

Stroud District Councillors' Report – August 2021

Report of meetings during July

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

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

Audit & Standards Committee – 13 July 2021

The Committee considered numerous issues including:

- The Information Governance Framework
- The Annual Report on Internal Audit Activity 2020/21 (substantial assurance given for the council's system of controls, governance and risk management arrangements)
- Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Accounts 2020/21 – noted and approved.
- External Audit Plan
- Treasury Management

The **audit of the SDC Planning Enforcement Service** was also discussed. At a previous meeting of the Committee, members requested Audit Risk Assurance to undertake an objective and independent review of the SDC Planning Enforcement Service due to concerns about its operation. This audit is due to commence in July with a report to the November meeting of the Committee. The Head of Internal Audit agreed to amend the wording on the scope of the audit so that there is specific reference to communication with Parish Councils. The draft Terms of Reference for the audit can be found [here](#).

Meeting papers can be found [here](#).

Strategy & Resources Committee – 22 July 2021

The committee discussed a Procurement Update Report and the following issues:

- **Parliamentary Boundary Review 2023**

A response from SDC to the consultation on the Review of Parliamentary Constituencies, was agreed, which stated that “Stroud District Council is largely in support of the proposals and we are pleased that the initial proposals do not recommend the local authority area to be split between three different constituencies as recommended in the previous review. We also welcome the fact that this new proposal no longer contains any element of joining with constituencies outside the County Boundary of Gloucestershire.” Concern was noted about the proposal to transfer the wards of Hardwicke, Painswick and Upton, Bisley and Chalford to The Cotswolds constituency which does not reflect local ties or geographical factors such as shape and accessibility. The response noted that the wards of Wotton-under-Edge and Kingswood are closer geographically to Stroud than Cirencester and were historically in the Stroud Constituency, and that there will be strong affiliation with the Stroud constituency. The Council did not suggest alternative arrangements due to the impacts of making changes on other constituency boundaries, so that the key criteria stipulated (such as electorate range) can be met.

- **Finance reports** – the main agenda item considered the financial reports for 2020/21 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account and the final outturn position.

The committee agreed transfers of General Fund underspend to earmarked reserves (paragraph 8 of the report) to cover future costs and fund priority works as follows:

- o Business Rates Pool gain of £386k – to be ringfenced for economic development work to be set out in the Economic Development Strategy (currently in development).

- o Revenues recovery funding £150k – to be allocated to the Revenues & Benefits team to provide support for business grants and test and trace support payments to local businesses and individuals
 - o Repairs and Maintenance Reserve - £50k – towards funding of the eventual replacement of the Community Services vehicles in line with agreed policy.
 - o Climate Change Reserve - £150k to be set aside towards the potential upgrade to electric road sweepers to be used by Ubico in the district.
 - o Recovery Reserve - A final balance of £50k is transferred to provide initial resource for projects emerging from the new Corporate Delivery Plan (in development).
- **A Leadership Gloucestershire** meeting report provided updates on the following:

Western Gateway Board

Current projects are being mapped, including a digital accelerator programme, under 4 broad headings: Innovation, Connectivity, Global gateway and Net Zero.

The bid for a fusion power plant at Berkeley and Oldbury has made it into the next Government round alongside 14 or 15 other sites nationwide, 6 or 7 of which were in Scotland and 8 were in England and Wales. This is expected to be shortlisted to 5 sites in due course

One Gloucestershire – Integrated Care System

Govt reform to the NHS is proposed in a Bill going through parliament. The new Integrated Care System pattern is expected to be in place by April 2022. Clinical Commissioning Groups will be closed down, with the ICS becoming a statutory body with commissioning functions.

City of Culture – Stroud District Council (along with other local authorities in the county) had agreed to support a bid by Gloucester City Council for the UK City of Culture – as the rules had been widened to allow groups of towns and cities to apply. However, Gloucester City Council subsequently decided not to submit a bid given the time and capacity required.

- A report from the **Regeneration and Investment Board** (a committee subgroup) provided updates:

Draft Economic Development Strategy – consultation on the draft will take place with stakeholders during the summer and early autumn

Regeneration Pipeline and Brownfield Sites – a pipeline of regeneration schemes and priority brownfield sites was approved as a living and evolving approach to prioritising investment. The pipeline will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Levelling Up Fund – Members approved the establishment of a task force to review options and develop a bid in round 2 of the Government's Levelling Up Fund (LUF). SDC can bid for up to £20 million. The initial focus will be on Stroud Town Centre, its connections and potential to drive prosperity locally and across a wider area. Any bid will require the support of the Stroud MP as the funding is assigned to a Parliamentary Constituency (so Wotton Ward is out of scope!). The Cotswolds Constituency is a lower priority constituency (priority 3) than Stroud constituency (which is priority 2).

Meeting papers can be found [here](#).

Development Control Committee – 20 July 2021

The Committee considered two issues:

- Land at, Fromebridge, Whitminster (S.20/2109/FUL)

Agricultural improvement of old mineral excavation area with recontouring of land using imported subsoils and soils. Permitted - following officer advice.

- St Marys, Eastcombe, Stroud (S.21/1077/NEWTPO)
New Tree Preservation Order TPO 580 – confirmed.

Meeting papers can be found [here](#):

Neighbourhood development plans approved

Two NDPs for Cam and Horsley were approved through officer decision – as the full council meeting planned for July was cancelled (due to the cost of holding a social distanced meeting). Details can be found [here](#):

Grants for business - Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) 4

A fourth round of ARG funding of £1 million for Stroud District Council has been announced. The discretionary grant is administered by SDC to support businesses affected by the Coronavirus pandemic

The grant covers the following sectors: Hospitality, Travel and tourism sector, including group travel, travel agents and tour operators, Wedding industries, Nightclubs, Theatres, Events industries, Taxis, Wholesalers, English language schools, Breweries, Freelance and mobile businesses (including caterers, events, hair, beauty and wedding related businesses). Eligible businesses will receive a one-off payment based on the number of successful applications received.

Applications must be submitted by 10pm on Sunday 8 August 2021. Businesses can find out more information at: <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/business/business-rates>.

Consultation on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

There are two related consultations:

- **Review of street or building names and monuments in the district**

This review is to ensure statues and commemorations, as well as the names of streets and buildings, are representative of local people's values and those of a modern, inclusive Council. Feedback from the consultation will also be used to help determine a future approach to public spaces to help ensure that in future the different histories and achievements are reflected.

Residents are also being asked what they think and feel about the Blackboy Clock, Blackboy House, Castle Street, Stroud and a comprehensive report detailing its history and what we know about the statue and the clock has been published with the consultation documents. A Review Panel made up of community representatives, councillors and historians will review the findings to determine the action that should be taken.

- **Consultation on the new draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

The new Policy sets out the Council's commitment to providing an inclusive and supportive environment for our residents, our employees, members, contractors and visitors that is free from discrimination. As a public body, we have both a legal and moral duty to promote equality, diversity and inclusion amongst residents, service users and our own employees. The draft

policy includes the work that has been committed to undertake from April 2021 – March 2022. Following the consultation, responses will be collated, reviewed and incorporated into the policy, which will then be adopted at a full Council meeting. The consultation is open for comments until 1 September 2021.

Further information can be found [here](#)

Electoral Register – Annual Canvass

The annual canvass is underway to ensure that SDC keeps the electoral register up to date, identifying any residents who are not registered so that they can be encouraged to do so. The way the council conducts the annual canvass changed, and now residents will simply receive an email or a letter if the resident hasn't provided an email address or did not respond to the initial email. All emails will be sent from elections@stroud.gov.uk with a subject line of 'Household Electoral Register Communication - Stroud District Council'. Further information is available [here](#).

Summer holiday activities

Extra summer holiday activities for every child in the district are being provided by Stroud District Council. Swimming, gym sessions, fitness classes, DJ sessions, Forest Green Rovers tickets, and visits to Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Berkeley Castle are all being offered free-of-charge. Due to high demand, the scheme is limited to one activity event per family. The activities are being funded by the Community Outbreak Management Fund, as a direct response to the difficulties many families face during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Additional there are additional activities available for children who are eligible for free school meals through the Holiday Activity and Food Programme. Further information is available [here](#). (see "District Wide Offer" for activities open to all).

Fine for illegal waste burning

SDC brought a prosecution against a landowner in Bisley, who was fined more than £3,000 for burning waste and keeping it without permission. Further details can be found [here](#)

Plastic Free July

Plastic Free July is a global movement which encourages people to do what they can to help save the environment from plastic pollution. More than 300 million people across the world have taken up the challenge to date. SDC produced some suggestions of ways to reduce consumption of single use plastic, from carrying a reusable water bottle, to refilling plastic bottles of toiletries and choosing more sustainable alternatives to single use cleaning wipes. Further information can be found [here](#).