

Reports to January 2016 Meeting

District Council report for January 2016.

SDC believed to be first in Europe to achieve carbon neutrality.



Councillor Simon Pickering with senior policy officer Petula Davis

At the SDC Environment Committee's meeting on the 19th December, Councillors endorsed a report stating that Stroud District Council has become a carbon neutral council. It is thought that SDC are the first council in Europe to demonstrate that the carbon dioxide emissions from its operations have been outweighed by the reduction in emissions from energy efficiency measures and renewable energy installations put in place.

This has been delivered through a multi-pronged strategy focused on households, businesses and community buildings, as well as reducing the council's own operational emissions. SDC has obtained over £36m in investment, allowing it to create jobs, cut heating bills and reduce carbon emissions. It's been a classic win-win approach to tackling climate change, helping households and stimulating the local economy. The audit revealed that during 2014/15 its estimated CO₂ emissions from its operations of 2,925 tonnes have been outweighed by the 3,275.6 tonnes using its environmental initiatives, such as energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy measures such as ground source heat pumps, air source heat pumps, solar panels and solar heating. For their own part in this programme, SDC has been encouraging behavioral changes amongst staff to become more energy efficient and installing significant solar panel arrays installed, lighting upgrades, and insulation and air tightness improvements on council owned buildings and homes.

Multi Services Contract (Refuse).

At the same Environment Committee meeting, the final arrangements for the Multi Services Contract for the in-house SDC owned Ubico refuse collection and sorting service were approved.

In summary, the agreements were as follows, which may help in answering resident's questions:



- Food waste will be collected weekly. Households to be given a 7 litre silver coloured kitchen caddy together with a 23 litre silver coloured food waste bin for their weekly collections.



- Residual landfill waste will be collected fortnightly. 140 litre black Wheelie bins to be used but imprinted bags to be provided to households whose property is difficult to access. Waste presented by the side of the bin will not be collected. Additional waste will not be collected except for the collection after Christmas when a maximum of two additional bags of waste will be collected.



- Dry recyclables will continue to be collected as now i.e. either in a green 240 litre wheelie bin or a hessian sack and for paper/card in a recycling box. Bins/bags/boxes containing incorrect materials affect the quality of recycle sales and will not be collected.



- An 'opt in' garden waste service has been introduced (register now- starts in Feb 2016), with an annual subscription of £36 and a one off bin purchase charge of £20. A 180 litre brown bin will be provided and the service will operate from February to November each year. The service will only be available to those households that can accommodate a wheelie bin and from which a wheelie bin collection can be made.



- A charge is already introduced for the collection of bulky waste items. (£15 for 3 items, £5 for each additional item)
- Collection rounds to be no longer based on Parish and Town Council boundaries but to be on the most efficient route.

SDC introduces 'Pay by phone' to council run car parks.

Good news for anyone who has struggled to find the correct change in the District's car parks. From Friday 8th January visitors to Stroud, Painswick and Stonehouse will be able to pay using their mobile phones when they park in Stroud District Council car parks, using MiPermit scheme, which is already in use in other parts of the country.

Paying by phone provides an additional and convenient way to pay. Furthermore, motorists can also send a text to extend their stay, so they don't have to rush back to their car, allowing them to stay longer in our towns.

The usual way of paying using coins will continue. However, using the 'pay by phone' system will cost an extra 20 pence on top of the normal cost of parking. Free parking will continue in the Council's Brunel Mall multi-storey car-park after 3pm.

Customer satisfaction survey.

SDC ending the year on a high note after the results of its latest annual surveys showed satisfaction levels among residents and businesses have risen to their highest level in recent history. Results indicate that nearly 80% of residents are satisfied with the Council's performance, despite externally imposed economic pressures. Efforts to stimulate jobs and economic activity were also welcomed with employers.

This year's rating of 78% is the highest in the past decade. Dissatisfaction among residents is at its lowest at 6%, with 16% expressing no strong opinion. Sixty-eight per cent of residents felt the council provided value for money – a significant (and perhaps surprising) increase of 11% on the previous year. Seventy-two per cent of residents agreed that the council had 'maintained services to a good standard' - up from 67%. Satisfaction among the business community has also risen from 52% last year to 64% - the highest since the council started surveying opinions in 2010.

Fountain Crescent housing land.

Despite earlier intentions of the provision of much needed social and affordable housing in Wotton, and more recently a promise that any change from this ideal would be discussed beforehand with WTC, we now understand that SDC have unilaterally decided to sell their land behind Fountain Crescent to a property developer. At the Housing Committee budget setting meeting held on the 22nd December, a valiant attempt was made by Cllr Reeves to isolate the sale of this land from the overall 2016-17 budget, so that time could be given to the Town Council to consider this imposed change of strategy. Unfortunately, the alternative resolution proposed was out-voted by Councillors not living in the area, but there will be an option for WTC to purchase the land and self-develop.

The Full Moon, Wotton.

Woodbourne Group have indicated that they will represent their (existing?) planning application for the Full Moon site to the Development Control Committee again on 9th February 2016. However, in line with the latest High Court ruling, they will now need to include a designated number of affordable homes, but I suggest the overall design and layout will not change. There is an opportunity for WTC and the community to decide their stance on this application, especially as SDC have now shown their hand in wanting to develop the adjacent garages/parking plots, possibly with help from the Woodbourne Group.

Budget setting.

Following specific financial training, all Councillors sitting on the various SDC Committees have now reviewed and agreed or amended the budget proposals put forward by the various SDC Department officers. Following overall scrutiny by the Strategy and Resources Committee on the 7th January, the overall 2016-17 budget will be put to the Full Council on 28th January for final approval. A further meeting on 25th February will set the Council Tax level needed to deliver the budget. It is anticipated that a modest rise will be needed to 'balance the books', but under the 2% increase that would trigger a local referendum.

May I conclude my report by wishing all Councillors and administrators a marginally belated Happy New Year and a great 2016.



Ken Tucker
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Liberal Democrat District Councillor for Wotton under Edge and North Nibley.

2 January 2016

Report on County Council Matters to North Nibley Parish Council

4th January 2016 John Cordwell

County Council budget 2016/2017

Last month's Cabinet meeting agreed to go out to consultation on two options for the coming year's budget. The Cabinet is proposing:

- a 1.99% council tax increase, the first rise in six years. On its own this would mean an increase in Band D council tax of £21.70 per year and a total bill of £1112.20. It would partly offset the continuing reduction in central Government grant, but still mean, for example, a 9% cut in the highways' budget.

- a possible additional levy of up to 2% specifically for social care as announced by the Chancellor and amounting to an extra £4.7M which could only be spent on vulnerable adults, paying for things like social and residential care. Together with the above rise this would mean an increase in Band D council tax of £43.50 to £1134.01.

Neither of these proposals would trigger a referendum. It should be noted that the forecast overspend in adult care in the current financial year is £4.095M and a further £2.475M overspend in the children and families budget.

Consultation is in progress and continues until Friday 22nd January. To take part visit:
www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/budget2016

The final decision on next year's precept will be taken by the full County Council on Wednesday 17th February.