and clear communication channels protect ongoing operations and maintain neutrality.



CORE PRINCIPLES FOR ORGANISATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

Professional Impartiality

Maintaining neutrality ensures trust with incoming leaders and supports operational continuity during political changes.

Strong Corporate Memory

Accurate historical data and policy records help new administrations understand context and make informed decisions.

Risk Registers and Forward Planning

Updated risk assessments and scenario planning prepare organisations for policy impacts and vulnerable services.

Clear Internal Communication

Effective communication ensures staff understand expected behaviors and operational continuity through transitions.



APPROACHES TO SCENARIO PLANNING

Developing Political Scenarios

Create plausible scenarios to anticipate political changes.

Impact Assessment on Services

Assess potential impacts on social care, environmental services, investment programmes, and community safety under each scenario.

Preparing Briefing Packs

Prepare comprehensive briefing packs with statutory obligations, project timelines, budgets, and performance metrics in advance.



MANAGING THE FIRST 24–72 HOURS AFTER CHANGE

Providing Clear Information

Senior managers must supply accurate and timely information about statutory obligations, finances, and commitments to new leaders.

Effective Communication Protocols

Clear communication prevents uncertainty and service disruption during the political transition period.

Orientation and Induction

Providing high-quality induction materials, early briefings with clear protocols to help new councillors understand governance and operational risks quickly.



GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING ADJUSTMENTS

Adapting Governance Structures

Political shifts demand rapid updates to governance frameworks, decision pathways, and delegated authorities to ensure smooth transitions.

Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities

Clear member-officer boundaries and expectations help new councillors understand professional conduct and influence limits.

Supporting Portfolio Holders

Managers prepare concise portfolios detailing priorities, risks, and initiatives to aid leadership effectiveness early on.

Ensuring Continuity in Decisions

Critical projects and legal processes must continue seamlessly despite political transitions to maintain organisational stability.



COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIPS

Internal Staff Communication

Senior managers provide timely updates to staff to clarify expectations and reassure during political transitions.

External Partner Communication

Transparent messaging to external partners protects strategic relationships and reduces anxiety during change.

Coordinated Communication Protocol

Temporary protocols ensure consistent messages through press statements, spokespeople, and media responses.

Proactive Engagement

Early meetings help understand new leaders' priorities, working styles, and expectations, fostering trust and alignment.

Tailored Induction Support

Provide induction to new leaders on governance structures and statutory frameworks to build confidence and effectiveness.



MANAGING RISKS AND MITIGATIONS DURING TRANSITION

Identifying Risk and Risk Mitigation

Managers must recognise operational, strategic, and reputational risks during political transitions to ensure service continuity.

Planning alternative scenarios and providing evidence can mitigate risks linked to policy changes and project delays. Senior managers should assess risk registers to identify areas impacted by new political priorities for timely adjustments.

Update Induction Materials

Refresh induction documents to provide clear, updated information on portfolios, responsibilities, and ongoing projects.

Capacity Planning

Plan for short-term support and resource reallocation to manage increased briefing needs and rapid policy development.

Ensure Continuity and Communication

Maintain essential statutory functions and establish regular communication with new administration for smooth transitions.



LONG-TERM ORGANISATIONAL ADAPTATION

Strategic Alignment

Senior managers must align corporate plans and financial strategies with the new administration's priorities to ensure organisational coherence.

Policy Monitoring and Integration

Monitoring national and local policy trends enables integration of emerging insights into corporate planning for long-term resilience.

Performance Monitoring and Reporting

Regular performance tracking and clear reporting frameworks support informed decision-making and effective organisational oversight.

Culture and Staff Support

Reinforcing values, providing training, and engaging staff fosters adaptability, morale, and productivity during change.



Breakout group and contributions

Instructions (20 mins)

- What are you taking from the inputs today?
- What are you already doing that you are happy to share e.g. member development / constitution changes / culture
- Anything you are grappling with, any suggestions for further support?
- Feedback key themes into the main room chat when we are back from breakout groups



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Final comments and feedback

Ami Beeton

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Feedback via Slido...



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