

Stroud District Councillors' Report – May 2022

Report of meetings during April

All Stroud District Council and Committee papers can be found here: <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/meetings> Recordings of meetings are available via the Committee meeting webpage on the Council's You Tube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeH_AmF0s-TShcYIM8Stweg/videos

Housing Committee – 5 April

Committee papers can be found [here](#). Items discussed by the Committee:

- Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22 Quarter 3
- Tenant Engagement Strategy
- Decant Policy
- New Homes and Regeneration Programme Update
The summary report can be found [here](#). This provides details for the eight new council homes to be built in Wotton on the Bradley Street/ Gloucester Street site – with start on site and construction expected in August 2022, and practical completion expected in July 2023.
- Revised Civil and Financial Penalties Policy (offences in the private housing sector)
- Progress Update on Key Action Plans (Cleaner Estates and Service Standards)
- Updates on the Out of Hours Provisions
- Tenant Representatives update
- Retrofit/Carbon Reduction Task and Finish Group Update
- Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Task and Finish Group Update
- Housing Repairs and Voids Task and Finish Group Update

Strategy & Resources Committee – 7 April

Committee papers can be found [here](#). Items discussed by the Committee:

- Levelling Up Bid - Use of Business Rates Pilot Funding to support project development costs (see also overview of emerging Levelling Up Fund bid). Details of the emerging bid “Gateways, Landmarks and Access for All”, can be found [here](#).
- Budget Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2021/22
- Debt Write Off - write off of sums owed by Rush Skatepark Ltd
- Leadership Gloucestershire Update
- Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC)
- Gloucestershire Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee (GEGSC)
- Regeneration and Investment Board

Audit & Standards Committee – 26 April

Committee papers can be found [here](#)

- 3rd Quarter Treasury Management Activity Report 2021/22
- Internal Audit Progress Report 2021/22
- Covid-19 Business Support Grants - Post-Payment Assurance Update
The update confirmed a low level of potential fraudulent claims and those that are suspicious are being pursued.
- Planning Enforcement Management Update
Some positive progress on Planning Enforcement improvements, though resourcing challenges remain.

- Draft Internal Audit Plan 2022/23

A Risk Management review by Internal Audit highlighted there are improvements needed, but that SDC is similar in its maturity to other district councils

Council Meeting – 28 April

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

- **Climate & Nature Action** Council approved the recommendation from Environment Committee – to endorse the 2030 Annual Report (2021-2022) on the 2030 Strategy and Master Plan – a snapshot of successes is shared below.

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

This review was prompted by the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, which highlighted on-going racial injustice and discrimination. A Review Panel was convened involving community representatives as well as councillors, to consider the appropriateness of public commemorations of people and events from history to ensure they represent our area's inclusive values.

The review was launched in July 2021, and a public survey last year received 1,680 public survey responses including more than 1,400 from people with a connection to the Stroud district. At the Council meeting all the Review Panel's recommendations were approved.

This issue has featured in both local and national media – particularly focusing on the proposal that the council should seek to progress removal of the Blackboy Clock and Statue in Castle Street, Stroud. The Blackboy clock recommendation is in line with findings from the survey where 78% of respondents felt it should be removed (and of this figure, 59% felt it should be placed in a museum) and 22% felt it should remain where it is.

The council has voted to explore how removal could be achieved. This process is expected to take some time and removal is not guaranteed. Approval would be required from numerous stakeholders including the owners of the clock and statue, the Local Planning Authority, Historic England and very likely the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

Other recommendations from the Review Panel included:

- Restoration of the Anti-Slavery Arch, Paganhill, taking into consideration its historic and tourism potential.
- Undertaking a review of the street name 'Blackboys' in Dursley in consultation with Dursley Town Council.
- A task force to be established to take forward the recommendations and develop a community project for the commemoration of an individual, group of individuals or event suggested in the survey responses.
- Reviewing the council's street naming protocol – which will include a consultation process on the selection of future street names with a particular aim to ensure future street names are inclusive and reflect diversity within the district and address any potential gender imbalance in the street names across the district.
- The Council's Cultural Strategy, currently in development, should celebrate and encourage aspects of the district's cultural and community diversity.

Other reports approved by Council:

- **Equality Diversity & Inclusion** - Annual Report on the Outcome of 2021/22 Equality Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan and Proposed 2022/23 Action Plan.
- **Islamophobia** - Adopting the All-Party Parliamentary Group Definition of Islamophobia – recognising that members of our community face discrimination and prejudice, with British Muslims, being the most disproportionately targeted religious group (according to a Home Office report) as 45% of recorded

religious hate crime is targeted towards Muslims. Islamophobia contributes to the dehumanising of members of our community, and with it the undermining of citizenship and fairness for all and is a barrier to the participation of Muslims in public, economic, political, and social spheres of life. The council has committed to include in regular training for Members and Officers. information on recognising and countering instances of Islamophobia, to develop and strengthen our links with religious and community groups that represent and embrace Muslim communities, and to promote events and messaging around Islamophobia Awareness Month (November) and the recently declared UN International Day to Combat Islamophobia (March 15).

- **Appointment of Independent Persons** as required by the Localism Act 2011 - to assist the Council in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst all its members and the towns and parishes within the District. Three people were appointed for an initial period of two years: John Acton, Phyllida Pyper, and Adrian Stratton.
- **Ubico Five Year Vision and Business Plan 2021/2022** approved
- **Motion – 20s Plenty**

Councillors supported a motion proposed by Cllr Martin Brown (Green) and seconded by Cllr Robin Layfield (Labour) calling for Gloucestershire County Council to make 20mph the default speed limit for residential areas in Stroud District and throughout Gloucestershire.

2030 Strategy Annual Report



Ukraine

Stroud District Council officers continue to work with other authorities to support the Homes for Ukraine programme, which involves inspecting homes of sponsors in Stroud District who will be welcoming refugee families displaced by the war, with SDC officers working evenings and weekends to help speed the process up. This work involves Government, Gloucestershire County Council, and Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS).

Canals Strategy consultation extended

Stroud District Council has extended the community consultation phase of its draft canals strategy to 27 May. The draft strategy sets out how the council, its partners, communities, and landowners can work together to make better use of our canals for culture, recreation, leisure, to support the local economy and to enhance the environment and local wildlife. www.stroud.gov.uk/canalstrategy.

First Boats Pass Under The New Ocean Bridge

Boats have sailed under the railway bridge at Ocean, near Stonehouse on The Stroudwater Canal for the first time in 70 years. Members of canal-based charity Cotswold Boatmobility made the inaugural trip in three katanus, stable catamaran canoes that each seat up to six people.

The trip has been made possible only since the Ocean railway bridge was replaced between Christmas and New Year by Network Rail on behalf of the Cotswold Canals Connected partnership. The previous bridge with its narrow opening was too small to allow boats to pass underneath. Canal volunteers will now begin to carry out work on the towpath between Ocean and Bonds Mill, replacing the path, installing edging, and cutting back overgrown vegetation. The work is due to finish mid-May, allowing the towpath to re-open. Until then an alternative walking and cycling route will continue.

Unlawful puppy breeder prosecuted

A woman who bred 18 French bulldogs in three litters without a licence has been ordered to pay more than £3,200 in court following investigations by the SDC Animal Welfare Team, acting to protect the welfare of animals.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Demonstrator grant is allowing Stroud District Council's housing service to 'deep retrofit' 28 council houses in the district with the aim of significantly improving energy efficiency, reducing their carbon footprint and fuel costs for tenants. An initial Demonstrator project will pilot the effectiveness of these measures and demonstrate innovative approaches to reducing the carbon footprint of homes. The Hamfallow project, in Berkeley Vale ward, will see the installation of a ground loop heating system, photo-voltaic and battery storage, so that we are able to generate and store energy on site.