

Stroud District Councillors' Report – November 2021

Report of meetings during October

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

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

Full Council Meeting – 21 October

This was the meeting of the full Council since May, as the July meeting had to be cancelled and there was lots on the agenda:

- **Independent Remuneration Panel** – two new members were appointed. The Panel is required to make recommendations to the council on a scheme of members allowances. There are now four members on the panel, above the minimum requirement of three members.
- **New Monitoring Officer** – Stephen Taylor has been designated as interim Monitoring Officer for 6 months, following the departure of Patrick Arran in August. Stephen is a solicitor and has extensive experience as a monitoring officer having worked for other authorities in the south west. A process is now underway to appoint a permanent Monitoring Officer – which will be shared with another authority in Gloucestershire.
- **Youth work – Hear by Right participation pledge.** The Council is committed to undertaking the award programme of the national Hear by Right standards for youth participation. Officers from the Council's Youth Service are working with the National Youth Agency (NYA) and will be undertaking specific online training shortly – this will also be offered to other officers and members in the cross service support group. The Participation Pledge demonstrates the Council's commitment to the participation of young people in sharing the central values of inclusion, empowerment, commitment and impact.
- **Review of the Council's constitution** – following a review by the Constitution Working Group, some changes to elements of the constitution were approved, to update the document, introduce a parental leave policy for members and include a protocol on dealing with press and media enquiries.
- **Equality Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Action Plan** – following consultation, the revised policy and action plan for 2021-25 were approved. The action plan can be found [here](#). This sets out how the Council will work to achieve the aims of the Equality Act 2010 to:
 - o Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the equality legislation
 - o Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it
 - o Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it (A protected characteristic under the Act is any of the following: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.)

- **The Council Plan** setting priorities for 2021-26 was adopted. This plan had been developed by the Alliance Leadership Team, Alliance members, officers and the Stroud District Youth Council. The final copy can be found [here](#). A [press release](#) set out the main priorities for the plan:
 - o Environment & Climate Change - Protecting our environment and leading the district to carbon neutrality in 2030.
 - o Community Resilience and Wellbeing - Strengthening & supporting our communities so people feel included and connected.
 - o Economy, Recovery and Regeneration - Supporting a thriving and resilient local economy.

Under those priorities are 16 objectives, and 74 key projects and activities. Key performance indicators for each of the activities in the plan are currently being developed for performance monitoring by Committees.

- **Budget strategy** – this sets out the assumptions that will be used when preparing the upcoming Medium Term Financial Plan and sets out the pressures on existing services. Further information will follow once the Local Authority funding settlement is confirmed at the end of the year. It is assumed that a £5 Council Tax increase for a Band D property (which is the limit for Council Tax increases without holding a referendum) will again apply for each year of the Budget Strategy, which will be needed for financial resilience due to the increase in inflation.
- **Statement of Principles - Gambling Act 2005** – the current Statement expires on 30th January 2022, so a revised statement of principles was adopted following public consultation. SDC is the licensing authority, responsible for issuing and enforcing licences, permits and notifications under the Act. Stroud District has only a small number of licensed premises under the Gambling Act 2005. These are 5 Betting Shops and 2 Adult Gaming Centres. In addition, currently there are 2 Family Entertainment Centre Permits, 9 Club Gaming Machine Permits and 3 Licensed Premises Gaming Machine permits. There are 50 pubs with gaming machine registrations and 155 current small society lottery registrations. There have been no hearings under the Gambling Act 2005 at Stroud District Council.
- **New Tenant Representatives on Housing Committee** – Since 2016 there have been two new tenant reps (with non voting status) on the Housing Committee to enable tenants to have a voice in decision making. The council appointed two new representatives: Becky Adams and Mike Richter, and approved two new deputy tenant reps – Trish Betteley and Carol Wise.

Two motions were unanimously approved by the Council:

- **Motion: Climate partnership – Local and National Government**
The motion calls for the creation of a Partnership between Local Government and National Government for urgent action on Climate Change (in line with calls by the Local Government Association and others). Such a partnership would set appropriate regulations, benchmarks and targets and create the much needed long-term funding mechanisms to enable local communities and economies to decarbonise whilst remaining resilient and sustainable. The Council will write to the Government informing them of our support for a Local / national Government Climate Change Partnership Taskforce.

The motion was proposed by Cllr Steve Hynd (Green) on behalf of Cllr Chloe Turner (Green) and seconded by Cllr Robin Layfield (Labour). The full text can be found [here](#) (at item 14a) and further information was provided in a [press release](#).

It is welcome to note that the new UK Net Zero Strategy has a section on local governance (Report by Climate Change Committee, p18-19) including reference to a commitment by the Department for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to set up a Local Net Zero Forum, which will bring together senior officials from across Government and leaders from local government.

- **Motion: Local Electricity Supply**

The council resolved to support the Local Electricity Bill, (currently supported by a cross-party group of 266 MPs) and which, if made law, would establish a Right to Local Supply which would promote local renewable electricity supply by making the setup and running costs of selling renewable electricity to local customers proportionate to the size of the supply company. The Council will write to the local MPs, Siobhan Baillie and Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, asking them to support the Bill, and to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, expressing its support.

The motion was proposed by Cllr Laurie Davies and seconded by Cllr Paula Baker (both Labour).

Attendance at the meeting was much lower than usual, due to many councillors being required to isolate and concerns about sharp increase in Covid infection rates. To mitigate the risks of holding the meeting in the council chamber (which does not have the space for social distancing), all members were asked to wear masks, unless speaking, and to report a negative lateral flow device result to their group leader prior to the meeting. It was regrettable that some Conservative members choose not to wear a mask, despite the request to do so.

The Meeting agenda and papers can be found [here](#)

Leisure & Wellbeing Review Board - 22nd October (Cllr Tucker)

I have variously reported the progress of this cross-party Board of which I am a member. We have been reviewing and progressing the options/findings of our consultants, Max Consultants, to enable us to have first-rate Sports, Leisure and Wellbeing facilities across the district for the next 40 years.

This is likely to include substantial improvements and additions at Stratford Park Leisure Centre in Stroud, further facilities at The Pulse in Dursley and a new complex somewhere along the A38/M5 corridor, the latter meeting the needs of the proposed substantial new housing developments in the West of the District. But nothing yet has been ruled out or definite.

Following a recent survey of Board members, it was generally agreed that out of 12 options 'priorities' offered, the following 4 options, in no particular order, were considered the most important (and my own personal choices!).

- Customer Experience and Satisfaction.
- Using local employment where possible.
- Delivery of Council objectives and strategy.
- Exemplar quality of Council and community facilities across the district.

At our last meeting we reviewed the 'management options' to run our facilities. These were 'In-House', 'External Contractor', Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) or a Non-Profit Distributing Organisation (NPDO). The key difference between a LATC and a NPDO is that if you set up an NPDO, you need to go through a laborious procurement process and compete externally, whereas the LATC route can be set up without the procurement process. After much discussion with Max Consultants over the advantages and disadvantages, we have opted for either 'In-house' (building on the extensive experience at The Pulse) or forming a LATC. We have subsequently requested further information on costs and operational considerations etc of both options. The initial spend profile will be in the region of £10m-£12m. At our next meeting on 3rd November, we will make a final recommendation and then prepare a report by the 12th November, so that our thoughts can be presented to Full Council on 3rd December for approval. We need to progress this in a timely fashion, as our current external provider's contract finishes in October 2024 and we need to give them contact notice if we are to terminate it. If the 'In-house' route is taken, we will have much work to do.

The Board has considered every aspect of the provision of future facilities options. There is too much to cover here, so please let me know if you would like further detail on any of our deliberations.

Community Services & Licencing Committee (Cllr Tucker). No meeting in October (next meeting 2nd December).

Environment Committee (Cllr James). No meeting in October (next meeting 9th December).

Strategy & Resources Committee (Cllr Braun & Cllr Tucker) – next meeting 25 November.

Other news

£421,000 funding – for new affordable homes – SDC has secured funding from the Government's Brownfield Land Release fund to help facilitate the council's new build programme – and in particular demolition of existing structures at Gloucester Street/Bradley Street in Wotton (8 new homes), Orchard Road, Ebley (5 new homes), Cambridge House, Dursley (13 new homes) and Glebelands, Cam (23 new homes). These schemes will provide a mix of affordable rent and shared ownership ([link](#)).

Nuclear fusion bid – Berkeley and Oldbury – The “Severn Edge” bid to host the UK's first prototype fusion plant has been shortlisted for the next phase of the national selection process. A decision may be made by the end of the year ([link](#)).

Brimscombe Port – A developer is being sought to work with the District council to create a new waterside community at the 10 acre site. Demolition work has started, and the council continues to work with former tenant Rush skatepark and supporters in their search for a new home. A video setting out the project can be found on You Tube [here](#) and further information is available in the [press release](#).

Awards for Animal Welfare Team – the team has received awards from the RSPCA for the way it handles stray dogs and animal licensing. The stray dog service ensures that stray or lost dogs are collected and looked after until they can be reunited with their owner. There was also an award for the Community Services team for its contingency planning ([link](#)).

Anti social behaviour app – a new app is available to SDC tenants by invitation. It allows users to upload photos, video, audio and written evidence of anti social behaviour – which can be used in court, helping to evidence and resolve difficult cases ([link](#)).

Award for Stratford Park – the park in Stroud has again received a Green Flag Award ([link](#)).

Apprenticeships – SDC apprentices have won awards at a county wide award ceremony ([link](#)). Many opportunities are available for apprenticeships at the Council ([link](#)).