

ERMIN WARD

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS – 2021

#19 Covid-19 PARISH REPORT - March 2021



I also post items on the @ErminWard Facebook page @ErminWard
Please could you mention this in your Parish News and Village Website.

Cllr Julia Judd
Ermin Ward District Councillor
julia.judd@cotswold.gov.uk
07853 383874

Gloucestershire's exemplary vaccine roll out continues apace. As of 8 March, Covid cases in the Cotswolds reduced to 16 per 100,000. As of 15 February, GPs/the NHS had offered a vaccination to everyone over the age of 70. All adults are expected to have received their first dose by the end of July, possibly earlier as a surge of extra doses of the vaccine is made available.

If you are an unpaid carer you will be eligible for the Covid-19 vaccine and will be contacted by your GP for your vaccination appointment as long as:

- ✓ You are registered as an unpaid carer with your GP
- ✓ You are in receipt of or entitled to Carer's Allowance.

Make sure you register with your local GP if you are an unpaid carer.

For more information visit <http://carers.org/.../101-coronavirus-vaccine-and-carers...>

District Councillors have a duty to hold the local authority and fellow councillors to account and challenge and express concern about decisions and processes whilst to adhere to other aspects of the Councillor's Code of Conduct. With local elections approaching, Parish Councils are prohibited from circulating party publicity. This newsletter intends to uphold the spirit and integrity of both statements.

A reminder that if you have an issue which concerns you, Council welcomes questions from the public. Your question should not take longer than two minutes and relate to issues under the Council's remit. Please liaise with your District Councillor or contact [Democratic Services](#) no later than 5pm the working day before the next Council Meeting.

NEXT COUNCIL MEETING (AGM) - 26 MAY 2021 - 2pm

[COUNCIL MEETING 17 MARCH 2021](#)

Planning Protocol

Cllr Steve Trotter asked a question to Cllr Juliet Layton if she intends to revise the planning committee 'panel' which decides if an application should go to committee. Cllr Juliet Layton as chair of the planning committee is arguably the most influential member, but the Ward Councillor is not present, nor is a representative from the Parish, and no Minutes are produced. 60% of referrals have been denied and Cllr Layton said she has no intention of revising the arrangement. The situation will be raised further as concern remains. Outcomes in planning can lead to personal enrichment so it is imperative that the process is transparent and open to scrutiny. The current mechanism lays the process open to poor governance, cronyism or worse.

UBICO WASTE CONTRACT EXTENSION

Waste collection is the most expensive core service that the Council has to deliver. Costs have increased owing to Covid and there are currently no alternatives to Ubico. Ubico is a not-for-profit Teckal company owned by several shareholders (i.e. other Councils) which benefit from contracts for works, services or supply from its controlling Contracting Authority without having to go through a competitive tender process.

- Current contract to be extended by 5 years from 1st April 2022 until 31st March 2027 with a break clause at 2 years.
- 2020-21 waste collection in the Cotswolds cost the taxpayer £6,552,103, an increase of £507,563 from the previous year.
- The Ubico budget for 2021-22 is £6,983,315 (a further increase of £431,212).

UPDATE TO COUNCIL CONTRACT RULES

CDC procurement team have carried out a review (last done in 2015) to ensure that they comply with the latest legislation and reflect the UK departure from the EU.

KEMBLE PARISH COUNCIL TO BE RE-NAMED KEMBLE & EWEN PARISH COUNCIL

HOMELESS PREVENTION GRANT INCREASE

£45,183 increase of funding allocation for 2021-22 to £133,271.

ALLEGATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COUNCILLORS - ADOPTION ARRANGEMENTS

FURTHER FINANCIAL SUPPORT PACKAGE FOR SLM (Management of Leisure Centres and Corinium Museum). Included in the budget figures above.

SLM (LEISURE FACILITY MANAGEMENT) FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- SLM has requested a further £280,403 (April-July 2021).
- November 2020-March 2021 they received a support package of £291,146 (plus £8,773 monthly fees payable from SLM to the Council also waived).
- 29 July 2020 - Council approved support package of £221,140 (plus £8,773 monthly fees payable from SLM to the Council also waived) to cover August to October 2020.
- 1 April-30 July 2020 - Council paid £74,000 (£18,500 per month)

Total: £936,873

AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEMES

Update on Section 106 sums for affordable housing and seek approval to spend them.
Moreton-in-Marsh (Land west of Davies Road) - Capital Grant to be included £478,500
Moreton-in-Marsh - Further capital grant £102,000 to enhance environmental sustainability

Avening - Capital grant of up to £400,000 (funded from Section 106)

Avening - No environmental sustainability support was printed in the Council agenda or spoken about at the meeting. Cllr Richard Morgan requested an amendment, calling upon the Council to make the units environmentally sustainable. Cabinet Member Lisa Spivey deferred to the Housing Officer and then confirmed that the units will benefit from ground source heat pumps, pv panels and grey water collection so the amendment was withdrawn.

COUNCIL MEETING 24 FEBRUARY 2021 - BUDGET MEETING

Leader's introduction

An external review of Publica is being carried out to assess accountability, resulting in a partial refresh of Publica board. New chair of Publica board Sunny Walker, formally GCHQ, the leader aims to 're-establish Council's sovereignty over Publica'. Also appointed Chris Wood, Audit & Risk particularly looking at investments that Publica need to make. New CDC Executive Assistant, Olivia Gross, has started, her role is to provide Cabinet support. Deborah Smith, Senior Planning Officer, celebrates 25 years at CDC. She is a fountain of knowledge. Processes within the planning department are to be re-assessed and updated.

Public Questions

Homelessness in Cirencester Rob Gibson asked about homelessness figures in Cirencester. Accounts reveal that £100,000 spent in 2020 with £250,000 projected for this year. How many homeless people in Cirencester in 2020. What is being done? With potential evictions this year, has the Council made a financial provision?

Cllr Lisa Spivey, Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness, replied that CDC working with Yellow Bus Project, Cirencester Signpost, P3, CHYP and Citizens Advice. GCC also supports homelessness in the County. They have placed 2 people in accommodation, working towards a further 4. Housing First Scheme can deal with complex cases, they work with a maximum of 6 people with a full time support worker and partner with Housing Associations to find accommodation. In November 2019 there were 7 people classified homeless in Cirencester, in 2020 there are 4. The potential eviction situation is on the agenda for next Monday's cabinet meeting.

GCC drainage budget vote David Fowles asked the leader Joe Harris why, at last week's Gloucestershire County Council meeting, did he vote to reduce the County Council drainage budget by £127,000. In light of the recent flooding in Cirencester, had this gone through, how many properties in Cirencester would have lost out? The leader then spoke for several minutes but did not answer the questions.

MOTION: CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION AWARD SCHEME

Cllr Julia Judd (Con. Ermin Ward) proposed a motion to create the first ever **District Climate Award scheme**, seconded by Councillor Andrew MacLean (Green Party). In

July 2019 Council declared a Climate Emergency 'that requires urgent and comprehensive action'. The awards aim to highlight leadership in addressing climate change by reducing carbon pollution and inspiring new initiatives. Suggested award categories include: Individual Leadership, a Youth I am very keen that Council establishes a cross-party action group for the benefit of the wider community. Engagement from all councillors with businesses, groups, peers and partners will motivate, enhance and accelerate our ambitions to address Climate Change in the Cotswolds. The motion was well received however the leader decided to refer it to Cabinet for scrutiny so that he can then re-present it at the next Council meeting.

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND BUDGET 2021/22

The budget was approved. It was not supported by the opposition. It is a 148 page document, links below:

1. [Agenda Item 07 - Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget 2021 - 22](#) (275Kb)
- i. [Agenda Item 07 - Annex A - MTFS 2021-22](#) (145Kb)
- ii. [Agenda Item 07 - Annex A1 - MTFS 2021-22 to 2024-25](#) (25Kb)
- iii. [Agenda Item 07 - Annex A2 - Unavoidable Budget Pressures](#) (22Kb)
- iv. [Agenda Item 07 - Annex A3 - Capital Programme and Funding](#) (23Kb)
- v. [Agenda Item 07 - Annex A4 - Revenue Reserves and General Fund Working Balance](#)
- vi. [Agenda Item 07 - Annex B - Draft Capital Strategy 2021-22](#) (106Kb)
- vii. [Agenda Item 07 - Annex C - Draft Investment Strategy](#) (133Kb)
- viii. [Agenda Item 07 - Annex D - Treasury Management Strategy](#) (199Kb)
- ix. [Agenda Item 07 - Annex E - Detailed Budgets 2021-22](#) (974Kb)
- x. [Agenda Item 07 - Annex F - Pay Policy Statement](#) (151Kb)
- xi. [Agenda Item 07 - Annex G - Budget Consultation Survey Responses](#) (167Kb)
- [Agenda Item 07 - Annex G2 - Other Budget Consultation Response](#)

Suggested amendment 1 - FLY TIPPING - MOTION ACTIVATED CAMERAS At the January Council meeting, Cllr Tony Berry and seconded by Cllr Julia Judd, presented a motion to purchase motion activated cameras of good quality to support efforts to catch fly-tippers. This was taken to and approved at the cabinet meeting but included within the 'Civic Pride' £200,000 budget. Cllr Berry requested to amend the budget so the cost is accounted as a stand-alone item and therefore ring-fenced. This would have no impact on the overall budget, but would provide transparency and commitment. This amendment was rejected.

Suggested amendment 2 - It was widely acknowledged and discussed at the meeting that the Planning Department is under considerable strain. The Conservative

opposition proposed an amendment to the Budget to budget up to £140,000 to support the Planning Department. This amendment was rejected.

You have probably received this year's Council Tax bill and within a pamphlet illustrating how the Council's money will be spent in 2021/22. It does not say that HM Government has underwritten 75% of all lost revenue to the Council owing to Covid, meaning the council should be able to access a total of approximately £2,595,180 in government aid.

EXTRA COUNCIL SPENDING (beyond core services)

- Garden Waste - 2021/22 increase to £40 for each bin licence
- Waste container replacement - £5 per item
- Bulky waste collection to increase from £14 to £25 for up to three items. The charge for additional items will remain at £5 each with an upper limit of six items.
- Another Councillor allowance rise.
- £54 million of capital investment to reflect the desire to invest to deliver against the Council Priorities and Corporate Plan, approved in September 2020, and to generate additional income. No details on how this borrowing is to be spent.
- £350,000 to be spent over the next three years to deliver the £54 million commercialisation strategy.
- £1,000,000 to support for the Council's leisure contract with SLM as revenues down owing to Covid. It could be assumed that the payback in the event of SLM getting back into profit will not materialise because by the time they are in profit, the CDC contract will have ended.
- £75,000 has been budgeted by CDC to explore a two council unitary authority devolution instead of just one under Gloucestershire.
- £24,000 (to increase to £30,000 pa) for the new Crowdfunding Spacehive App marking the end of the Community Project Grant Scheme.
- £200,000 for an initial two-year Civic Pride Programme (updated street signs)
- £10,000 grant, a separate £20,000 loan and a further £20,000 contract awarded to The Barn Theatre for ongoing media support to generate publicity, communications, and engagement with residents on behalf of the council.
- **New positions at Council (costs unknown) include:**
- Chief Executive Officer (replacing the existing Head of Paid Service)
- Senior Infrastructure Delivery Officer
- Infrastructure Delivery Technician
- Head of Climate Action
- Economic Development Officer
- Lead Landscape Officer
- Sustainable Transport Officer
- Affordable Housing Programme Delivery Manager
- Cabinet Support Officer

- Monitoring Officer shared with Stroud District Council (the previous Monitoring Officer who is now at The Forest of Dean DC). He too is leaving.
- Dr Christine Gore, Executive Officer (who took over from Nigel Adams as interim CEO) is also leaving.

Other Matters

Flood Forum

The important Cotswolds Annual Flood Forum hosted by [Geoffrey Clifton-Brown](#) was held at [Barn Theatre](#) on Friday 5 March. You can watch a recording of it here: <https://fb.watch/44of-p27P/>

Representatives from [Thames Water Environment Agency Gloucestershire FWAG](#) [Cotswold District Council](#) and [Gloucestershire County Council](#)

Full transcript here:

https://www.cotswoldconservatives.com/cotswolds_flood_forum_2021

N.B. GCC LibDems members proposed to cut Gloucestershire's drainage budget by £127,000 at the recent GCC Budget meeting.