

## **Reports to Annual Parish Meeting: 4 April 2016**

### **Report to Annual Parish Meeting. Parish Councillor David Palmer.**

I am David Palmer, a retired IT consultant and have been a Parish Councillor since 2005.

I am the representative for footpaths on the Parish Council. I investigate any problems that are reported to me by parishioners. When necessary I report any that I cannot deal with to Gloucestershire County Council Rights of Way team. Each year I check every footpath and I have produced a report for 2015/16.

I am also the NNPC representative on the Monument Trust and together with a group of other volunteers have been clearing scrub from the hill around the monument for two years.

I monitor planning applications and try to ensure that neighbours have been consulted.

I take an active interest in local projects such as the Chapel and Music Festival and help out whenever I am able.

I built and maintain the North Nibley website [northnibley.org.uk](http://northnibley.org.uk) for the benefit of the community and welcome any further community content. I am grateful to the Parish Council for their financial help towards its running costs. David Palmer

### **Report to North Nibley Annual Parish Meeting. Parish Councillor Keith Larkin.**

I am the Parish Council's representative on the Recreation Field Management Trust dealing with the overall management of the recreation field and sports pavilion for its use for sports and community purposes.

I have specific interest in and experience of town planning matters and have taken a leading role in formulating the Parish Council's responses

on a number of planning applications during 2015/16 in order to protect the character and amenity of the village and wider Parish.

In addition to the above, I am a strong supporter of the Village Shop and Nibley Knoll Trust and actively support the initiative to secure some affordable housing in the parish in the next couple of years.

Keith Larkin

### **Report to Annual Parish Meeting. Parish Councillor Ken Brown.**

#### **Knoll Trust & Parish Council Working Together.**

**The Knoll.** This is a good time for an update on the progress on the Knoll. As most people who use the Knoll will realise the undergrowth has been cut back to the boundaries and I have had many comments that the whole place is looking so much tidier.

Our next project is to obtain prices for renewing gates, fences and stiles on the Knoll, work which needs to be completed by 2017 in order to qualify for a government grants. I am in the process of getting prices from contractors to fence the Knoll. The Trust is also looking at the possibility of felling a small number of trees to the North to enable us to obtain a view point that has been obscured by the trees growing up there.

In recent months we have had a problem on the Knoll with a number of horses causing damage by being exercised over the whole of the area. Due to the very wet weather there have been a number of complaints that the Knoll is getting very tracked up. We are addressing this situation and will be in touch with those responsible, as clearly it is unfair on other Knoll users.

Assessing the Knoll in general, it clearly is a work in progress.

**Parish Council.** My responsibility as a Parish Councillor has been to obtain grants for the land that is in the Council ownership and keeping a general overview on that situation.

I also represent the Parish on the Police Neighbourhood Committee and have attended several meetings helping to ensure the police are aware of policing priorities for our Parish.

**Ken Brown.**

**Report to Annual Parish Meeting. Parish Councillor David Purnell.**

**William Purnell Education Charity.**

The Trustees met in November as usual and were able to award 3 amounts of £50 to the 2 students who applied.

**Stinchcombe Hill Trustees.**

The Trustees meet twice a year, usually in March and October.

The Trust has a regular income now from the rent from the Golf Club.

It also has income from the Rural Payment Agency money and a small legacy.

Conservation work on the slopes of the Hill, keeping scrub down, continues under the guidance of the vice chairman, Chris Wiltshire.

At the last meeting the Trustees were pleased to hear that there is a fresh stewardship scheme available and during 2016. A feasibility study will be done with the aim of a new scheme for the maintenance of the slopes of the Hill to be put in place by 2018. If this is successful then a programme for grazing all the slopes of the Hill will ensure the grassland aspect of the Hill could be maintained.

**Report on County Council Matters. Annual Parish Meeting, April 2016**

**County Councillor John Cordwell**

***This can only be a very brief summary of what has been happening at the County Council.***

**County Council Membership**

The council remains a minority Conservative administration with a political composition of:

24 Conservative; 13 Liberal Democrat; 9 Labour; 3 UKIP; 1 Green; 1 PAB; 1 Independent and 1 vacancy following the recent death of a Liberal Democrat councillor.

During the 2015/16 civic year the council has had a Labour chair and a Liberal Democrat vice-chair. County Council meetings are now being webcast live on:

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/watch-council-meetings>

### **My roles on the County Council**

I continued as Shadow Cabinet member for Fire, Planning and Infrastructure. I also continued as my group's lead member on the Highways Contract Advisory Group.

In addition to other roles I detailed in last year's report, during this year I have been Vice-Chairman of the Planning Committee. I have also served on three scrutiny task groups.

### **County Budget 2016/17**

Public consultation on council tax options for the County Council budget resulted in a preference for a 3.99% increase in the precept of which 2% is ring fenced for adult social care in line with the Chancellor's announcement last year. This is the first increase for five years.

After the consultation began the Government financial settlement for 2016/17 was announced and notification received of the final tax base and collection fund surplus/deficit figures from the six district councils. The net effect of these and other small changes was an increase in available funding which the Conservative Cabinet intended to add to reserves.

However, ahead of the budget meeting the Liberal Democrat Group put forward a series of proposals to use this windfall to improve services. In the media the Conservative Leader of the council opposed them, but at the budget meeting almost all of these were accepted in whole or in part including the following final additions:

- to invest a further £2.075M in road maintenance (including a roll-out of the lengthman scheme across the county). Within this, the amount available to each councillor for 'Highways Local' schemes has been increased from £22.5k to £30k.
- a £100k investment to improve the implementation process of Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs). This helps to reverse the Conservatives entire removal of the budget for TRO work in 2010.
- £25k investment to provide improved mental health support to children and young people.

- £50k to continue for a further year the Liberal Democrat initiative to fund free Y5 pupil visits to the Gloucestershire SkillZone, assisting in improving the safety of young people.
- £20k to the Child Sexual Exploitation scheme to spend on e-safety, with advice from the Children's Safeguarding Board.
- £150k to undertake some of the cycling schemes proposed in the "Barriers to Cycling" report produced last year on the request of Liberal Democrat councillors.
- £50k invested in seeking solutions to the pollution levels in the county's Air Quality Management Areas, subject to match funding from the district councils.

These changes leave the overall call on council tax payers for County Council services unchanged from the Cabinet recommendation. At Band D this equates to an increase in council tax of £43.51, to £1134.01. The county council Labour group did not put forward any amendments but voted against the budget.

The capital programme for 2016/17 now includes £2.3M funding for the work on the Berkeley Bridges.

### **Devolution in Gloucestershire – and Oxfordshire Unitary bids**

The Gloucestershire devolution bid was submitted at the beginning of September. It had the support of all six district councils, including Cotswold, and other bodies. A Government response is expected in the autumn.

However, on 25<sup>th</sup> February the leader of Cotswold District Council revealed proposal to create a new unitary council based upon the existing boundaries of Cotswold and West Oxfordshire District Councils, as part of a proposed Oxfordshire reorganisation and devolution deal under which four small unitaries would be created and Oxfordshire County Council abolished. Another of these unitaries would also take over part of Northamptonshire.

The repercussions for Gloucestershire would be immense. For example, **Gloucestershire County Council would have to terminate or renegotiate over 100 contracts for service provision** which cover Cotswold District Council. The transition cost of just one adult social care contract has been calculated at over £16M. Consultation on the plan is likely to take place over the summer with a final bid submitted to government in October 2016 and a government decision in early 2017. If the bid were successful, elections to the new authorities would take place in May 2018.

### **Children's Activity Fund**

Started in 2014/15, this annual fund allocates £5k to each County Councillor for their divisions. I am waiting for details of the scheme for the coming year as it is understood that the criteria for this grant scheme may change.

## **Highways Issues**

The new local highways manager, Andrew Middlecote, has been in post since last May. As mentioned above, councillors have been allocated £30k for the new financial year and I would welcome suggestions as soon as possible.

In July unanimous county council support was given to a motion expressing concern over highway repairs in the county and the poor performance of Amey and its poor communication with county councillors, parish councils and the wider community. It was revealed that at that time 58% of its work was being delivered through 41 sub-contractors. There were issues over sub-contractors not being paid on time.

## **Street Lighting**

A new street lighting contract has been awarded to Skanska. This includes the conversion of the county's ca. 55,000 street lights to LED lighting and for the general maintenance of the council's street lighting, lit signs and bollards. Work has started on a four-year core programme to install the new LED lighting, controlled from a central location using remote dimming technology. The contract will also start to replace the life-expired concrete and aluminium street lighting columns from this month.

## **Local Transport Plan Review**

Consultation on this final phase of the Local Transport Plan (LTP) review process ended on 5<sup>th</sup> February. Thirteen documents were consulted on: an overarching strategy, six transport model policy documents, including rail, and six "Connecting Places" delivery strategies, one of which was for the Stroud area. The final plan is expected to be approved by the County Council in June.

In the past the LTP was a bidding document for carrying out schemes. From 2015/16 most of Gloucestershire's capital funding for transport has been coming through the Single Local Growth Fund (SLGF) which is allocated to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), not the County Council.

I have continued to stress the reopening of Charfield station in meetings with GCC officers and through my response to the LTP consultation. The likely way forward for this is through the proposed MetroWest developments which provide an opportunity for improved Bristol-Gloucester services, including new stations, in the 2019 – 2029 period.

## **County Council Solar Power Proposals**

In July the County Council Cabinet approved a strategy for the development of ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) renewable energy generation on six sites on the council's estate. On the same day the Government announced a consultation on subsidies for solar power. The resultant changes have made the county council's

proposals uneconomic at present. This may change with developments in energy storage, enabling power to be sold to the grid at peak demand.

Meanwhile, the County Council is to carry out long overdue weatherproofing and modernisation of the Shire Hall complex. This will include the integration of pv solar panels into the roof of Shire Hall and other council buildings.

### **County Residual Waste Disposal Project – Javelin Park**

The opportunity for Stroud District Council to challenge the court decision expired in August. The main construction is due to start this summer. The plant is scheduled to be treating waste in 2019.

In response to a Freedom of Information request the Information Commissioner required the County Council to disclose the details of the Javelin Park contract. The county's Cabinet is contesting this decision. The hearing by the Information Tribunal is to be at the end of May. Many county councillors have never seen the full contract.

Last November's Cabinet approved a £17M one-off financial contribution from the council's reserves to mitigate the increased project cost caused by the delay in the facility coming in to service from 2016 to 2019. The Liberal Democrat group raised concerns that such a significant redirection of funds took place without the approval of the whole council.

### **Consultation on Public Transport**

This consultation ended in January and the results were considered by Cabinet in February.

One of ten evening consultation events was held in Wotton after I complained that evening meetings further away would not be accessible by bus to Wotton residents! The Wotton one was particularly well attended.

Soon after the start of the consultation Severnside Transport gave notice they could no longer afford to run this subsidised service managed by South Gloucestershire but to which Gloucestershire County Council contributed £54,000 annually. Changes agreed by South Gloucestershire, without notifying Gloucestershire County Council, resulted in South Gloucestershire providing a much reduced service between Wotton-under-Edge and Cribbs Causeway via Thornbury.

At short notice the County Council procured a replacement six-month contract from Stagecoach giving a similar level of service for the Dursley – Wotton-under-Edge and Thornbury corridor, now numbered service 60.

The Cabinet meeting also decided to replace the Mike's Travel 201 service with a revised service 87 to Dursley to link with direct services from there to Gloucester. So there will be no direct service to Gloucester from Wotton in future. I

challenged this but it was argued that the disadvantages were offset by an increased choice of onward journey opportunities by using Dursley as a hub.

**John Cordwell**

## **District Council Report for 2015-16:**

### **District Councillor Lesley Reeves**

Your District Councillors for Wotton-under-Edge and North Nibley are Cllr. June Cordwell (Community Services committee); Cllr. Lesley Reeves (Housing committee) and Cllr. Ken Tucker (Environment committee).



The Stroud District Council (SDC), Local Plan, which defines the housing and employment requirements in the District until 2031, has been approved and issued. The plan encourages at least 11,400 homes to be built and identifies the number and location of these homes, including up to 1350 homes on land between Stonehouse and the M5 motorway. The strategy is to locate development at higher tier settlements and restrict development outside settlement limits to conserve the countryside. The Stroud District Local Plan is available to view at [local.plan@stroud.gov.uk](mailto:local.plan@stroud.gov.uk).



A revised scheme of polling districts and stations has been agreed following the Electoral review of the District by the Boundary Commission. From May 2016, Wotton-under-Edge ward will comprise of Wotton-under-Edge, Divisions 1 and 2, but with an amended boundary to the south of the polling district to reflect changes to the district ward boundary; North Nibley parish and will also include Stinchcombe parish. The new district of Wotton-under-Edge (South) will be part of Kingswood ward.

The final arrangements for the **Multi Services Contract** (Refuse) for the in-house SDC owned Ubico refuse collection and sorting service were approved following detailed work by Environment committee.

Budgets have been set for 2016/17 and a District Council tax increase of just under 2% (1.99%) has been agreed by Stroud District Council. Details are available at [www.stroud.gov.uk](http://www.stroud.gov.uk).

Lesley Reeves. District Councillor for Wotton-under-Edge ward