

Annual Parish Assembly

**Parishioners of Wotton-under-Edge are invited to
the Civic Centre, Wotton
Tuesday 18th March 7pm**

*Cllr Roger Claydon OBE
Mayor of Wotton*

Agenda

(Note: written reports on Councillor statements will available before the meeting)

- 1) Welcome, Introductions & receive apologies for absence from Councillors
- 2) Adoption of Previous Minutes of Annual Parish Assembly of 14th March 2013 & any Matters Arising from those Minutes
- 3) Brief Report from the Mayor Cllr Roger Claydon OBE
- 4) Brief Annual Police Report for 2013/14
- 5) Brief reports from Town Council Committee Chairs:
 - Planning (Cllr Chris Galbraith)
 - Footpaths (Cllr Chris Galbraith)
 - Allotments (Cllr Clair Galbraith)
 - Regeneration (Cllr J Cartigny)
- 6) Receive brief updates from Council supported organisations
 - Wotton Youth Club
 - Wotton Library
 - Wotton in Bloom
 - Wotton Swimming pool
 - Wotton Community Sports Foundation
- 7) Brief report from Cllr Dr JE Cordwell on County Council matters
- 8) Brief from a District Councillor on District Council matters
- 9) Any questions from the Public on Town Affairs before Parishioners are invited to meet all the Councillors and staff and share a glass

***** *wine, juice, nibbles* *****



Wotton-under-Edge Annual Parish Assembly 14/3/13 1

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD AT 7.30PM ON 14TH MARCH 2013
IN THE BRADLEY ROOM AT THE CIVIC CENTRE

PRESENT: Dr J E Cordwell, (Town Mayor and Chairman), Mrs J M Cartigny, R P
Claydon, Mrs J H Cordwell, Mrs L Harris, P Kenny, T Luker, P C Smith, M
Zimmer.

IN ATTENDANCE: 10 members of the public.

1. The Clerk read the Notice convening the meeting.
2. APOLOGIES for non-attendance were received from Councillors C Galbraith and Mrs C V Galbraith who were out of the country.
3. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY HELD ON 15TH MARCH 2012
The Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly held on 15th March 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. Passed all in favour.
4. REPORT FROM THE TOWN MAYOR
A written report from the Mayor was available and was noted. A copy of the report is attached to the Master Copy of these Minutes.
5. REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCIL COMMITTEES
Written reports were received from the Chairman of the Planning Committee together with papers with information on Planning Initiatives and the general Planning environment; the Town Regeneration Partnership, Allotments, Footpaths Committees, and a report from the Youth Liaison Group from Mrs Cordwell. Copies of these reports are attached to the Master Copy of these Minutes.
Issues raised:
Planning: Miss McInnes noted from the report by the Chairman of Planning that Stroud District Council had granted planning permission for 11 applications despite this Council objecting to them and wished to know which these applications were. Dr Cordwell stated that he could let Miss McInnes have this information the following day.
Footpaths: The issue of accessibility to footpaths was mentioned and it was asked whether disabled access could be improved to footpaths. It was reported that most farmers would object to gates wide enough to allow access for wheelchairs because of the possibility of stock then being able to escape through the wide access.
Allotments: It was noted that it was still not known to some allotment holders who had won the Best Kept Allotment at Competition at Knapp Road. It was suggested that a list should be put up and also a list of the criteria used in judging.
6. COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT
A written report on County Council matters was received from County Councillor John Cordwell. A copy of the report is attached to the Master Copy of these Minutes.

7. DISTRICT COUNCIL REPORT

A written report on District Council matters was received from District Councillor June Cordwell. A copy of the report is attached to the Master Copy of these Minutes.

8. TOWN AFFAIRS

A. Wotton-under-Edge Swimming Pool

Mr Mark Lovell asked questions about future funding for the Swimming Pool and whether the £28,000 provided for the past two years would continue. It was noted that although the original agreement with the Swimming Pool Company was for three years, the referendum which had taken place prior to the funding being allocated had been open-ended and had not specified any time limit. The status of the pool for the coming season was being discussed at the next Town Council meeting but it was likely that the Town Council would continue to support the pool, in addition to other local initiatives when asked.

Mr Lovell asked how the Town Council was going to take soundings across the general public about whether support for the pool should continue at the present level as the funding concerned could be spread across a number of services.

It was noted by Mr R Carter that the Synwell Playing Field had recently sent out a leaflet appealing for £500 and it was suggested that the field should receive more support from the Town Council. It was suggested by Mr Carter that more people benefitted from the Synwell Playing Field than the Swimming Pool. Councillor Paul Smith declared an interest as Chair of the Synwell Playing Field Trustees. The Trust was looking for local donations, bookings, trustees and committee members. Many of the existing committee members were now elderly and might not be able to continue. Younger members were needed as, if the Committee collapsed, the field would be in trouble. The main need was for new people to get involved. Revenue from bookings was sufficient to cover maintenance and the major income came from the local football clubs. Miss Helen Roberts suggested that a Youth Committee should be formed.

It was pointed out by Councillors that no request for help with funding had been made to the Town Council for several years but that whenever such a request had been made in the past, the Town Council had always made generous grants.

B. Mr Gareth Kitchen raised queries about the questionnaire which had been distributed by the Chamber of Trade, asking for views on the possibility of a supermarket being built at Old Town. He asked whether these views had been fed into the Community Plan.

He stated his view that, as 50% of the shops in the town sold food, a supermarket would have a serious effect on the high street with implications for the loss of jobs in the main street.

It was stated by Mr Claydon as Chair of Planning that the Town Council had not expressed any view on this at this stage as this could prejudice consideration of any future formal application. The Town Council understood that the survey showed that the community was entirely divided on the supermarket issue, though the Town Council was opposed to the loss of one of the last remaining employment sites in the town. There had been no further word from Renishaw for some months but it was understood that there were major concerns about Highways issues and also that although there had been general discussion about a supermarket on the site, in practice no supermarket chain had expressed interest in the site.

Mr Kitchen expressed concern that there was no recent data available on footfall within the town, as Stroud District Council had not commissioned any surveys for several years so that there was no accurate information on which to base proposals. He referred to the District wide Loyalty Card and criticised the lack of promotion for this. It had been promoted to traders as bringing customers but this did not appear to be successful.

It was pointed out that this had been introduced by Stroud District Council without any consultation with the towns or indeed with members. This had been called into the Scrutiny Committee who had asked for information on how the success of the card was being monitored. Ways of promoting the card were now being considered and it was possible that it could be distributed to all households with the Council Tax bill.

District Councillor Mrs Cordwell mentioned changes to the structure at Stroud District Council which was reverting to the Committee system. She noted that only two officers at Stroud District Council were now working part time on regeneration so there was a limit to what they could achieve.

Mr Carter noted that High Streets across the country were suffering because of the increase in online shopping. The shortage of parking in the town did not help, especially when the town competed with Yate which had large free car parks and more choices. As many local residents worked out of the town, it was all too easy to stop at larger supermarkets on the way home.

Mr Kitchen expressed exasperation that the Town Council had changed its position on parking. It was his view that this was not based on hard evidence but on feelings which had culminated in earlier work being wasted.

Town Council members noted that the parking situation had changed since the survey had been undertaken, in that short term parking was now being enforced in the Co-op car park, displacing a lot of long term parking into the surrounding area. Gloucestershire County Council were also taking over enforcement of on-street parking and it was unclear how strictly this would be enforced and how this might affect current parking patterns. The needs of local residents for parking also had to be taken into account, meetings had been held with them to address their concerns and Stroud District Council officers had admitted that if changes to long-term parking were made in the Chipping, this might well have to be reversed in the near future.

Mr Kitchen disagreed and considered that there was no evidence to support this view, he stated that 76% of residents travelled out of the town and needed short term parking to encourage them to shop here.

Miss McInnes suggested that more people should walk to do their shopping.

Mr Carter pointed out the needs of business people based in the town and the lack of parking, even on the outskirts of the town. He noted that this was partially due to the planning authority persistently allowing new development in the town with insufficient or no parking. He noted that the Town Council had consistently sought to have adequate parking required in new developments but this had been ignored by planners. Other alternatives for providing additional parking had been considered, including converting the Civic Centre car park into a multistorey but the potential costs had been horrendous. Unless buildings were demolished it would not be possible to provide more parking in the town centre, people would have to be prepared to walk further to shop. However, this was a car-based society and this was not going to change.

It was suggested that this meeting would ask Stroud District Council to carry out

a footfall survey or one could be done with volunteers. The Chamber of Trade might like to be involved with this. Mr Carter had done some costings on the use of parking permits and machines and had submitted this to Stroud District Council but this had not been pursued. He suggested that there was also a problem with disabled spaces being abused by able bodied people.

Mr Kitchen stated that it did not have to cost a lot to enforce parking restrictions. The Council needed to look at how car parks were managed. The Co-op car park was now half empty as restrictions were now enforced there. The company enforcing restrictions for the County Council would have targets and would issue tickets to meet them. Stroud District Council were responsible for enforcing restrictions in their car parks and did not have sufficient wardens to do this properly.

- C. Ms Sue Hunt criticised the Town Council website which did not have much information on it, though there was more than previously. Some items which were required to be on it were not and it was best practice to have far more available. She suggested that a member of staff should be nominated to follow this up.

It was also noted that details of members' interests were not on the website, nor were most of them on the Stroud District Council website. The Clerk noted that there were ongoing difficulties in getting some members to complete the required information so that this could be signed off by the Stroud District Council Monitoring Officer, despite the fact that this was a legal requirement on taking office as a Councillor. Until this had been done, the details were not confirmed as acceptable and this was why they were not yet displayed on either website. The Town Council had no powers in this matter which was administered by Stroud District Council. Ms Hunt did not accept that this was an adequate excuse for not displaying the information and suggested that it should be displayed before it was signed off. The Clerk advised that this would be against Stroud District Council advice and that the Monitoring Officer had not yet sent back the forms to be displayed. It was suggested that a link to the relevant page on the Stroud District Council website could be added to the Town Council website.

Ms Hunt also noted that some Minutes and Agendas were on the website but suggested that more historic Minutes should be added. Mr Carter suggested that the most recent minutes should be put on first and that older minutes be added as staff time permitted.

Mr Lovell suggested that the website was a potential way of getting information out to local people and that if more information was available, this might encourage more interest.

Mr Kitchen gave his view that the Town Council was achieving nothing.

- D. Ms Helen Roberts was grateful to the Town Council for trying so hard to prevent the housing development at Potters Pond. She considered that this had achieved some changes. She asked how people could get involved in future.

It was noted that the situation had changed drastically under the new planning framework. The role of the Town Council was now very limited though it had tried to reflect the concerns of local people in the detailed response made. Although the developer had held preconsultation meetings with local people there was very little changed in response to the issues raised.

Dr Cordwell was concerned that the Highways response by Gloucestershire County Council did not have full local knowledge.

Wotton-under-Edge Annual Parish Assembly 14/3/13 5

Ms Roberts suggested that it would have been helpful to other people if the Town Council response had been published earlier but the Chairman of Planning pointed out that this could not be done until after the Planning Committee Meeting which discussed the application. Responses were usually submitted very soon after the meetings.

District Councillor Mr Smith referred to changes under the new Planning framework with the implications of appeals and costs, and to the possible effects of current appeals relating to the five-year land supply in the District. Stroud District Council had applied for judicial review on one recent appeal which had been allowed by an Inspector and until the outcome of this was known, any refusals of planning permission would be lost at appeal. Appeals cost £120-125,00 each. Seventeen major applications had been put in since that appeal had been lost and members were under pressure to approve these.

- E. Mr Alan George thanked the Town Council and everyone who had supported the Pool under the new management. The Chairman thanked him and his fellow directors for all of their work to improve and open the pool since taking it over.
- F. Mrs J M Cartigny reported, on behalf of Mr Barnaby Beere, for the Sports Foundation and reported that more than 1000 trees had now been planted on the site.

This concluded the business of the Annual Parish Assembly and the Mayor thanked everyone for attending. The meeting closed at 09.05pm.

Signed:

Date:

Town Mayor and Chairman of the Town Council

MAYOR'S REPORT



As your new Mayor and Chairman of the Town Council I welcome you all to the 2014 Annual Parish Assembly. It has been a year of change for the Council. We have said farewell to our long standing and well respected Town Clerk, Glenys Sykes, who retired in October after 22 years of sterling service and welcomed Sue Bailey, an experienced Clerk, who joined us from Tetbury. We have also co-opted four new Councillors to replace those who have resigned during the year.

As the new Chairman, I am very keen to develop the relationship between the Council and the community we represent so that we can better understand what local views are and this year's Annual Parish Assembly has been structured to facilitate this. Committee Chairmen will report at the Assembly and there will be an opportunity for all to meet with Councillors on a less formal basis at the end of the meeting. I hope these arrangements will make this year's Assembly more effective.

The Town Council continues to provide significant financial support to the Swimming Pool, in accordance with views expressed by the community in the 2010 Parish Referendum and has recently renewed the Service Level Agreement with the Swimming Pool Company for a further 3 years. Significant financial support is also provided to maintain and run the Youth Club with additional operating hours this year being provided through funding from the Youth Liaison Group. Other local organisations supported include the CAB (which has enabled 188 residents to be assisted between April 2013 & February 2014, including 19 to the specialist complex benefits service); Wotton in Bloom; the Library, which has been able to extend and maintain its opening hours and, of course the One Stop Shop which continues to be well used. We have provided new A Boards to enable the Town Hall Teas to continue to be successful in raising funds for local causes and we will also be providing a grant to the Synwell Playing Field Association which will help to ensure that the playing fields and playground remain open for the benefit of residents and the football clubs. We are also working with other community groups to establish a skatepark next to the new sporting facilities on the New Road site.

Of course, the above support has to be paid for and the Wotton Precept for 2014/2015 will be £258,958, an increase of 2% on last year, some of which is required to off-set a reduction in Local Council Tax Support Grant received by the Town Council from £21,538 to £18,237. There is still a possibility that funding will be capped in future and the current Precept will allow existing services to be maintained and provide an adequate contingency. A summary breakdown of the budget is attached.

The Council is conscious that times are difficult for residents, businesses and traders in the town and we always try to act in the best interests of the community we represent. This is not an easy task and we are aware from letters in the Gazette and elsewhere, that not all are happy with issues such as community planning, parking in the town, promoting the high street and unwanted housing development. Of course, many of these cannot be resolved by the Town Council alone and we will continue to press our case at District and County. The Town Council has recently established a parking Working Group to look again at parking problems in the town and this group is exploring some new ideas. We will also be establishing a similar group to review the 2005 Community Plan to determine if and how it should be updated. These initiatives would benefit greatly from community support. As an active member of the Chamber of Trade, we are delighted that it is being reinvigorated and hope that it will become an active and beneficial voice for the town's traders. Also, as a result of strong objections from the Town Council, Wales and West Utilities have deferred until further notice their intention to renew the gas main in Long Street which, had it taken place, would have seriously damaged trade in the town centre.

Last year a number of concerns about the way the Annual Assembly was organised and advertised were raised and I hope you will feel that this year we have done better. Learning from last year, we have made summary financial information available. After the installation of a new computer system recently, efforts will concentrate this year on

improving the town council website in order that information may be disseminated in a more timely fashion. In the meantime via the current website we have ensured that councillors' registrations of interest, as approved by the District's Monitoring Officer, are available and we have added policies on grants and conduct – the lack of which were identified as shortfalls last year.

The Town Council has had another busy year and a summary of some of the issues dealt with is below. We hope that this year's Assembly will provide for a rewarding interchanges of views and ideas and will do our best to answer questions that arise – but please be understanding if we are not able to respond directly at the meeting. Thank you all very much for attending.

ROGER CLAYDON, TOWN MAYOR AND CHAIRMAN,

ACHIEVEMENTS 2013/2014

- New Town Clerk appointed after 22 year predecessor retirement
- New Policies introduced for Grants, Media, CCTV, Complaints, Publications
- Extra Youth Club hours negotiated: funded by the Youth Liaison Group
- New Service Level Agreement negotiated with Swimming Pool Company
- Engaged with local Wildlife Trusts to help protect crayfish in Dyers Brook from Potters Pond construction activities
- Removed trees adversely affecting residents in Marchesi Walk
- Prevented utility work in Long Street
- Established an in-principle agreement with landowners at Holywell Leaze
- Agreed Pre-application Development Protocol with SDC
- Installed new networked office computer system
- Engaged with Developers and Planning Inspectorate in an attempt to preserve the common land at Potters Pond
- Commented in detail on the Stroud District Local Plan and many planning applications
- Signed the Working Together in Stroud Protocol with SDC
- Supported the Synwell community in their attempts to resist unwelcome development of the Full Moon and adjacent garage site for Local Authority housing
- Expressed concerns about the planning application for 150 houses at Charfield Green

One Stop Shop Visitor Statistics - 2013

Month	SDC	GCC	WTC	Other	CC/TH Booking	Photocopy /Fax	CAB	Sales	Gen Info	Wotton Info	Totals
Jan	21	25	18	6	36	24	8	1	50	42	231
Feb	22	22	22	4	27	25	8	2	44	32	208
March	22	21	42	6	27	26	4		32	32	212
April	18	37	53	2	32	23	6		43	37	251
May	26	17	36	6	39	30	4	4	35	36	233
June	33	17	30	3	28	24	5		38	54	232
July	23	23	35	6	37	18	4	2	40	55	243
Aug	23	25	30		36	21	7		43	46	231
Sept	22	15	26	2	27	23	5		41	40	201
Oct	13	25	28	2	46	37	3		42	50	246
Nov	20	20	37	2	26	16	7		40	45	213
Dec	7	3	24	1	23	19	6	3	20	16	122
Totals	250	250	381	40	384	286	67	12	468	485	2623

Totals for 2011 were 2588, 2012 were 2987. There has been an increase in enquiries regarding Wotton Town Council, CAB and local information over the past 3 years. However there has been a decrease in visits for general information, photocopying and bookings for the Town Hall and Civic Centre. After going through the leaflets and rearranging the displays it appears that a lot of organisations no longer exist or have joined forces with others. A lot no longer produce leaflets in favour of website information.

WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE TOWN COUNCIL

BUDGET SUMMARY YEAR 2014/2015

Income		Amount
	Rent, Lettings, Interest, Fees etc	£38,665
	Local Council Tax Support Grant (-15%)	£18,237
	Precept (+2%)	£258,958
	Total Income	£315,860
Expenditure		
	Allotments	£1,700
	Town Regeneration	£6,300
	Civic Centre	£30,500
	Old Town Toilets	£7,200
	Youth Projects	£18,000
	Cemetery/Churchyard	£10,800
	Library	£1,650
	Neighbourhood Wardens	£2,000
	Civic Grants	£4,200
	Swimming Pool	£28,000
	Synwell Playing Field	£2,700
	CCTV Upgrade	£10,000
	Maintenance Wages	£27,500
	Chipping Club Room	£5,000
	Town Hall	£4,000
	Total Specific Items	£159,550
	Amenities and Other	£36,315
	Office Equipment and Administration salaries	£101,995
	Contingencies	£18,000
	Total Expenditure	£315,860

Wotton-under-Edge Town Council

(Figures excluding VAT)

Income 1st April 2013 to 28th February 2014

Rent, Lettings, Interest, Fees etc	£33,336
Council Support Grant	£21,538
Precept	£253,462
Total Income	£308,336

Main Expenditure Items 1st April 2013 to 28th February 2014

Allotments	£741
Town Regeneration	£4,639
Civic Centre Costs	£24,288
Old Town Toilets	£5,144
Youth Provision	£13,713 (SOSYP £12000)
Cemetery	£9,570
Library	£2,718
Neighbourhood Wardens	£2,000
Civic Events/Grants	£4,104
Swimming Pool	£28,000
Wages	£24,994
Town Hall	£4,000
Town Trust Support	£4,700
Total Specific Items	£128,611
 Amenities & Other	 £30,967
 Office Equipment & Admin. Salaries	 £92,359
Contingencies (Legal Fees, Potters Pond)	£2,598
Total Expenditure	£254,535

Breakdowns of Main Expenditure Items

Town Regeneration	
Farmers Market	£725
Wotton in Bloom	£2,000
Christmas Tree Grants/A Boards	£396
Website	£625
Subscriptions	£474
Flowers/Christmas Trees	£419
Total	£4,639
Cemetery/Churchyard	
Grasscutting	£7,155
Tree Work	£1,076
Waste disposal/rates etc	£1,339
Total	£9,570
Amenities & Other	
Vehicle	£1,933
CCTV 2 Year Maintenance Contract	£2,250
Tree Work	£1,710
Public Works Loan (Chipping Hall Floor)	£4,209
Grasscutting & Flowerbeds	£16,217
General Maintenance	£4,648
Total	£30,967
Office Equipment & Administration Salaries	
Audit	£1,085
Computer System	£4,197
Insurance	£8,496
Salaries	£68,933
Office Expenses	£4,833
Travelling/Subscriptions	£2,583
Training/Honoraria etc	£2,232
Total	£92,359

Grants Paid 1st April 2013 to 28th February 2014

Wotton Community Sports Foundation	£7,985 (From earmarked reserves)
Christmas Tree £10 Grants	£240 (from Town Regeneration)
A-Boards, Town Hall Teas	£156 (from Town Regeneration)
Wotton in Bloom	£2,000 (from Town Regeneration)
Total	£10,381
Citizens Advice Bureau	£2,800
County Air Ambulance	£300
Tabernacle Churchyard Grasscutting	£225
Home-Start Stroud District	£100
Cobalt	£50
Cotswold Vale Talking Newspaper	£50
Total	£3,525
Civic Events Catering etc	£579
Total of Civic Events/Grants	£14,485

POLICING

in Wotton under Edge Area
Report - September 2013 to March 2014 on Community Priority Areas

1. To reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour in and around Wotton under Edge.

Throughout the course of the previous 6 months we have taken an active role in trying to reduce the number of anti-social incidents that occur within Wotton and its surrounding parishes. High visibility patrols have been undertaken by the local neighbourhood policing team and visits to the local youth club have also taken place.

Various school talks are underway at the moment at KLB including Sexting to year 8 students and drugs talks to year 9 students. Talks to year 10s on Anti-social behaviour have been given by Jane McKerron from GL11, the licencing officer Jaine Simner, and PCSO Dodd. Further to this PCSO Dodd and Jane McKerron worked with the year 10 drama group at KLB by asking them to produce playlets on inappropriate behaviours / relationships which counted towards their coursework. These playlets will be incorporated into talks that will be rolled out on inappropriate relationships and domestic violence.

We have conducted regular patrols outside of KLB after school which enables us to interact with the pupils and ensure their behaviour, after school finishes, is not anti-social. We will be attending the school on a weekly basis to interact with the pupils during their lunch break.

School talks have been conducted at Blue Coat Primary on e-safety and this is also due to be done at The British School. Our aim is to become involved with all primary schools and KLB on a regular basis so that the children feel comfortable approaching us should they need advice or help.

There are a number of plans in place which will see us delivering school talks to all schools within Wotton and the surrounding areas on a rotational basis.

A number of anti-social behaviour warnings have been issued to youths around the area and their parents have been visited and advised. Patrols have also been conducted in the highlighted areas such as The British School who have been experiencing problems with youths entering the school grounds after hours.

There is a focused issue regarding a garage on Symn Lane where youths are gathering and causing a nuisance both inside and outside. The owner has been spoken to regarding this and a multi-agency approach has been taken with Stroud District Council to remove all items within it so that it is a shell and not so appealing to the youths. The garage is also due to be sold by the owner which will alleviate the issue.

2. Addressing Community concerns of parking, speeding and antisocial use of motor vehicles

Concerns regarding parking appear to be prominent within this local policing area, in order to combat this we have conducted patrols in the highlighted areas and dealt with any offending vehicle that we discover. Words of advice have been given to a number of drivers regarding their parking and consideration is sought from them too. We have placed signs around the area of the Civic Centre car park entrance as we were having a number of reports from local residents about cars parking here making it difficult for people to pass. Since these signs have been put up, we have not had any more reports of this nature. Our aim is to do the same in North Nibley where local residents are concerned regarding parking in this area.

As previously discussed in the last panel meeting, double yellow lines are now dealt with by an outside enforcement agency. Jim Daniels Parking Manager Gloucestershire County Council has been contacted asking for an update on how many visits have been made to WUE and the surrounding areas.

One of the problems that appear to be prominent from a Police point of view is parking by parents outside of schools during drop off and pick up times. We have had a number of reports from The British School regarding this and PCSO Rollins has been conducting his patrols here during the highlighted times. We are also in the process of working with the school to try and get a sign made to inform parents not to park on the zig-zag lines.

A number of speeding checks have been conducted within Wotton, many of these outside of KLB. We have taken a multi-agency approach in tackling speeding within this area by working with the mobile Police Station and Stroud District Council. During one particular speed check, Pc Sallis checked 150 cars and out of this amount 4 were in excess of the 30 mph speed limit (2 x 33 mph, 1 x 35 mph, 1 x 37 mph.). All drivers concerned were educated with regards to their speed.

During a separate speeding check outside of KLB the results were as follows: 16 cars were stopped and the drivers were spoken to with regards to their speed. Out of these, 4 drivers were issued with a ticket whereby they could have been offered a speed awareness course (if their speed was between 38mph and 42mph in a 30mph zone), anything over 42mph would have received 3 points on their licence and a £60 fine.



Our aim is to re-educate people with regards to their manner of driving which is in line with the Police and Crime Commissioners plan.

Safe & social driving – People should be able move around our communities in safety and with as much ease and convenience as possible. The police will enforce the law when necessary, but we will all work to reduce offending and antisocial driving.

We still have community speed watch in Kingswood which is going well, all volunteers are very keen to assist where they can and now that we are getting lighter nights they will be able to go out when they plan and not be side tracked by the bad weather. This scheme is an asset to the community and we believe they are doing a sterling job. The Neighbourhood Warden for the area Pete Gleed often goes out with this team to assist them and lend a hand when he can.

We do have some reports of vehicles being driven in an anti-social manner however this number is dropping since the main offender of this behaviour has had his driving licence taken from him.

There has also been a Section 59 Notice given to one young driver which details that should he or his vehicle be involved in another incident similar in nature within 6 months then the vehicle can be seized and crushed. He has not come to light since.

NB.....After a meeting on 13th March 2014 at the Civic Centre in Wotton, the Community Policing Priorities meeting also voted to include the 'education of young drivers on safer driving' as a high priority with no. 2 above, and the Police will shortly be working in secondary schools to achieve this aim through talks and presentations.



Wotton-under-Edge Town Council

Annual Parish Assembly 2014

Planning Committee Report

The Town Council was consulted by SDC on 93 applications and we commented on one application for 150 houses at Charfield Green in the adjacent Planning Authority area.

Town Council Recommendation	District Council Decision	Number
Support	Permitted	50
Support	Refused	1
Support	Not yet decided	27
Object	Permitted	11
Object	Refused	3

Significant Applications

1. **Change of use (from retail) , 1 Market Street (The Tolsey)** This application came before the SDC Planning Committee for decision and our objection was upheld by the Committee despite Officer recommendation for consent, after hearing submissions from (among others) , one of our District Councillors and the TC Planning Committee Chairman.
2. **Full Moon Public House.** Following a proposal to demolish and build Social Housing on the site of The Full Moon and the adjacent garages, the Full Moon Public House was registered as “ A Site of Community Interest ” by SDC.
3. **Potters Pond.** Although Planning Consent was granted in earlier years for 46 houses, the developer gave notice of works associated with development on Common Land at Potters Pond. The Town Council and others objected and the application is currently being decided by The Planning Inspectorate . A decision is expected shortly. Some of our objections were to the use of gabions in the Conservation Area and disturbance to the nationally significant population of the now rare native White Tailed Crawfish in the Dyers Brook.
4. **Stable at Uphill Coombe.** After a long and complicated planning history, appeals and representations by many local residents to both SDC and us , the matter of keeping horses in the stable will be decided by the Planning Inspectorate.

Chris Galbraith, Chairman Planning Committee.



Footpaths Committee Report to

Annual Parish Assembly 2014

1. **Membership** . Thanks to Cllr Pearce Kenny for his footpaths work , he has now resigned from the Town Council and has , as yet , not been replaced.

2. **Holywell Leaze**. The Town Council agreed (subject to the preparation of a legal agreement) to the erection of a fence at the top of the stream bank in order to discourage visitors and dogs from straying onto the adjacent land to the north , the landowner commissioned and paid for this. It was also agreed to update the Management Plan to take into account recent changes. The Cotswold Volunteer Wardens have kindly laid the hedge around part of the site.



3. **The Clump , Wotton Hill**. Thanks again to The Cotswold Wardens for clearing undergrowth , removing ivy from the walls and removing accumulations of litter from the walled area and around The Clump.

4. **Footpath Matters and Survey**. The long standing obstruction of CWE 15 across The Mears at Holywell by an electric fence has been removed . The footpaths survey is still ongoing , albeit , at a slower pace than previous years .

5. **County Council Footpath Work**. Commencing 1st April 2014 , Amey will be the Contractor for the New Highway (and footpaths) Contract let by GCC , reported in more detail elsewhere to the Parish Assembly.

6. **Trees at Marchesi Walk**. The tree report for Marchesi Walk prepared by the Footpaths Committee in 2012 has now been incorporated into the Town Council's tree maintenance programme and will be implemented in stages over the next few years.

7. **Lastly**. But not leastly , a big 'Thank You' to Yasmin Milsom , our Clerk , for all her hard work !

Chris Galbraith, Chairman Footpaths Committee.

ALLOTMENTS

REPORT TO ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY March 2014

This has been a year of consolidation. Our Administrative Officer Diana Hyam has approached her role with enthusiasm. Allotment records are now computer based which enables more efficient administration. She has been instrumental in improving The Tenancy Agreement and has produced a useful quick reference list of do's and don'ts which address the most frequent queries to her office. Copies of these have been sent to all allotment holders.

The council has been made aware of the new National Water Regulations Act of 1999 regarding the water supply to allotments with which we must comply. This is designed to reduce any possible back contamination of the public water supply, to reduce water consumption by minimising the risk of leakage and to encourage economical use of this resource.



The water supply at New Road has not been upgraded for many years and does not comply with these new standards. This supply will be redesigned and installed as funds permit. The water supply at Knapp road has been recently revamped but will need some changes to be compliant. The main change that allotment holders will see is that stand pipes will be replaced by troughs and hose pipes will be thing of the past. Needless to say this will be a very expensive operation ...but we have no choice.

The Knapp Road Allotment Association is hoping to work with the Town Council to improve the appearance of the roadside bank inside the new fence at the site. Continual cutting back of the encroaching nettles or chemical weeding killing are both impractical at that location. Again, this could well be a costly project.

We were sorry to hear of the death of Mr Cecil Smith, an allotment holder at Knapp Road for many years and a regular winner of the annual Best Kept Allotment Competition. He set high standards and will be missed by all.

I would like to thank the site representatives at Knapp Road, Ian Jones and Colin Mitchell and at New Road, Martyn Kingscote and Brian Elloway for their on going help and support. Hopefully the coming gardening year will be as productive as the last.



Clair Galbraith: chairman of Allotments Committee

TOWN REGENERATION PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2014

Christmas Lighting

The Town Council provided a grant of £10 to traders in the main streets of the Town as an incentive to put up a Christmas tree and lights on the outside of their premises. A total of £240 was paid.



Flower beds

The Town Council/Clerk is taking on the planting of the War Memorial planters for this coming season. There may be some changes to the flower bed planting/structure when the current contract ends in Autumn 2014.

Wotton in Bloom

This will be the fifth year of Wotton in Bloom. This year the baskets have had to be replaced due to deterioration. The Town Council has agreed to take over the watering contract this year, which will enable the VAT to be reclaimed and thus save overall costs. The Town Council will contribute £2000 towards the watering costs, the same amount as last year, with the remaining sum coming from Wotton in Bloom in the form of a grant to the Town Council.



Town Hall Teas

Six new A-Boards have been purchased at a cost of £156. All of the Sunday Town Hall Teas are booked for this year and all but one of the bank holiday Mondays. They will start the first Sunday in April. The record takings for a single Town Hall Tea in the 2013 season was £890, the average being around £250.

Youth Liaison

There are now two different youth providers at the Youth Centre operating on different evenings. The more recent provider is being funded for 12 months by the Youth Liaison group. The Youth Centre is very well-attended.

Sports Foundation

Meetings are taking place with KLB School with a view to creating a joint venture company to manage the sports facilities, both at the school and Sports Foundation site. It is hoped that this will be finalised by September. The Sports Foundation facilities are proving to be a big success. There are some issues with the impact the floodlights are having on neighbouring properties which need to be resolved, but the general feedback is that the facilities have transformed sport activities in the town.

Chamber of Trade

The Chamber of Trade suffered a decline in membership, however, the former president of the Chamber of Trade, Alex Wilkinson, has now returned to the helm and is visiting businesses to try to regenerate membership. The website has been revamped and the Breakfast and Supper Clubs reinstated. There will be an "Ideas Exchange" on 3rd April and they are looking into the viability of expanding markets in the town.

Towns Teams Initiative

This initiative arose from the Portas review of high streets and involved four towns in the Stroud District, including Wotton, with funding available for advertising and PR. The initiative has not proven very effective and will not continue. Remaining funds of £4000 will be available to support festivals for the four participating towns up to a maximum of £1000 each.

Wotton Electric Picture House

The cinema will be under new management from 1st April 2014 and will introduce more shows and improved advanced booking arrangements, as well as continuing many of the special community initiatives currently enjoyed.

Other Organisations

The Town Regeneration Partnership has members from a number of organisations in the town, all of whom are involved in organising a wide variety of special events and regular activities within the town. These include the churches and Churches Together, the Heritage Centre, Under-the-Edge Arts, Wotton Arts Association, Beaumont-le-Roger, Fairtrade Towns, the Civic Society and the Christmas Event group, as well as those detailed in the paragraphs above. Representatives of other community groups are welcome to join.



Youth Liaison Group

Report on Youth Service Provision in Wotton 2013/2014

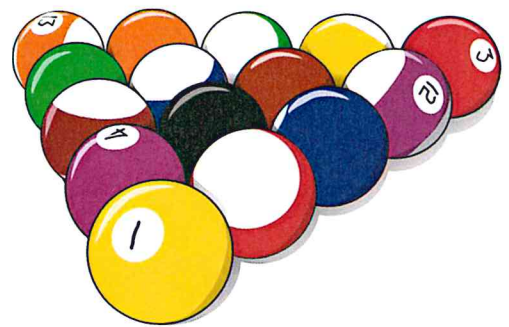
Wotton Youth Liaison Group (WYLG) and (WTC) work together to provide Youth Services in Wotton. Our key aim is to support young people in improving outcomes in education, training, employment and community engagement. We are currently providing a highly successful programme of activity based in the new Wotton Youth Centre.

Open Sessions

We offer two open sessions each week during school term time to provide a safe, relaxing, recreational space for Young People. These have proved very popular with our young people and we have seen attendance increase over time until we now regularly have 40 plus young people attending with the current record at 55.

Youth Forum

The Youth Forum is part of a district wide network through which Young People provide input into issues which affect them and provide feedback to local and district council. The Youth Forum has seen numbers increase and we now have 20 members. Youth Forum representatives now take an active part in Wotton Youth Liaison Group meetings and are represented on the Stroud District Youth Council. Youth Forum members are now also providing leadership in the open sessions and in other activities.



Additional Activities

We provide additional activities and to build confidence, emotional resilience and team-working skills. Highlights during 2013/14 are:

- After school sessions being delivered on Wednesdays with a more focused agenda designed to help Young people maximise their potential.
- Strong links forged with the Community Sports Foundation with Young People involved in designing the Skate Park and undertaking fund raising activity.
- Volunteering activity in August 2013 to refurbish the CAM Youth Centre.
- Successful arts project and exhibition August 2013.
- The Young People have introduced neighbourhood meet and greet Coffee Mornings. These have received positive feedback from the community and will now be organised on a regular basis.
- Being involved in the Christmas Fair was a major focus for our youth work this quarter. It raised the profile of the Youth Service as well as almost £200.

The future

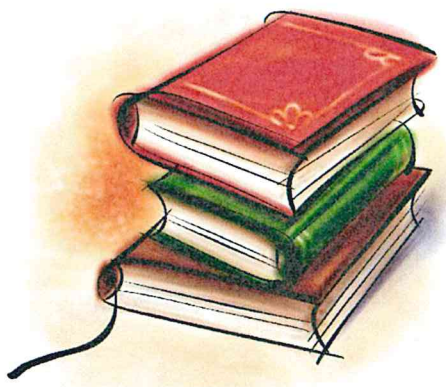
Wotton Youth Service is popular and successful. WYLG and WTC will continue to work together to support our Young People.

Mark Lovell - Chair, Wotton Youth Liaison Group

Wotton under Edge Library

Ludgate Hill

Monday	Closed	
Tuesday	10.00 – 1.00	2.00 – 6.00
Wednesday	10.00 – 1.00	2.00 – 5.00
Thursday	Closed	
Friday	10.00 – 1.00	2.00 – 5.00
Saturday	9.30. – 12.30	



The Library is open 22 hours a week and this is thanks to both our Library Support Volunteers and monies given by the Town Council; the latter of which pays for an additional 4 hours of opening on Tuesday afternoon & early evening.

The volunteers who work alongside Library Staff have enabled the library to open for an additional 6 hours.

Wotton is a flourishing library with the average number of visitors increasing from last year. Our monthly average is currently 1660.

We have a wide variety of activities from Baby Bounce & Rhyme sessions which are for babies up to the age of 18 months to the monthly Library Club for older people.

Books are still the primary reason people visit us and whilst there has been a slight decrease we are still issuing on average 2,500 books per month with fiction being the most popular closely followed by picture books for our younger readers.

We are already starting to think about our Summer Reading Challenge the annual event for primary age children which aims to keep them reading during the school holidays. This National promotion has a new theme every year with last year's being Creepy House and 176 children in Wotton participated – an increase on the previous year. This year's theme is the Mythical Maze and we are hoping that even more children will join in.

We always welcome new members and if you haven't visited recently you may not be aware that the library service now offers e-book lending alongside the traditional service – and free of charge.

Report from the Wotton Community Sports Foundation to the Wotton Town Council Annual Meeting March 2014

Looking back at the past 12 months, we think that the progress and results on the New Road site have exceeded our expectations.

Thanks to the unprecedented generosity of Sir David McMurtry, we've finally been able to complete the construction of our new artificial pitches, and we are even more pleased that they are being so well used – current figures show almost two thousand users per week enjoying the benefits of the new facilities.

Our opening day on 21st September was a proud moment for all of us, and brought a fantastic atmosphere to the combined facilities available on the New Road and KLBS sites.

We've had to deal with a number of teething issues, notably on the power supply to the floodlights and the arrangements for opening & closing the site, but we are pleased that solutions to both these issues are now in place.

Looking forward to the coming twelve months, the most important issue for us now is the planned construction of the skate area.

We've been fortunate to secure some further funding from a number of sources, for which we must thank the Wotton Town Council and the Wotton Youth Liaison Group for their assistance. We are currently awaiting bids from three companies who have expressed an interest in constructing our skate area; with this information to support bids for funding we believe that we can secure the remaining monies required and commence construction of our skate area during FY 2014/15.

Again, we are very grateful for the continuing support from the Wotton Town Council and Councillor Jackie Cartigny in particular for her excellent contributions. We would also like to acknowledge the help and support that we receive from the multitude of other local groups and organisations.

We look forward to a fantastic year of sport in Wotton!

Barnaby Beere
Chairman, Wotton Community Sports Foundation



WOTTON IN BLOOM 2014



The **Wotton in Bloom** team is hard at work planning and fundraising for this year's hanging baskets and troughs. This is the fifth year running that **Wotton in Bloom** will have provided floral displays in Market Street, Long Street, High Street, Church Street and part of Haw Street: enhancing our town centre with vivid, vibrant flowers.

We are all involved in this because we believe that it makes a difference to the town. We receive letters and comments giving overwhelming support from local residents,

people passing through and visitors to the town: clearly they appreciate the difference that **Wotton in Bloom** makes to the town, complimenting the beautiful Cotswold architecture.

The project is funded by donations:

- From local traders who contribute to the cost of the flowers outside their premises.
- From local clubs and societies who donate, or who sponsor a basket. In 2013 we were able put up 11 baskets at charity shops and empty properties – all sponsored by local groups.
- From businesses who do not have shop fronts on the main streets but see the benefits to the Town.
- From individuals and others who show their support by donating to the project.

The Town Council, Chamber of Trade and Renishaw plc have always supported **Wotton in Bloom**, and we would like to thank them and everyone else for making it such a success so far.

This year the baskets will be going up at the end of May (weather permitting) and we are determined to make it a bumper year for flowers. We will be writing to everyone who has supported us in the past, and lots of others who haven't yet had the opportunity! Thanks to your generosity we have been able to replace our baskets this year, and will continue to water, feed and maintain them.

Last year we raised over £10,000 – this year we aim to do the same. Our collection boxes are ready to go into shops, we will be holding a street collection and our usual stall at the Charities Fair selling home grown, home-made pickles and preserves.

If you would like to be part of **Wotton in Bloom** 2014 please contact me, Sue Hunt, on 01453 521263, or at suehunt2@btinternet.com.

KEEP WOTTON BLOOMING IN 2014!



WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE SWIMMING POOL Ltd *(Registered Charity)*

Summary for the year to 31st October 2013

Highlights of the season



Availability & Use

- Overall use of the pool was estimated to have increased by 23% overall on the previous year (10% in 2012) with adult swims up 48% and children's swims up 8%
- The pool was open every day, as advertised
- About 7700 (6300 in 2012) swims were taken during public sessions this summer - about 50 per day on average (44 a day in 2012)
- In addition there were school swimming sessions for Bluecoat School, British School and Katherine Lady Berkeley School
- There were also 58 private party bookings (66 in 2012) - the fall due in part to the Triathlon Club moving to a larger all weather pool
- Entry prices were maintained at the levels charged in 2011: £2:50 adult, £1:50 for children, £50 for an hour's hire

Lifeguard training and Swimming Lessons

- There were swimming lessons for children and the pool is registered as an approved training centre with the Royal Life Saving Society and ran refresher training for lifeguards as well as a course for new lifeguards – with 8 successful graduates (12 in 2012)

Facility Improvements

- The major upgrade was to the pool surrounds outside the enclosure - the old concrete was replaced and the services beneath the concrete were upgraded to improve drainage and electrical supply
- Spectator seating was repaired and upgraded
- Ex-service thermal solar panels that had been donated by EDF Energy in Gloucester were installed towards the end of the season
- Art work from local Katherine Lady Berkeley School was hung within the enclosure following an art competition organised by the school.
- The fence by the external ramp was decorated
- Water temperature was maintained at a consistent 27C – 29C

Report on County Council Matters

to Wotton-under-Edge Annual Assembly 18th March 2014
John Cordwell

This of course can only be a summary of what has been happening at the County Council.

The most convenient point to start this report is following the May 2013 County Council elections.

County Council Election, May 2013

As you may recall, a Boundary Commission review led to a reduction in the number of county councillors from 63 to 53. This came into effect at the May 2nd elections. This was made without any thought to the effect on the ground. Locally it extended the Wotton-under-Edge electoral division to include the Stroud District Council Vale Ward, in addition to the Kingswood and Wotton wards.

I retained my seat in this enlarged division and am now the longest-serving county councillor, taking over that role from Basil Booth, who retired in May. Basil's area included Ham & Stone and Alkington.

The election took the council from one in which the Conservatives had an overall majority to one where no party had overall control.

Of the 53 councillors elected, just 28 had served in the previous council and another three had been county councillors in the past. This is a very large turnover in members and a lot of training was required. Since the election the council has been run by a minority Conservative administration which holds all eight seats on the Cabinet.

I am not a fan of the Cabinet system. When one party has an overall majority few people outside the Cabinet, of all parties, know what is going on. The present position of no overall control is an improvement since it means there is more participation for those outside the cabinet, with shadow cabinet positions and more cross-party meetings.

My roles on the County Council

Following the election, in order to track the Cabinet portfolios my position has changed slightly and I am Shadow Cabinet member for Fire, Planning and Infrastructure, which in fact includes a number of other areas*.

I continue to be my group's lead member on the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee, although it has increased its scope since the election, the Planning Committee, Traffic Regulation Order Committee and Commons and Rights of Way Committee.

Also, I continue to chair the county's Stroud Road Safety Liaison Group.

On outside bodies, I regained my position as the council's representative on the Severn Estuary Partnership. I am now also a member of the Berkeley Site Stakeholder Group.

I remain a regionally-appointed member of South West Councils and its Resources and Management Committee.

County Budget 2014/15

At the County Council meeting on 26th February the council's minority Conservative administration put forward a budget for £428.11M which represents a decrease in cash terms of £2.80 M. Broadly this was supported by the council. Council tax has been frozen for a fourth year, requiring a precept of £227.134M. Proposed amendments to the budget, mostly from the Liberal Democrat and Labour groups were all tabled simultaneously. The council then adjourned for discussions on these between the political groups. Many were agreed, some with modifications. One that was not was a bid by the Liberal Democrats to put an extra £1M into highways maintenance and in a subsequent vote it was defeated by 15 votes to many more. The argument against it was that if a bid to Government for a grant of up to £15M in respect of flood damage was successful the highways staff would not be able to cope with the work produced by an extra £1M.

Other changes were as follows:

Active Together Grant: The County is now once again responsible for public health for which it receives a £22M Public Health Grant. The draft budget included a one-off £2.65M grant, that is, £50k per county councillor from this to support the prioritisation and delivery of sport and physical activity within their electoral divisions. This was amended to £40k per individual county councillor. The remaining 53 x £10k is to be pooled, so that the ten county councillors in the Stroud District Council area will have £100k to fund healthy projects and healthy living campaigns in disadvantaged communities. It was a concern that the original scheme did not prioritise disadvantaged areas (as mentioned in my letter published in the Gazette on 20th February).

Young People's Mental Health: a new £450k investment over two years (originally a Liberal Democrat proposal for £1M over two years) to help programmes and services to improve young people's mental health.

SkillZone: A Liberal Democrat proposal for a one-off £35k to give all Year 5 pupils (aged 9/10) attending Gloucestershire schools the opportunity to attend a session at the SkillZone, to improve their awareness of safety issues and risk of injury. So far only pupils from 56 of the 246 primary schools in the county have visited the SkillZone.

Bus Travel Cards: costing an estimated £450k per year, worth £200 each for first-year apprentices aged up to 24 and for children in care and care leavers aged 16 to 24 to assist with their travel costs. Prior to its introduction in September some further work is needed on this Labour proposal to see how young people in places where public transport is not available can be helped.

Living Wage: a Labour proposal costing £211k so that 119 council employees who are paid less than £7.65 per hour see their wages increased to this amount.

Residents' Parking Permit Fees: mostly involving Cheltenham and Gloucester, this Liberal Democrat amendment reduces the fee from £80 to £50 for the first car. At £80 it was one of the three most expensive places to purchase a permit. This will cost £132k per annum.

Community Empowerment Chest: A Labour proposal for £100k in grants of up to £5k each to assist community start-ups, community enterprises and voluntary and charitable organisations.

Pupil Premium: a Liberal Democrat proposal for a £10k study into the use of the pupil premium in Gloucestershire schools, so that best practice can be shared.

The budget also includes:

- continuing the £20k per county councillor to spend on highway works within their community for a further year.

- an allocation of £5k per annum allocated to each county councillor to support activity projects for local children and young people in their area. This would seem to be a small recompense for the withdrawal of most of the county youth service a few years' ago. This is in addition to continuing the £50k per district council area for youth facilities.

County Residual Waste Disposal Project – Javelin Park

Prior to the election the County Council's Cabinet, despite many objections, pressed ahead with its plans for waste disposal using an incinerator, to be located at Javelin Park, close to junction 12 of the M5. Against advice from its Environment Scrutiny Committee the council signed a contract with Urbaser-Balfour Beatty (UBB) before UBB's planning application was considered by the county's planning committee on 21st March. Indeed it was signed just a few weeks before.

At the end of an 11-hour meeting the application was refused unanimously by the 18 members of the planning committee, of which I was one.

The grounds for refusal were based on environmental considerations, essentially that the harm to the landscape outweighed the benefits, that it introduced a prominent building into a rural area overlooked by the AONB and the Cotswold Way, and that it would have an overbearing effect on nearby residential properties. The council was not able to object to the proposed technology.

UBB appealed against the decision and a public inquiry was held starting on 19th November 2013 and concluding at the end of January this year. The inspector was the same person who previously considered the council's Waste Core Strategy. The Secretary of State has "recovered" the appeal, which means that the planning inspector will not determine it himself but will submit a report with his recommendations to the Secretary of State, supposedly not later than 21st May 2014.

Highways Funds devolved to County Councillors

In the 2013/2014 financial year, councillors were allocated £20k to spend on highway issues within their divisions. Such a sum of money does not go far!

As in the previous year I was keen to ensure that I didn't spend the money on things which the county

council was required to fix or was already intending to do.

The two schemes which I eventually put forward both involved dealing with defects in roads that didn't meet the formal definition of potholes:

- between Wortley and Alderley and
- on the A38 in Newport, just north of the Stagecoach Inn and a bit further up the road.

Other work which I had considered including was undertaken by Gloucestershire Highways (GH):

- potholes in Old Town, Wotton. Since then, more have appeared!
- the condition of a lane in Lower Stone which GH dealt with this using jetpatching,
- patching at the turn for Stinchcombe near Road Green.

New Highways Contract

Amey have been successful in securing the new contract for highway services, having been selected from a shortlist of four. The contract starts in April for an initial period of five years, but could be extended to 11 years, making the contract worth between £130M and £450M in total.

There has been some disquiet about the role that public rights of way volunteers will have when Amey take over the Highways Contract in April. Amey held a meeting at Shire Hall on 25th February to which parish councils and others were invited and which dealt particularly with this issue. I hope the volunteers have been reassured.

We are now starting on a new street lighting contract.

Commons and Rights of Way Committee

The large backlog of PROW modification applications and associated problems with the Definitive Map received critical questions from members of the public and councillors at recent meetings of the committee. Prior to this it had not met for two years. Previous cuts meant that only one officer was left to deal with these applications.

In view of this concern by me and others a bid was made for extra staff which I followed up with a question at the council's budget meeting. I am very pleased to report that two full-time posts are being advertised internally.

Village greens will form a large part of the forthcoming work of the committee. There has been an upsurge in these in attempts to thwart unwanted building development brought about by the relaxation of planning rules.

Local Government Structure

Following a Labour motion to the September meeting of the County Council a task group was set up, of which I was a member, to assess the feasibility of unitary local government in Gloucestershire (again!).

The driver behind this was the ever-increasing Government pressure on local government spending and the need to reduce costs whilst protecting services. A meeting was held in December to which all six district councils were invited to send senior representatives. There was clearly little enthusiasm for such a change. It was felt that joint working arrangements between authorities in the interests of efficiency were the best way forward. This was reported back by the task group and that is the end of the matter – for now!

Water

Localised flooding of roads and properties has been a concern, particularly in the Vale and included sewage overflowing. In Gloucestershire as a whole, Tewkesbury has suffered once again as have other places such as Alney Island in Gloucester.

The Environment Agency's original Severn Estuary Flood Management Strategy was heavily criticised and a revised version has been produced. The problem is that the EA has insufficient resources to protect everything and the economic bias in favour of protecting property rather than farmland is a concern for local farmers.

The Flood and Water Management Act Schedule 3 is due to come into effect on 1st April 2014 after which the County Council has statutory responsibility for approval of sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS) on all new developments of two or more dwellings – around 500 per year in the county. The council has no identified budget for dealing with this. The Government originally said we should charge developers to make it self-financing but more recently it seems this has been amended to individual

householders having to be charged.

Planning permission may be granted by a district council but be unable to go ahead if the proposed SUDS is refused by the county council. Agricultural developments that don't require planning permission may be prevented from going ahead because of an inadequate drainage scheme.

Once a scheme is approved, GCC ends up adopting the SUDS and maintaining it. GCC will receive commuted sums to cover the long-term maintenance.

Highway Maintenance

The state of the roads and footways remains a top concern with Gloucestershire residents and others who travel through the county. Flood damage over the winter, including landslips, has been estimated as between £7M and £15M and a bid for a grant has been made to the Government. The grant will, at best, only cover the extra damage caused by flooding and not for any betterment of the highway condition prior to the flood damage.

The current backlog in road repairs stands at around £86M and the county has to spend £15M per year (excluding further damage caused by flooding) to prevent it getting bigger. It is just about managing that.

On top of that between £4M and £6M is spent on routine maintenance – mostly pothole repair.

Some local parishes have registered concern over the time that has been taken to repair street lights. I have been following these up and have also started monitoring the time it takes to repair the ones I report.

If it is just replacing the lantern, this usually only takes a few days from being reported, but if it is an electricity supply problem it can take a lot longer.

The best way to report potholes, street lighting and street furniture faults is via

<http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/reportit> This reporting system allows you to mark the location on a map, which also shows you whether it has already been reported and any other reports from nearby. You will also be given a reference number, allowing you to follow progress.

Fire & Rescue Service

As well as its work in Gloucestershire, the county service has given support to Somerset in tackling the problems on the Somerset Levels.

At the end of January the Chief Fire Officer, Jon Hall, retired. I participated in the interviews for his successor, Stewart Edgar, from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. He started working for us just a few weeks later (24th February).

July saw the service acquire some new fire trucks, including one for Wotton.

The service is one of the most efficient in the country, as endorsed by a recent review. There have been suggestions of merging the service with that of one of our neighbours, but the local service would lose out in such an amalgamation.

Landslip. Old London Road

The road has been closed since November 2012 and has proved to be more of a problem than first supposed.

At the February meeting of the County Council I asked the Cabinet Member how many sections of road in Gloucestershire are currently subject to closure or restrictions caused by landslips, and how is their reopening being prioritised, pointing out that Old London Road has been closed for 15 months at that time. Nine were named, including Horsley, although I had to prompt the inclusion of Old London Road which had accidentally been omitted from the list produced! The costs of a number of these are likely to exceed £500k, which will require the council going out to tender.

I have also been copied in to an email from the county's senior geotechnical engineer who said the timescale for construction would need to be determined by Amey/GCC but that GCC consider it a high priority.

John Cordwell

Stroud District Council AGM Report To Wotton Town Council

We have a 3 party administration of Labour, Liberal and Green parties. The Conservatives are in opposition.

Changing to a Committee System: There is no longer a Cabinet or Executive. After the Council AGM in May 2013 we changed to a Committee System with 4 main Committees, each with its own budget, which are:-

Strategy and Resources	£5,927,900
Community Services	£5,724,500
Environment	£5,040,300

Housing comes within the Housing Revenue Account which has a capital expenditure of £21.095 million planned for 2014/15. The 'first division' elements of the programme should deliver an increase of 59 properties to the council's housing stock through a combination of purchases and new build.

I was voted in as Committee Chair of Community Services. This is a very different role with more delegation to officers. Paul Smith is on this committee and is Vice Chair of Environment. The following committees will remain as separate committees as before: - **Planning, Licensing, Audit and Council.**

The Stroud District element of the Council Tax for 2014/15 will be held at the same level as last year.

Parking: GCC from 1st April 2013 has contracted out **ON** street parking. **Off** street parking is still dealt with by SDC officers. The back office work (parking tickets) has been dealt with by Cotswold District Council, but in the future the work will be done in house at SDC and this will be a saving of £32,000.

New Recycling Service: The new service has achieved the 30% recycling target and continues to be around 31%. Complaints and resident queries are now lower than before the scheme was introduced. There are actual savings to the Council of £70,000 for 2012/13 and predicted £245,000 for 2014/15.

The Full Moon Pub: There were moves afoot between Hammonds Yates Ltd and SDC to knock down the pub and SDC garages to build 19 affordable houses for SDC. The demolishing of 18 garages will displace cars onto Mount Pleasant where there is already a parking problem. The Synwell community signed papers to allow them to bid for community use of the pub. Owners of the pub turned down the community offer. I set up a meeting to speak with the head of housing and SDC have now made some concessions:-Although the tenants of the garages were given notice on their leases by SDC this was rescinded. The garages have now been taken off the schedule for the housing re-build programme.

Improving the carriageway issues in Mount Pleasant will be investigated regardless of any building scheme progressing. Any improvements will be in the new financial year

Flooring at Stratford Park Leisure Centre: As soon as The Count was finished at the Leisure Centre for the County Council Elections, work began on renewing the floor of the Main Hall. It was affected by flooding and holes appeared which were filled with resin the old floor was laid in 1975 and was due to be renewed in 2018

Stratford Park Leisure Centre Changing Rooms: This is a major upgrade of facilities, not altered since the Leisure Centre was opened on 1975. The upgrade of the ventilation system needs to be done as part of the modernisation. Walls will be knocked down to provide better security and more space for disabled people. The lockers will be renewed to a standard enjoyed by Dursley pool. There will be both open plan family changing facilities and more private cubicles. The upgrade is not in this year's

budget so Council is being asked to spend £61,000 this year as part of the £219,375 already been recouped through insurance.

The contract run by Sports and Leisure Management continues to be going well. The contract for the outside area of Stratford Park, with a budget of £210,000 was awarded to the same contractors as before. The new contract started on 1st December 2013.

Dursley Pool: Serving the South of the District Dursley Pool is to have an extension consisting of a gym and dance studio. The cost will be 1.4 million. This is the first time in many years that any major investment has been made in the south of the district. £4m went into the canal and there has been no capital expenditure since. The subsidy for Rednock Joint Use Centre is at present £43,321. The subsidy for Wotton Joint Use Centre at KLB is £39,886. Dursley Pool is an investment to save and the money will be recouped within 10 years. It will provide 3.50 jobs and apprenticeships.

Stroud District Council has again met the **Investors in People (HP) standard** and has gained the **Health and Wellbeing award**.

Public Toilets: The toilets in Castle Street car park in front of Dursley Pool are to be demolished, thus releasing 4 more parking spaces. There are now toilets in Sainsbury's, the swimming pool and 400 yards away in May Lane by the Old Spot. The latter toilets are to be refurbished. The cost of this is in the region of £60,000. There will be a pay back of £11,000 per year. Again this is an investment to save.

Stroud District Council has been awarded about £900,000 to install 400 air source heat pumps in council homes. It is the largest allocation to any council and larger than the total allocation for the whole of Scotland. The grant will go towards helping make council properties more efficient and to help tenants reduce their fuel bills. In a programme to use green renewable energy a show house at Kings Stanley has been created. It is fitted out with the technology to show the positive difference these improvements can make. It is one of the first in the country to achieve the highest possible energy efficiency rating of A.

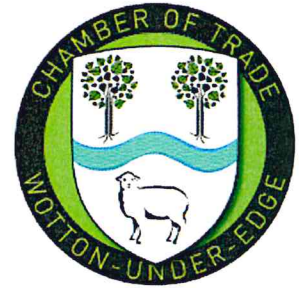
The Armed Forces Community Covenant: There is a long term voluntary Statement of Mutual Support between the civilian population and the serving and veteran armed forces community in the Stroud District. As Champion for SDC I will be a member of the vetting panel which awards grants.

A financial Inclusion Strategy was developed to respond to the issues of housing revenue and protect the Councils income. However there are much wider issues facing our communities including: increased costs for utility services, gas, electric and water, access to banking services to those who will receive universal credit payments as well as multiple debt issues and the increase in payday and short term, high interest loans, where those on low income with poor credit are unable to access affordable emergency loans. **The aim of the Strategy** is to bring together inter agency working with case referral and the use of a more streamlined approach to case work between agencies. Develop a multi-agency relationship that enables better network to be developed between partners, training between partners to ensure that all partners know what each other does and where skills and strengths lie. Agree a joint focus on clients in terms of defined service standards and outcomes so that all work to the same aims. Citizens Advice Bureau will be a lead member and lead the training.

Cllr. June Cordwell

Chairman of Community Services Stroud District Council

Calendar of events 2014



13th February supper club. The Swan Hotel 6.30pm
Talk by Pete Roberts entitled 'Back to the Future'.
7th March Networking breakfast. The Falcon Steakhouse 7.30am.
3rd April Idea Exchange supplemented with Wine & Cheese Evening
hosted by Wotton Gallery at 7.00pm
24th April Supper Club. The Edge Coffee Shop 6.30pm
Talk by Jeff Walsh entitled 'The History of Wotton Cinema'
13th May Wickwar Brewing co Brewery Tour & Supper with real Ale
depart from the Swan Hotel by Minibus 6.15pm
23rd May Networking Breakfast. The Royal Oak 7.30am
26th June Supper Club. The Swan Hotel 6.30pm
3rd July Barbecue & Clay Pigeon Shoot (Mark H) Park Mill Farm
10th October Networking Breakfast. (Venue to be confirmed)
8th November Supper Club. (Venue & speaker to be confirmed)
13th December Christmas Dinner at The Royal Oak 7.00pm

Events also being organised (dates to be confirmed)

Another? Clay Pigeon Shoot at Park Mill Farm

Quiz Night & Buffett at the Star Inn

Visit to Renishaw new site at New Mills.

Idea Exchange Evening 3rd April at 7:00pm with wine and cheese hosted by Wotton Gallery Thursday

We would like to invite all Local businesses for an interactive evening of collaboration on how to promote Wotton-under-Edge, complemented with wine/soft drinks and cheese. We would like to take the focus of the Chamber of Trade events back to its roots: business!

We encourage all members and non-members to generate ideas in preparation for a group discussion about the following suggested agenda topics:

1. Renishaw Old Town Site
2. Launching the Saturday Market in Market Street
3. Local Auctions: connecting large events back to the heart of town
4. Town pride and business motivation (re: Flower baskets)
5. Increase Wotton's appeal: to traders
6. Increase Wotton's appeal: to visitors
7. Business opening hours
8. How to encourage registered members to attend/return to more Chamber events

If you would like to add any topic for discussion on the evening, then please email Alex at president@wotton.biz. The event will be held at Wotton Gallery. Space is limited and should there be significant interest, then we will consider another venue. We will send you a confirmation of venue 2/3 days before the event. Please book on the website in the normal way <http://wotton.biz/booking.php?id=57>. We look forward to seeing you on the night for a productive evening

Kind regards

*Alex Wilkinson, President 07976 272764
Wotton under Edge & District Chamber of Trade & Commerce*