

County Councillor Report – 4th February 2024

Prepared by Cllr Linda Cohen

Highways

Plenty of activity in January with Gary Wilson out and about attending meetings with groups of residents and carrying out inspections. We've started working on plans for each parish which are detailed below.

There are a number of major road closures during February about which all parish and town councils should have been alerted. Please can we highlight these with a map on social media to give residents at least a week's notice. If you need my help, please ask. Also can we continue to build awareness of 'Fix My Street' [Fix My Street](#) - a new, easier and more efficient way for residents, businesses and organisations in Gloucestershire to report and get updates on everything from potholes to problem paths.

Grit Bins – a by product of my walkabouts is the confirmation that almost every grit bin is being used by the public for dumping rubbish and dog waste. I'm going to investigate whether we can sticker bins to explain use, but it shouldn't be necessary. Grit bins are essential to road safety for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. I'll highlight on social media but would appreciate any help broadening awareness.

Wotton

We conducted a walk from Coombe to Parklands through Old Town and out to Symn Lane with residents. There is now understanding about the length of time and cost of TROs to deliver yellow lines and speed restrictions and the fact that they don't guarantee success. Under consideration – a joint TRO parcelling all requirements in Wotton.

The following actions have been agreed:

Coombe programme of works to clear blocked drains and to investigate new springs, replace signage next to Coombe Hill House and to create a passing place opposite 12ft drop at top of hill. Investigate bulging wall next to Green Hay Farm and investigate broken pipe and next to Coombe Villa and 13ft blockage in pipe opposite.

Parklands campaign to request that residents don't park on both sides of the approach to the junction with Culverhay and to work with the church and Culverhay surgery to educate visitors and patients to do the same.

Create programme of 'drop pavement' works to ensure residents of Parklands can easily transfer from one pavement to another. Lines will be painted on either side to discourage parking.

Speed monitoring to be conducted on Culverhay with view to installing a VAS.

Investigate abandoned vehicle.

Letters campaign to residents on approach to first drop of hill in Old Town to request a period of 'no parking' to allow monitoring to see if it improves flow of traffic and helps reduce incidents of Wotton coming to a standstill. All other options having been considered and discounted as unworkable.

Speed monitoring to be conducted on brow of New Road and approach to Haw Street. VAS sign also under consideration.

Funding has been secured for the surfacing of the footpath to the east of Blue Coat School which runs down to the fields and will much improve the walk which is currently very muddy. The work will be carried out later in the spring. I am still hoping that the school governors can be prevailed upon to cut back the trees which are obscuring the light of the homes in Venns Acre and adds to the existing problem.

Gary to also provide detail about the geotechnical surveys and repeated road closure of the Rushmire B4058.

Hillesley/ Tresham

Resurfacing using patching machine next to War Memorial (April.)

Investigating responsibility for collapsed wall in Tresham.

North Nibley

Resurfacing of part of pavement on left hand side of B4060 (approaching from Wotton) just before turn to The Street. Paid for with Highways Local.

Ham and Stone

Use 'lengthsman' allocation to look at: flooding under bridge on approach from Road Green; clearing growth on approach to garage (currently unpassable and residents using the road); replace 30mph sign between Ham and Berkeley, remove sign from ditch; need flush through of drains from Woodford to Stone, fix pothole outside hairdressers.

Road Safety / Highways

Kingswood

Continue with campaign.

Stinchcombe

Continue with work to put in place speed restrictions and warning signs at Tait's Hill.

Hillesley/ Tresham

Plan to launch full road safety initiative which involves the whole community rather than wait for success with a TRO. This could include: repainting of markings, village gateway, new advisory signage – developed in conjunction with the primary school, poster and social media campaign. Outline of plan to be presented at parish council meeting on 13th February and then presented to community in March for input. (Funded by Highways Local).

Ham and Stone / Alkington

Working party has been formed to develop campaign with clear objectives to transform the safety of the stretch of the A38 that runs from Berkeley to Falfield. Work has started engaging with residents to collect evidence and information and have had input from Stone with Woodford Primary School. We will be using the lessons we have learned from our initial success with the 84/85 campaign.

Buses 84/85 (and all other services)

- Bus service to remain until September '24

I will be asking questions again at full council in February and will continue to work with South Glos and WECA to try and effect a final resolution.

I would continue to reiterate the absolute importance of everyone trying to use the buses whenever possible, the passenger figures will continue to be a key part of the criteria used to assess our merit to receive support.

Library Closure

All libraries will be closed on Thursday 29th 2024 for a whole staff service day. This day went ahead in 2023 and feedback from library teams was that it was hugely beneficial and a success. They particularly liked the opportunity to meet team members that they had never met before, have a real input into the direction of the service and also to be able to hear directly from the Management team.

The book management system has been amended so that items are not due back and no fines will be incurred and the public PCs are closed for booking.

Worth noting

Fire Service

A report going to Gloucestershire County Council's cabinet next week (31 January) will discuss plans to approve the next steps to increase fire cover in line with risk and demand across the county. The preferred proposal would see an increase of 14 firefighters (including crew and watch managers) in the county.

The report includes a request to start a public consultation in March to ensure that it can hear the views and feedback of Gloucestershire communities, workforce and stakeholders on the proposal. As part of the steps to increase fire cover in line with risk and demand, they will also consult on potential changes to shift patterns.

The shift pattern changes from 9-hour-day and 15-hour-night shifts to 12-hour shifts could improve the ability to have the right people, in the right place to respond to emergencies and provide prevention and community safety as well as benefit the health and safety of firefighters.

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) wants to ensure it keeps communities safe through reviewing its resources to meet its priorities outlined in its Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2022-2026.

Mark Preece, Chief Fire Officer, said: “We need to ensure that we continually assess how we best serve the communities of Gloucestershire. After reviewing the modelling and available data in accordance with our CRMP 2022-2026 priorities we are asking to consult on an increase of fire cover within the county.

“We want to ensure we have the right people, in the right place, at the right time to provide emergency response, community prevention and safety needs across the county.

“The proposals ask to consult with the public, our workforce and stakeholders to increase fire cover across the county, including options around shift patterns.”

You can [read the full cabinet report here](#).

Action being taken to tackle climate change in Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire County Council has updated its action plan to tackle climate change and outlined the progress made so far in a report going to cabinet next week.

Its vision for Gloucestershire is that we will have a net zero county by 2045 that provides quality of life now and for future generations.

By 2030, the county council aims to reduce its own carbon emissions, for example in buildings, its fleet and street lighting, by 80 per cent on 2005. It has already achieved a reduction of 76 per cent.

It has a five-year rolling action plan which it began in 2019 and provides an annual update on progress.

A report going to cabinet on Wednesday 31 January says that the long-term trend of reducing emissions in the county is continuing, with emissions now down 34.8 per cent since 2006.

Other achievements include:

- Introduction of a new tool to measure the ecological and climate change impacts of all cabinet decisions
- Non-recyclable waste per household dropped by over 3.5 per cent in the last year
- A total of £48 million has been secured towards active travel projects, including the 26-mile cycle spine that will link Stroud to Bishop’s Cleeve
- The Javelin Park Energy from Waste facility helped reduce emissions from waste. In 2022/23 emissions from waste at the facility were 2,660 tonnes of carbon, if this waste had gone to landfill it would have been 55,772.4 tonnes. It has also provided enough electricity from waste to power 25,000 homes.
- Since August, the trial e-scooter scheme in Gloucester and Cheltenham has replaced over 13,000 car trips, reducing CO2 from cars by 4.2 tonnes

The county council’s action plan includes plans to increase building sustainability and generate more renewable energy, work with communities to reduce emissions, decarbonise transport, increase flood resilience, plant trees and continue to reduce waste. The council is also investing in low carbon school buildings and running campaigns to focus on the actions residents can take to reduce their environmental impact. Libraries are creating ‘greener together’ zones to increase access to

sustainable literature and staff champions are spreading sustainability messages through communities.

Cabinet is being recommended to note the overall emissions for the county council and Gloucestershire, as well as the progress made so far and approve the five-year action plan.

You can [read the full cabinet report here](#).

Healthy Lifestyles

Gloucestershire County Council will fund new provider ABL Health with over £1 million a year to run Gloucestershire's healthy lifestyles service for adults.

As part of the council's legal duty to improve the health and wellbeing of local people and reduce health inequalities, they provide a healthy lifestyles service.

From 1 April 2024, a new provider, [ABL Health Ltd](#), will run the service in Gloucestershire. ABL is an experienced, community-based, behaviour change organisation. The new £1.13 million contract will run for an initial 5 years, with the option to extend it for up to a further 4 years.

ABL will offer one-to-one coaching support to help people make a lifestyle change, such as increasing their physical activity levels, reducing alcohol, stopping smoking, or managing their weight.

Since the healthy lifestyles service was first put in place in 2017, there has been an increase in weight management support available in the county, including the NHS Digital Weight Management offer. Therefore, after a public consultation, the healthy lifestyles service will change the weight management offer from a referral to Slimming World to focus on bespoke, targeted help for those people who face the greatest challenges in managing their weight.

The healthy lifestyles service for adults is provided in addition to a [£3.6 million healthier lifestyles service for children and families](#) who want support to manage their weight, run by [BeeZee Bodies](#).

Visit [Healthy Lifestyles Gloucestershire](#) for more information on the support available.

[Find more information on the decision here](#).

Public set to be consulted on adult social care fairer contributions policy

Public consultation is set to be carried out on proposed changes to the county council's adult social care fairer contributions policy.

Adult Social Care services are paid for by the county council with contributions from the individuals it supports. People can be charged for their care and asked to make a contribution in line with their financial circumstances. The council wants to make sure its fairer contributions policy is clear, accessible, and fair, to support individuals with choice and control over their care.

Following a public engagement in 2023, the council has reviewed its fairer contributions policy and is proposing changes which include:

- increasing the Minimum Income Guarantee (either for everyone or for some), and a change to the Disability Related Expenditure process, which may allow some people to keep more of their income
- a change to how the council charges for short break respite care and
- the introduction of an admin fee for people who pay the full cost of their care but wish the council to arrange care and support services on their behalf.

The consultation will begin on 5 February 2024 and end on 29 April 2024. Everyone will be encouraged to have their say, whether they currently pay for their care or may do so in the future, to make sure that it works for people now and for years to come.

There will be no changes to the fairer contributions policy, and therefore no changes to how residents are assessed to pay for their care, until public consultation has concluded, and all feedback has been considered.

Council appoints Rethink Mental Illness to support people with mental health issues

Gloucestershire County Council has appointed Rethink Mental Illness to run its Mental Health Support and Advice Service.

Rethink Mental Illness is a leading charity provider of mental health services in England which aims to improve the lives of people severely affected by mental illness through its network of local groups and services, expert information and successful campaigning.

Gloucestershire County Council will invest up to £4.7 million over the next seven years in mental health support. Rethink Mental Illness will receive £700k per year to provide its Mental Health Support and Advice Service. The new contract starts on 1 April 2024, for a period of five years, with the option to extend it for a further two years.

The current Community Advice, Links and Mental Health Support (CALMHS) service is due to end on 31 March 2024. The council has reviewed the service to ensure a inclusive and consistent approach to mental health support across Gloucestershire, ensuring the voices of people who need support are heard.

Last summer, it collected the views of individuals supported by the service together with staff, volunteers and partners, alongside a six-week public engagement exercise. This feedback has been instrumental in designing the new service which will focus on community provision, personalised support and seek to reduce the need for further health and social care assistance.

Rethink Mental Illness will work with the council to bring together people who have lived experience of mental health conditions and mental health professionals to coproduce further elements of the new service, including a name. This will help to ensure that the service best meets the needs of the people that use it.

More information about mental health support services in Gloucestershire can be found at Be Well Gloucestershire - When life gets tough, find the support (bewellglos.org.uk)

CONTACT

If you have any ideas that you'd like to discuss or community / personal issues that need my help please get in touch. Email linda.cohen@gloucestershire.gov.uk 07791110906

My remit includes: Education, Highways, Children and Families Services, Health and Social Care, The Environment, Apprenticeships, Employment and Business, Fire and Rescue, Police, Trading Standards and Waste Disposal (not collection).