

Bourton Vale Ward

District Councillor's Report December 2023

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## CABINET DECISIONS

### **PUBLICA REVIEW**

The Cabinet considered the Human Engine Report that the majority of council services are returned to the Council and to approve the recommendations in the report.

Cabinet AGREED to recommend to Full Council to:

1. APPROVE the recommendations set out in the *Human Engine* report.
2. AGREE That the Chief Executive oversees the creation of a detailed transition plan for subsequent agreement by Cabinet and Council
3. ENDORSE the approach to the further due diligence outlined in the financial implications of the report including analysis of the detailed payroll data required, which will be essential to calculate the short and long-term costs associated with the recommendations set out in the Human Engine report.

This proposal will be examined by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Jan Britton, Managing Director of Publica, has resigned and left at Christmas.

### **PARKING STRATEGY**

To consider proposals to undertake a full review of the Council's parking provision to ensure the efficient utilisation of the Council's off-street carparks and support access to the District's Town Centres.

Cabinet

1. AGREED to review and update the Parking strategy to better reflect the changing needs of service users.

2. AGREED to undertake a full review to understand the requirements of the Council's future parking provision.
3. ENDORSED the proposal to employ the services of a professional customer insight gathering company.

CDC's overview and scrutiny committee has recommended that the review should consider the width of parking bays, the number of disabled parking bays and the provision of safe storage bays for cycles.

## **PLAYING PITCH STRATEGY**

A report has been produced by consultants to develop a Playing Pitch Strategy for the District.

The Cabinet

1. ENDORSED the findings of the consultants and APPROVED the Playing Pitch Strategy, including the key recommendations and site specific action plan;
2. AGREED TO AUTHORISE officers to work in partnership with other organisations to establish the feasibility and funding sources for the projects identified within the strategy and to prepare business cases, where opportunities arise, and bring them forward for consideration;
3. NOTED that the resources needed to develop these partnerships and implement the action plan will be met from existing resources by reprioritising existing work.
4. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommended that consideration be given to gender specific sports.

## **2024/25 BUDGET STRATEGY AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS) UPDATE**

Budget Strategy set out to support the preparation of the 2024/25 revenue and capital budgets and presents an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy forecast. It was noted that the Strategy was required to manage the upcoming financial uncertainties faced by the Council and to protect essential services. The Deputy Chief Executive and S.151 Officer (CFO) was then invited to speak.

Cabinet

1. APPROVED the 2024/25 Budget Strategy as outlined in Section 4 of the report.
2. NOTED the forecast surplus on the General Fund revenue budget in 2024/25 and proposed transfer to the Financial Resilience Reserve.

## **PLANNING**

Under the government's criteria for designation, a planning department must decide over 70% of its planning applications on time in order to avoid being placed into special measures.

In April this year CDC was only just under the required 70% rate required at 69.6% of applications processed within the required timeframe and was warned therefore of being at risk of being put into special measures. The levelling up secretary gave the authority until June 2023 to "demonstrate improved performance" before formally designating their planning department.

When a planning department is put into special measures, applicants may send their planning applications directly to the Planning Inspectorate, rather than the local planning authority.

### **Planning Fees to increase from 6 December 2023**

As part of the Levelling Up Act, Planning Fees were increased to assist Councils with respect to providing the Planning Service. This is to be welcomed and will assist in reducing the overall cost of delivering the planning service (planning fees only account for approximately 50% of the total cost of running the service).

The Fees for householder development will rise by 25% and all other application types will rise by 35%. The fees will be reviewed yearly and will be increased in line with inflation.

The Government has also removed the free go provision for planning applications and has introduced a tighter planning guarantee which means that any applications over 16 weeks old with no extension of time agreed will be liable to a refund.

### **LICENSING AND PLANNING**

Under the Licensing Act 2003 there is a presumption that a licence would be granted and could only be refused on very limited grounds. The grant of a licence was to be an administrative function rather than the previous procedure which involved a hearing before Magistrates. The four licensing objectives detailed in the 2003 Act are:

1. the prevention of crime and disorder;
2. public safety;
3. the prevention of public nuisance;
4. 4. the protection of children from harm.

Proposals to have greater cooperation between Licensing and Planning have not materialised. The fact that a licence may be opposed would not be a reason for planners to object. To do so would raise too many problems.

Planning considerations are therefore not applicable when licences are applied for. If the Licence requires planning consent that is not the business of the licensing panel, which renders most representations from the public to licence applications largely irrelevant.

Public nuisance is a very wide term and has to be more than a general inconvenience. It has to be something which is actionable by the person aggrieved and to be something which causes damage. Successful opposition to licensing applications has been rare since the 2003 Act. Any objection needs to have a considerable amount of backing from those who are affected by the licence if granted.

A Special Advisory Group is formed for events such as:

- Events of an unusual nature
- Events with significant numbers of attendees
- Events with a significant or unusual level of risk

- New venues
- Events or venues where there has been previous issues or incidents

The Safety Advisory Group brings together competent professionals such as Highways, Police, Fire and Ambulance services. Their role is to set out best practice guidelines to event organisers and provide a cohesive response to any eventualities that may arise.

After considerable public concern over certain new significant events being held in the Cotswolds this summer, CDC have now improved their systems to include a portal for licence applications where representations from Parish Councils and the public can be submitted.

## Cotswold District Council - capital grants up to £10K for village halls and community buildings.

Capital grants of between £2000 and £10,000 for village halls and community buildings, with 20% match funding required. The councils are keen to support decarbonisation, energy efficiency, and digital connectivity, but all capital projects for community buildings will be considered.

The deadline for applications is 8th January for the first round of funding, and then 12th July for a second round of funding. If you need support with your application, contact [info@grcc.org.uk](mailto:info@grcc.org.uk)

[https://www.grcc.org.uk/news-events/news-events/post/273-cotswold-district-councilcommunity-infrastructure-grants-now-open?fbclid=IwAR1GXSjuhB3Hr-55G8C9EQjuEJeBUBFNsnwc4EDMs6\\_gRQvs-3WOIVJ\\_-kJ](https://www.grcc.org.uk/news-events/news-events/post/273-cotswold-district-councilcommunity-infrastructure-grants-now-open?fbclid=IwAR1GXSjuhB3Hr-55G8C9EQjuEJeBUBFNsnwc4EDMs6_gRQvs-3WOIVJ_-kJ)

## POLLING DISTRICTS AND STATIONS

CDC is required to undertake a review of all polling districts and places every 5 years. The next one is due to be completed by 31 January 2025. However, given the imminent changes to Parliamentary constituency boundaries, and the upcoming Police and Crime Commissioner election in May 2024, it has been agreed that the review should be carried out as soon as possible so that polling districts and places are approved ahead of those elections and reflect the new constituency boundaries.

Please register your views on the current polling stations and any alternatives you may wish to be considered via this link: <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/about-the-council/elections-and-voting/boundary-reviews/>

Comments and feedback on the document should be emailed to [elections@cotswold.gov.uk](mailto:elections@cotswold.gov.uk) by Tuesday 12 December or please write to The Elections Team, Cotswold District Council, Trinity Road, Cirencester, GL7 1PX.

## **GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE**

### **GCC Council Meeting – 8 Nov 2023 - Policing in Gloucestershire**

Based on performance data from 2020, Gloucestershire Police went into Engage/Special Measures. The main reason for this was due to lack of investment in Officers, Police Community Support Officers and front-line police staff, and a lack of investment in IT (the crime record management system was the oldest in England and Wales!).

Since then we have 300 more officers

- Funded over 400 more Officers, Police Community Support Officers and front-line police staff
- new Enhanced Operating Model since June this year, which continues to grow officer numbers deployed on 999 response duties, neighbourhood police, investigation teams, rural police and detectives .....model increases by more than another 100 officers by spring 2024.
- Specialist Vanguard team reinforces neighbourhood police, helping to increase arrests of prolific offenders and solving more crimes
- 25% increase in Special Constables operational hours compared to last year, with 35% more vehicle stops. We now have more Specials per 1000 population than any other force in the country!

### **Anti-social behaviour cut in half**

ASB cut by well over 50% across the County

Attending more ASB incidents

Growth in Police Community Support Officers

Championing neighbourhood police and crime prevention

Deployment of SOLACE multi agency ASB teams across County

Extra CCTV, lighting, security devices for buildings, personal alarms

Community Speed Watch Plus trial programme that stops 90% of persistent speeders

on our rural and urban roads.....to be rolled out across the County Larger speed enforcement team

ASB Case Reviews for persistent problems

Drug-dealer disruption operations – drug offences down 38%

One of the lowest rates of vehicle theft in the country in 2022

### **Easier police contact**

Faster 999 response time - wait times halved, despite significant increase in demand Faster 101 response, current average wait 4.6 minutes, driving down hard towards the two minute target

## **Rural crime**

Rural crime cost cut by 29% in 2022, whereas nationally, cost increased by 22%

Rural crime team doubled in size

50 more Automatic Number Plate Recognition Cameras on our rural roads

Home security devices for vulnerable and isolated properties

Wildlife cameras

Drones

Anti-poaching and hare coursing concrete blocks

Combined police and fire stations in rural areas

## **Internet and phone scams reduced**

Fraud/scams account for more than 40% of all crime. Expansion of the economic crime unit.

Ongoing crime prevention advice to business and vulnerable members of the public. Work more closely with Crimestoppers to develop social media campaigns to increase awareness of evolving scam techniques

Online crime fallen 31% from the three-year average, incidents of fraud down 9%

## **The PCC has empowered and supported the Chief Constable to exit Engage/Special Measures**

Despite the force having six inadequates, exit from Engage in Sep 2023 the quickest of any force in recent times

New force Enhanced Operating Model a key factor in exit

Force now fully understands its crime demand

Now best in the country recording reported crime accurately and in a timely manner

Individual officer crime workloads are now more manageable

Picking up the phone faster to 999 and 101 calls

Responding faster to more incidents (28% improvement for Grade 2 emergencies)

Investigating more crimes, following up every reasonable lead

Attending all house burglaries[i]

Halving the time taken to complete investigations

Solving twice as many crimes as a year ago

Making more arrests – 24% increase  
New Victims Care Hub

## Biodiversity Action for Parish Councils

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Parish Councils have a duty to take biodiversity action before 1 January 2024. But what does this mean? What must local councils do to satisfy this duty? The Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GATPC) hosted an informative online session on 7 November for town and parish clerks to demystify this.

Andrew Maliphant, Environmental and Sustainability Advisor the the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) joined the session, together with officers from DEFRA and the Stroud Valleys' Project. Find out what all local councils need to know about this action and be part of the creation of a model biodiversity policy'

Work on installing 1,000 electric vehicle (EV) charging points in Gloucestershire over the next three years has got under way. For the Ermin Ward villages, I have long proposed using your CIL payments towards installing EV chargers in village hall car parks.

### Trees in Conservation Areas

In March 2023, three healthy apple trees, in Blockley Conservation Area, were felled, without prior notice to the Council, as is required by law. The Council's Tree Officer believes the apple trees to have been at least 60 years old and historic mapping indicates the site to have been an Orchard from at least 1891. Owner incurred fines and fees of £8884.

On 27 November the Cotswold District Council resident was fined £4224 and ordered to pay an additional £2970 in costs and a victim surcharge of £1690, taking the total to £8884.

More information concerning Trees in Conservation Areas can be found on the Council's website: <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/.../trees-in-conservation-areas/>

### Forthcoming Committee Meetings (underlined texts are linked)

There is no full Council meeting in December

Tues 7 Dec	6pm	<a href="#">Cabinet</a>
Wed 13 Dec	2pm	<a href="#">Planning &amp; Licensing</a>
Thurs 21 Nov	2pm	<a href="#">Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis, Private Hire, and Street Trading Consent Matters)</a>