

Stroud District Councillors' Report – October 2021

Report of SDC matters during September

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

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

New Council Plan

The new **draft Council Plan** (previously known as the Corporate Delivery Plan) has been discussed at each of the Committees and is due to be approved at the Council meeting in October. Both Cllr Braun and Cllr Tucker have been greatly involved and are working with officers to produce a Plan with clear targets and one we can be proud of. The plan has 3 priorities, 16 objectives and 74 projects. Further performance monitoring targets are being developed to manage progress and delivery.

The plan can be viewed [here](#).

Strategy & Resources Committee (Cllr Braun & Cllr Tucker) – 30 September

The Committee considered the budget monitoring report for Q1 and the **budget strategy** for the next financial year, setting out the assumptions that will be used when preparing the upcoming Medium Term Financial Plan.

There were updates from various **county level meetings** – including Leadership Gloucestershire, the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee and the Scrutiny Committee.

Information sheets were provided on **Brimscombe Port** and installation planned for October of **Water Source Heat Pumps** at Ebley Mill and Brimscombe Port Mill which will replace the previous gas boilers.

Committee Papers can be found [here](#).

Community Services & Licencing Committee. (Cllr Tucker) – 16 September

Members received an update on the **Committee's Budget Monitoring Report** for Q1 2021/22. Allowing for additional expenditure due to Covid, the spend was mainly in line with predictions.

Some changes to the current **Taxi Licencing Policy** were considered to adopt the Common Licensing Standards for Licensing Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Drivers in Gloucestershire, following public consultation. The document was developed by the Gloucestershire Licensing Officers Group (GLOG) with the aim of aligning local policies on matters included in the Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards issued by Department for Transport in 2020. The Statutory Standards focus on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Both this and an **amendment to change the current vehicle age policy** to exempt electric vehicles from the age requirements were agreed.

Similarly, Officers presented Members with a review on SDC's current **Statement of Principals under the Gaming Act 2005**, which is an annual requirement and considered recent updates to the Act. This proposal was also unanimously agreed.

One of the largest topics of work currently being undertaken is the District Council's **Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy for 2021-2041**. Officers presented a draft strategy which provides the rationale and recommendations to enable the delivery of exemplary leisure and wellbeing provision in the district over the next 20 years. Detailed options will now be prepared and presented to the Committee in December.

This Strategy also addresses a unique and exciting opportunity for the district, across sectors and in partnership with allied health professionals and educationists, to establish a dynamic network of services and facilities which are cutting edge and accessible to all.

Officers presented a report which highlighted initial learning from local context and the new '**Feeding Gloucestershire Partnership**'. It recommended that Stroud District Council set up a new Food Justice Task and Finish Group to engage with the partnership and embed learning from their work into relevant council action plans. This was unanimously passed with enthusiasm.

A number of update reports were received from Members who sit on a range of 'external bodies'. The future Work Programme to May 2022 was reviewed and updated. All committee papers can be found [here](#).

Environment Committee – 9 September (Cllr James)

The draft **Gloucestershire Statement of Common Ground**, the long-term spatial planning agreement between county, the districts and GFirst LEP, was debated and approved. The committee discussed how the statement would be used, what it covered and didn't cover and its relationship to the District's Local Plan. Any major changes before finalisation will come back to the committee.

The Stroud District **Cycling & Walking Strategy Task & Finish Group** was established, to drive delivery on the Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plans (LCWIPs) for the district, and to help realise the council's wider Active Travel ambitions. This will be chaired by Cllr Robin Layfield (Labour), with Cllr Martin Brown (Green) as Vice Chair. External members include GCC officers, Stroud Active, and the Stroud Valleys Cycling Campaign. It was noted that equalities/inclusion issues should be added to the groups Terms of Reference.

It was agreed that a Terms of Reference to re-establish the **Planning Review Panel** would be put to the next committee meeting.

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

Housing Committee – 14 September

The Committee looked at the quarterly budget monitoring and performance monitoring reports, the District Council's response to the **Social Housing White Paper** and received an update on actions plans for cleaner estates and for service standards.

The main item for decision was on the options for **decarbonisation and energy efficiency** of council homes in the District.

Following consideration of all the options, the Committee voted to support the recommendation, which will require investment of £180 m over the next 30 years to insulate council homes. This is part of the Council's ongoing commitment to address the climate emergency and will mean a reduction in emissions of up to 24.5%, with council tenants saving up to 11 % on fuel bills. It includes decarbonisation and retrofit programme for the council's 5,000 properties. This new investment, which requires some borrowing, will mean on average council homes will meet SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) C ratings by 2030.

Committee papers can be found [here](#)

Audit & Standards Committee – 28 September

The Committee received a **Counter-fraud update** with assurance over the counter fraud activities of the Council in relation to the work undertaken by the Counter Fraud Unit (CFU). The CFU is a specialist criminal enforcement service working with the Gloucestershire Local Authorities, West Oxfordshire District Council and a number of other public sector bodies such as social housing providers.

A number of councillors asked about probity on **Covid Grants** and it was confirmed a report will come to the next meeting.

There was discussion on the **2020/21 External Audit** – and it was noted that we were waiting on pension data to finalise the accounts

In the **Statement of accounts**, only minor mainly timing restatements were made to the draft unqualified accounts reviewed in July and were approved pending final adjustments

The **Treasury Management Report** showed investments had returned 2.7% in quarter and questions were asked about when detail of the ethical fund split will be provided.

Internal Audit Progress Report reported on progress in relation to the approved plan for 2021/22. This will come back to the next meeting.

The **Risk Management summary** was briefly discussed as had been received late, it was noted that risk assessment had been improved, but that better reporting is needed.

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

Brimscombe Port

All remaining occupying tenants have handed in their keys and vacated the site. SDC and members have supported them to move.

Grace Network, which runs a number of social enterprises including The Long Table, have been fortunate to find alternative accommodation across the road at Brimscombe Mill, which is separate to the SDC development site. SDC planners are working closely with them on issues related to their new operations site. The proposals for the site can be seen at the following link: A short video setting out the vision for this £40 m development is now on the SDC website:

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/brimscombe-port/brimscombe-port-our-vision>

Ecological and asbestos survey work is planned shortly, prior to demolition of the buildings on site. A process is now underway to appoint a developer partner to work with the council to deliver the project. The basin and road infrastructure can be started from 2022. Once this is completed, 150+ homes (30 % affordable) will be built adjacent, with planning expected in 2023 and the project completed by the end of 2025. This will include a number of quayside businesses, such as a boat chandler, restaurant and a community centre. The port itself will be 'land locked' for a period, until the Brimscombe to Stroud stretch of the canal is restored. Until then, provision will be made to accommodate the 'narrow' and similar boats in the port basin, by craning them in.

Canal project - Ocean Bridge, Stonehouse

The next big project on the Stroudwater Canal is to replace the existing Bristol to Gloucester Railway Bridge at Stonehouse. This will now take place from the 24 December to the 31 December. The existing bridge will be removed, foundation prepared, and the new bridge lifted into place during this tight schedule. The cost will be £1.8m and it is part funded by the Heritage Lottery.

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/news-archive/find-out-everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-new-ocean-railway-bridge-in-stonehouse-at-this-event>

This build is part of Phase 1B, which will connect the completed Phase 1 to Saul Junction on the Sharpness Canal, about 4 miles in length. The significant infrastructure works during 2019-21 at the Fromebridge Roundabout, have provided a method of traversing under the A38, but exposed through the

roundabout. It is well worth a visit to admire this £4m work of art, which was paid for by Highways England. Work on Phase 1B is expected to commence in 2022.

Planning

District Councillors continue to liaise and work with Wotton Town and North Nibley/Stinchcombe Parish Councils and SDC Planning Officers on a number of planning applications.