

January 2023 Parish Council report

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 YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeH_AmF0s-TShcYIM8Stweg

With the latest change in group formation on the council Greens had extra committee spaces allocated. As such, I now sit on both the Environment Committee and the Housing Committee.

Council meeting – 15 December

Parish and Town Council Charter – Council adopted the Charter which has been developed through six working groups with representatives from Parish and Town Councils in the district, in relation to five themes: consultation, communication, working in partnership, engagement, and resources.

The Charter will provide a clear and mutual understanding of roles and expectations of officers and members of both SDC and Parish and Town Councils. It promotes partnership working and co-operation between SDC and Parish and Town Councils beyond statutory frameworks and will assist with developing improved working relationships between councils.

It is hoped that the Charter will help councillors in partnership working to better address the challenges faced by local communities and to strengthen local decision making and improve local engagement.

The Charter is being circulated to all Parish and Town Councils and we hope that all will adopt it. A new online hub (website) for Parish & Town Councils has been set up to improve collaboration and communication. An annual schedule of events has also been developed to provide a useful resource that outlines key events and training opportunities relevant to Parish and Town Councils over the course of the year. Link to the Charter:

<https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s7030/Appendix%20A%20-%20Parish%20and%20Town%20Council%20Charter.pdf>

Member Champion roles – Council approved a framework and role descriptions for existing and new councillor roles:

- Mental Health Champion (Cllr Bennett, Cllr Gray and Cllr Watson)
- Armed Forces Champion (Cllr Robinson, Cllr Patrick)
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Champions (Cllrs Bennett, Brown, Drury-Layfield, Kay, Oxley)
- Migrant Champion - a new role, to champion the rights of migrants, advocate for migrants' rights, and be a point of contact for migrant residents and organisations supporting migrants ensuring their needs are considered and voices heard (Cllr Cornell).

Canal Project – Council supported a committee recommendation to increase the capital budget for the Canal Project by £10 million (£1m of which is to come from SDC) to meet a funding gap caused by Covid delays and increasing costs due to

inflationary pressures for construction and materials. The project team have planned for the £10m additional funding to come from the following sources:

- Grants (£4 m - applications in progress)
- Lock Sponsorship (£1m over the next three years)
- Sale of excavated materials (£1m)
- SDC contribution (£1m – approved by Strategy & Resources Committee)
- Partners (£1m – over next three years)
- Fundraising (£2m – over next three years).

Financial regulations – regulations in the Council’s constitution were updated to reference the latest job titles and to update the regulations on reserves and monetary levels.

Housing Committee – 6 December

New Homes and Regeneration Programme Update

Officers provided an update on the programme which can be found in the appendix [here](#). SDC has a strong track record of delivering affordable housing within the district, and since 2014, has built 280 new council homes. The latest new homes to be built have achieved an EPC-A rating which meets the Council’s 2030 commitments on carbon reduction. The New Homes Programme is funded from capital receipts, external funding (from agencies such as Homes England) and borrowing (which is paid back through rental income).

The programme was set to deliver a further 65 homes by 2025 but given the escalating costs that are being experienced by all housing providers, the current budget for these schemes is no longer sufficient. Housing Committee voted to remove the Orchard Road site in Ebley (5 homes planned) from the programme as delivery costs for this site were much higher than others, and to support an additional budget of £5m (to be funded from capital receipts and borrowing) to enable the rest of the programme to continue.

The remaining sites in the programme are Gloucester Street/Bradley Street, Wotton-under-Edge (8 homes), Glebelands, Cam (23 homes), Cambridge House, Dursley (13 homes) and Queens Drive, Cashes Green (7 homes). The acquisition of three additional council homes at Symn Lane in Wotton partially offsets the 5 homes that would have been delivered at Orchard Road in Ebley.

Budget for 2023/24 - The Committee agreed that from 1st April 2023 that social rents and affordable rents for council homes will increase by 7%, in line with national rent guidance. Garage rents and landlord service charges will also increase by 7%. This increase **will not cover** the council’s increase in costs for managing council homes. It will be possible to maintain a balanced budget for 2023/24 by using reserves, but significant savings will need to be found for future years to bridge the gap between expenditure and income for the Housing Revenue Account. The General Fund Housing revenue and capital budgets were also approved, which covers homelessness and temporary accommodation as well as grant funding to address fuel poverty in private sector housing through energy efficiency programmes.

Environment Committee – 8 December

Litter – There was a public question from local litter collector Eric Torrington, who has been working with officers to encourage the council to be bolder in its pressure on retailers - in particular local supermarkets - on litter in and immediately around their premises. Members requested an information report from officers in six month's time on progress re litter and officers will write to Siobhan Baillie MP for her support in pressing for faster regulatory change to force the hand of retailers on litter and waste packaging generally.

Ubico - Ubico Managing Director Beth Broughton and her Chief Financial Officer provided an update on the Teckal company's strategy. Ubico is seeking to reduce its climate impact and help partners to achieve their own carbon neutral goals.

Budget reports for Q2 2022/3, and the initial budget for 23/24 were shared. An amendment was proposed (by Cllr Drury-Layfield, seconded by myself) and then approved, for an increase in the Walking & Cycling capital budget of £250k.

The primary item of business was then the Community Infrastructure Levy allocations. Members voted to follow the officer recommendation and to propose to S&R that the following projects are funded:

- SGS Stroud College '14-16 Create Centre' - £25k
- Dudbridge to Ryeford Cycle Trail Surface Improvements - £75k (plus £75k from the Walking & Cycling budget)
- Berkeley Town Improvement Project - Preliminary Design - £20,239 (plus £20k from the Walking & Cycling budget)
- Wotton Community Sports Foundation The New Barn - £75k (£25k more than requested)

A feasibility bid for accessibility works on Dudbridge steps is being supported by the Walking & Cycling budget instead. Of a total available CIL budget of £1.1 million, £930,921 is retained in recognition of the strategically important projects that have expressed an interest in CIL funding but are not yet in a position to deliver.

Other reports presented to the Committee:

- Strategic Planning Advisory Board
- Stroud Regeneration Committee
- Performance Monitoring
- Update on the Stroud Valley Natural Flood Management Project Information Sheet
- A Strategic Action Plan for the River Frome by the Severn Vale catchment Partnership Information Sheet
- Climate Leadership Gloucestershire group

Development Control Committee – 13 December

The Committee considered the committee budget, and one application:

68 Thrupp Lane, Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire, S.22/1503/HHOLD (Pages 19 - 30) Erection of second storey extension and erection of detached garage and car port. Committee supported the officer recommendation to permit the application.

Community Services & Licensing Committee – 1st December

Taxis - Committee approved an Interim Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Emissions Policy as proposed by the Task and Finish Group and to approve it prior to formal consultation.

Committee agreed that it would not be proportionate to impose mandatory CCTV in Stroud licensed taxi and private hire vehicles.

Reports were discussed on Performance Monitoring Q1 and Q2, Budget Monitoring Q1 & Q2 and Committee Revenue Estimates.

Reports were also presented as follows:

- Museum in the Park (Cowle Trust)
- Police and Crime Panel
- Citizens Advice
- Mental Health Champions
- Homestart
- Woodchester Park Mansion
- Progress update on Stroud Lido
- Progress on Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) – for SDC leisure centres.

Other issues

More affordable homes than ever are being enabled by Stroud District Council

The number of new affordable homes enabled by Stroud District Council has doubled in the past year. The district council plays a key role in working with partners to facilitate much-needed new affordable homes for rent and shared ownership, and usually runs at an average of 120 per year. However in 2021/22 the council has had its best year of affordable housing completions - 245. These are mostly completions with housing association partners and represent a mix of housing sites such as Great Oldbury at Eastington, and more rural sites such as Chalkwood at Chalford.

Affordable housing, which can be for either rent or sale, is for those whose needs are not met by the market. It includes different tenures, including social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership, among others. To find out more about homes for rent, visit www.homeseekeplus.co.uk and for shared ownership homes: <https://www.helptobuyagent3.org.uk/>

Cost of Living Emergency – warm spaces mapped across the district

Stroud District Council has been working with community partners to map more than 40 warm spaces across the district where volunteers are stepping up for their communities in response to rises in the cost of living. Most offer hot drinks, free Wi-fi

and charging facilities, as well as a warm and friendly welcome. Some host activities such as art and crafts, film nights and pay-as-you-feel community cafes.

Interactive map: <https://cscic.org/community-hubs/warm-spaces-in-stroud/>

To add a warm space to the map, contact communityhubs@cscic.org.

There are also resources for volunteers on this website and people are able to make a donation. SDC is funding a warm spaces coordination team, which draws on the expertise and insight of local groups and partnerships. They are working together to create online cost-of-living resources, signposting materials, marketing materials and ensure that warm spaces and their volunteers are supported, and have access to appropriate training.

For further information www.stroud.gov.uk/costofliving (on money, energy and water, food, family and childcare, mental health support, and warm spaces). For anyone in immediate need of food or fuel and who has no money, SDC can refer them to the Foodbank where they can provide emergency food parcels and a small amount of credit for household fuel. Contact Stroud District Council on 01453 766321 or customer.services@stroud.gov.uk and ask to be referred.

Gloucestershire County Council also has support for households experiencing financial hardship. Apply to their Household Support Fund online or by calling 01452 425000.

For those who are not online, SDC Neighbourhood Wardens are helping to deliver leaflets with cost of living support telephone numbers to parish and town councils. SDC is printing copies of the GCC support phone number, the Worrying About Money leaflet and a Mental Health signposting leaflet and will be sharing electronic copies of these with parish and town councils.

Bath Place, Cheapside, Stroud– redevelopment site

In December SDC completed the purchase of land at Bath Place, Cheapside in Stroud town centre from Newland Homes, as a regeneration site linking to the Wallbridge area. This is a 0.9 acre brownfield canal side plot, which has stood empty for decades, and includes a fire-damaged Grade II Listed former canal warehouse. The land already has consent for development, but the Council will be looking to prepare new site plans over the next year, to improve connections between the canal and the town centre, and to rebalance the size and types of housing.

Climate disclosure project results

Climate change experts have rated SDC's work to tackle climate change as better than last year and on the way up. The 2022 Climate Disclosure Project (CDP) results awarded a 'B' for SDC work. More than 1,000 cities, states, regions and districts across the globe submitted data to the CDP which then independently rates them on their environmental transparency, leadership and action.

In the area of mitigating and adapting to climate change (which includes flood defences and retrofitting_ SDC was given an 'A' grade. That compares to a regional average of 'C' and a global average of 'D'.

For more information: <https://www.cdp.net/en> and follow #StroudDistrict2030 on social media for the latest updates on the council's climate work.