

Stroud District Councillors' Report – January 2021

Report of meetings during December 2020

Council meetings

All Stroud District Council and Committee papers can be found here:

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/meetings>

Environment Committee – 3 December

A long meeting which covered many issues. Link to [Committee papers](#)

- **Ubico** – SDC partner for collection of recycling and waste presented their draft business plan.
- **Future electric refuse collection vehicles** – Cllr Paul Denney reported on the first trial of a Refuse Collection Vehicle which has been converted to run on electric power. The vehicle was used on rounds in Stonehouse, Wotton-under-Edge and Upton St Leonards – an overnight charge was all that was needed to complete a round. A local company in Cam are undertaking work to convert existing diesel refuse vehicles into electric vehicles. Hopefully over the next 7 years as the current Ubico vehicle fleet wears out, the vehicles can be refurbished with electric power units in this way. ([Link](#))
- **Carbon Neutral Strategy 2030** – The Committee supported the draft strategy – and the commitment that SDC should do everything in the council's powers to address the threat of climate change to our society. The strategy notes that SDC is directly responsible for a very small amount of the emissions in the district and so joint action with individuals, business and government is required.
- **Severn Estuary Recreation & Mitigation Strategy** – A report on progress with the implementation of the Strategy since its adoption in December 2017. This strategy is designed to protect wintering waterfowl from recreation disturbance as a result of new development. An amendment was agreed to set up a working party to see how SDC can improve the process as well as making it more democratic.
- **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – Spending Allocations** This report was well received. CIL is effectively a tax on new development. The Committee agreed the following allocations for the share of CIL which is to be used by the local authority for strategic capital infrastructure projects which will deliver in 2021/22:
 - o a new youth centre in Hardwicke (the largest area of new housing in the district)
 - o more parking (for cars and covered double deck parking for cycles) at Cam & Dursley station
 - o a small contribution to new in-cab technology for a recycling and refuse vehicles and
 - o over £176,000 to match funding from the SDC cycling budget for four different cycleways:
 - Cam & Dursley Greenway - Design Phase
 - Cainscross Segregated Cycleway
 - Stroud to Nailsworth Cycle Track Upgrade
 - Frampton on Severn Cycle Path

- **Budget report** - the report setting the budget for 2021/22 was approved – subject to a successful amendment which increased the budget for walking and cycling by an additional £200,000.
- **Ash die back** – Cllr Jim Dewey asked a question about management of ash dieback and risks to roads and footpaths. A few trees on SDC housing estates are being looked at and will be taken down when required. In terms of roads, the Chair was able to confirm that GCC as highway authority is spending £500,000 this year in felling ash trees and replanting trees. They estimate it will cost them in the region of £13 m to fell and replant trees on public rights of ways and roads over the next ten years. SDC is developing a Tree Strategy which will complement the GCC strategy to double tree cover over the next 10 years. Local Forestry Commission officers can advise on managing ash die back in relation to private land.
- **Performance Monitoring report** – included reference to the following:
 - o Working with partners to implement the next phase of the **cycling and walking strategy**, focusing on routes between Dudbridge-Nailsworth; Dursley–Cam-Uley; Wotton-Kingswood-Charfield.
 - o Use of land at Salmon Springs, Stroud for the **planting of woodland and the development of a local Carbon Offsetting Scheme**.
SDC is working in partnership with the Stroud Valleys Project charity to transform this 5 acre council owned site into woodland, from its current agricultural grazing use. An ecological management and maintenance plan is being drawn up and Stroud Valleys Project will start to plant the site during the current tree planting season (winter 2020/21). A further report on this will come to Environment Committee in Spring 2021.

Housing Committee meeting – 8 December

Link to [Committee papers](#)

- New **housing management IT system** – the Committee approved an extra £260 k towards investing in a single IT system to manage housing issues and the repairs function. The Housing function is front of the queue for “modernisation” and this new IT system will replace nine separate IT systems that are currently used saving officer time and improving the service for tenants. £175k towards these costs had previously been approved by the Committee.
- A new **community energy retrofit pilot project** was approved. This will improve the energy efficiency of 7 independent living (formerly known as “sheltered housing”) bungalows – working with Gloucestershire Energy Co-Operative (GCEC). This type of bungalows are currently heated with storage heaters and the retrofit work will look to remove the electric storage heaters; install photovoltaics (PV) for onsite electrical generation; install batteries for storing electricity generated; install a Heat Pump in each property that draws on a shared ground loop system (requiring a small grassed area around the properties). Modelling has been done on properties in Cam - but the pilot could be delivered elsewhere in the district.
- **Park homes – insulation** – Committee authorised submission of another bid (for £950k) to the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LADS) Phase 1B – for more park homes retrofit which helps to improve comfort and reduce energy bills.
- **Carbon Neutral 2030** – the Committee discussed the role of housing, retrofit and targets in the action plan for the built environment. Noted that work is still ongoing to deliver energy efficiency improvements such as external wall insulation. The installation of gas heating systems has been paused – due to phasing out of gas systems. Tenant Services are looking at other options including heat pumps and boiler retrofit for hydrogen.

The 30 year Medium Term Financial Plan costs a “basic programme” of improvements to energy efficiency – the new target will require 70% emissions reduction on the council's 5,160 dwellings ensuring a minimum EPC level of C as the average standard by 2030.

- **Budget 2021/22**
 - o **Rents & Service charges** The Committee approved the new level of rents and service charges for 2021/22. Service charges are now being billed separately from rent for all tenants, including ‘independent living’ schemes. Where this would result in an increase in cost - current tenants will be protected from the increase for the life of their tenancy, so they are not adversely affected.
 - o **Homelessness** – additional funding in budget for next year for bed and breakfast accommodation recognising that demand has increased and is likely to increase further. The revised budget for 2020/21 also includes a budget of £600k for the Next Steps Accommodation Programme for rough sleepers. Following a successful bid by SDC for grant funding, four flats will be purchased and used to house ex rough sleepers. The grant funding of £200k will be combined with existing capital receipts to purchase the properties.
- **Performance report** – it was noted that there has been an increase of 22 % in tenants who are claiming universal credit.

Strategy & Resources Committee – 10 December (Cllr Tucker)

Following a recommendation by Officers, the views of Committee Members were sought on the 2030 Strategy for Limiting, Adapting, Recovering and Responding in a Changing Climate, ahead of its planned adoption by Full Council in early 2021. The recommendations presented were unanimously agreed by all parties.

A recommendation from the Environment Committee, presented by the Chair, Cllr Simon Pickering, Chair, was put to the S&R Committee, outlining the proposals of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Income expenditure. Again, the recommendations presented were unanimously agreed by all parties.

In 2018-19, SDC built new business units on land they owned, adjacent to Durley Vale Hospital. These were intended for short-medium-long term rental, with an expected 5% -7% return. Tenants have been very few and far between and the recommendation from Officers is that the remaining units should be sold. As some sales will exceed the authorised financial limit, Members agreed to delegate authority to The Head of Asset to oversee this activity. It is expected that this venture will now only break-even.

Member Reports were received on the following:

- Brimscombe Port Redevelopment Board
- The re-introduction of the SDC Investment & Development Panel.
- Leadership Gloucestershire Update.
- Gloucestershire Economic Growth Board
- Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee
- SDC Strategic Recovery Board
- Performance Monitoring Reports
- SDC Corporate Delivery Plan

- SDC Corporate Peer Challenge.
- Committee Work Programme.

Full Council - 17 December

The Council approved a recommendation from Housing Committee for the new IT system for housing management and supported two motions:

- **Motion regarding Supporting Universal Basic Income**

Proposed by Councillor Catherine Braun and Seconded by Councillor Trevor Hall.

A Universal Basic Income is a non-means-tested sum paid by the state to cover the basic cost of living, which is paid to all citizens individually, regardless of employment status, wealth, or marital status, which has been widely debated in recent months. Advocates argue it is the fairest, most effective way to mitigate the effects of coronavirus on people's incomes. A network of Universal Basic Income Labs has been set up and works with local authorities across the UK developing UBI proposals to address problems such as poverty, inequality, discrimination and environmental damage, long-term and immediately, in relation to coronavirus.

The Council resolved to ask the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Chancellor of the Exchequer, local MPs, GCC and leaders of the political parties to express the following:

- 1) That the current benefit system is failing citizens, with Universal Credit causing hardship to many communities in Stroud District;
- 2) There is a danger of increasing numbers of people facing poverty as a result of the coronavirus crisis;
- 3) Testing a UBI is needed, as a UBI has the potential to help address key challenges such as inequality, poverty, precarious employment, loss of community, and breach of planetary boundaries through:
 - i) Giving employers a more flexible workforce whilst giving employees greater freedom to change their jobs;
 - ii) Valuing unpaid work, such as caring for family members and voluntary work;
 - iii) Removing the negative impacts of benefit sanctions and conditionality;
 - iv) Giving people more equal resources within the family, workplace and society;
 - v) Breaking the link between work and consumption, thus helping reduce strain on the environment; and
 - vi) Enabling greater opportunities for people to work in community and cultural activities or to train or reskill in areas that will be needed to transition to a lower-carbon economy.
- 4) The success of a UBI pilot should not be measured only by impact upon takeup of paid work, but also the impact upon communities and what the people within them do, how they feel, and how they relate to others and the environment around them; and
- 5) Given its history of social innovation, wealth of expertise, and active networks across community, business and public services, Stroud District is ideally placed to pilot a UBI.

Motion regarding Food Poverty

Proposed by Councillor Steve Lydon and seconded by Councillor Simon Pickering

The Council noted:

1. That Trussell Trust research shows 3m children are at risk of hunger during school holidays.
2. Foodbank use has dramatically increased, the Independent Food Aid Network recorded a 59% increase in demand for emergency food support between February and March.
3. That the government has committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 2 “To End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture “. The first target under Goal 2 being – “By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round”
4. In the UK WRAP estimate 9.6 million tonnes of food is wasted of which 4.5 million tonnes of that is edible food - products that could have been eaten. Unless treated safely this food waste has the potential to generate 25m t of Greenhouse gasses
5. The COVID – 19 pandemic has highlighted the risk of long supply chains on both the supply and cost of food

And resolved to:.

- o Appoint food justice champions who will work with partners to tackle food justice locally and make a local contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 2. 9.
- o That the food justice champions will work with partners to set up a food partnership and to develop a food action plan to address the causes of food poverty and promote food justice

Meetings attended in December by Cllr Ken Tucker

- 1 Dec Ascent Focus Group Seminar by Zoom (reviewing SDC Officer and Members [, collaboration and behaviours).
- 1 Dec SDC Future Strategy Workshop by Zoom.
- 2 Dec Zoom meeting with SDC Group Leaders.
- 3 Dec Zoom meeting with local MPs.
- 7 Dec Chaired Zoom meeting with Independent Remuneration Review Panel.
- 8 Dec SDC organised Market Towns seminar by Zoom.
- 8 Dec Zoom 1 to 1 with CEO of ‘Ascent Focus.’
- 10 Dec Chaired Information & Computer Technology (ICT) Members Review Group.
- 11 Dec Chaired Information & Computer Technology (ICT) Members Review Group.
- 12 Dec Chaired Information & Computer Technology (ICT) Members Review Group.
- 15 Dec Attended Zoom Seminar on future of Fusion Power, particularly in the South West.
- 15 Dec SDC Planning Review Panel Zoom meeting.
- 16 Dec SDC Group Leaders Zoom Meeting.
- 17 Dec Chaired Information & Computer Technology (ICT) Members Review Group meeting.
- 17 Dec SDC Full Council.

- 18 Dec Zoom Meeting with Chief Executive.
- 21 Dec Chaired Teams meeting with Keith Gerrard, Strategic Director and others.
- 23 Dec Alliance Group Leaders Zoom meeting.

Meetings attended in December by Cllr Catherine Braun

- 1 Dec Ascent Focus Group Seminar on SDC organisational culture
- 1 Dec SDC Future Strategy Workshop
- 2 Dec Housing Committee Briefing
- 7 Dec North Nibley Parish Council
- 9 Dec Stinchcombe Parish council.
- 11 Dec The Keepers – Wotton Area Community Hub Trustee meeting
- 14 Dec Greenway site meeting with Project Manager
- 14 Dec Wotton Town Council meeting
- 14 Dec Wotton Area Climate Action Network steering group meeting
- 16 Dec Green Councillors meeting
- 17 Dec SDC Full Council.