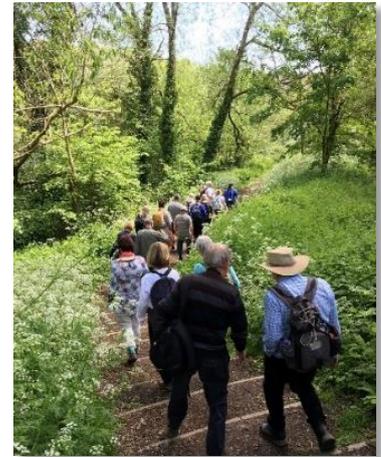


WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE TOWN COUNCIL



# ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY ~ REPORT FY2019-2020



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## DRAFT MINUTES OF WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE TOWN COUNCIL

### ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY

Held on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2019, at 7pm in the Civic Centre



**Present:** Cllrs, P Smith (Mayor), R Claydon (Deputy Mayor), P Barton, John Cordwell, June Cordwell, T Luker, M Short, J Turner, N Pinnegar, R Hale, D Thomas.

District Cllrs K Tucker, Ms C Braun.

**In attendance:** Town Clerk Ms S Bailey & Administrator Mrs D Hyam Members of the Public 11

1) **Welcome** The Mayor welcomed members of the public and introduced SDC Chief Executive Kathy O'Leary.

2) **Guest Speaker SDC Chief Executive Kathy O'Leary.**

Ms O'Leary outlined her aims for the future of the District Council.

- The County, District and local Town and Parish Councils must collaborate and work together to achieve value for money. It will be important to visit towns and villages in the district to listen to local communities to establish what can be achieved.
- There is impression that Wotton feels forgotten by the District Council along with others, however there will be not be such an emphasis on Stroud as it is important to build relationships with Town and Parish Councils and Councillors.
- Over the next five years Councils will struggle to meet costs with the reduction in funding from Central Government. SDC has been financially secure but this has been due to using reserves to balance accounts. It will be important for the District Council to be self-sufficient for a stable future.
- In future services that are not statutory might be at risk. Youth services that were cut by GCC have proved to be successful with alternative support, such as the Youth Centre in Wotton which is funded and managed by the Town Council. SDC may look at introducing agency services for the residents such as a handyman service so that residents can find a reliable tradesman to carry out maintenance. This would use knowledge available at the Council and generate much needed revenue.

The Following Questions were raised by the Public

UTEA. Concern was raised by a resident regarding funding of £2,500 on a 3 year programme and would this support continue in light of the housing developments in Charfield and Kingswood?

Other ways of funding may have to be considered such as a lottery for good causes. This will be presented to Councillors as there are many strict safeguards.

Decline in High Streets. Cllr D Thomas raised concern regarding empty shops etc. Many businesses are struggling due to rents and taxes.

It is important to offer a greater experience to attract customers to the High Streets, such as cafés, restaurants and markets.

SDC Carbon Neutral by 2030. A member of the public asked how this can be achieved.

SDC are looking at ways to change the car fleet to electric or dual fuel vehicles. There will be a lot of research into the positioning of charging points and how cars perform in this hilly district. A report will be submitted on 6<sup>th</sup> June outlining proposals to the Environment Committee,

Communication between SDC and WTC. Cllr M Short raised concerns that in some cases work had started on projects and applications before notification was received by WTC, such as the bin shelters at Bearlands as no consultation took place.

It was noted that communication has to be improved and this is being looked into. However, another system may have to be considered to make the improvements needed.

Local transport for elderly people in the area. Concern was raised regarding access to services such as the Memory Group that meet in Wotton. Residents from outlying villages have to rely on volunteers, family or friends to give them lifts due to poor public transport.

As budgets are being squeezed rural transport is a big issue and ways of using community schemes and other solutions are being investigated.

**2) Adoption of Previous Minutes** of the Annual Parish Assembly of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2018 and any matters arising from those minutes. It was proposed by Cllr R Hale and seconded by Cllr P Barton to approve the Minutes as presented, all in favour.

**3) Brief Report from the Mayor** Cllr Paul Smith

The Mayor thanked the Town Clerk and staff for their hard work during a very difficult time due to reduced resources caused by long term leave. He thanked Councillors for their support with taking on work to help the staff and he also thanked members of the committees and co-opted members for their support over the last year. He had nothing further to add to his written report in the booklet.

**4) Brief Reports from Town Council Committee Chairs.**

**Planning** (Cllr R Claydon)

The report in the booklet outlined the number of significant applications received and Cllr Claydon highlighted the following;

- Garages at Mount Pleasant. WTC objected to this application and was not informed of the application going to the DCC therefore was unable to raise any objections.
- Land North of Holywell. WTC objected to this application and it was refused by the Planning Authority.
- Garages at Berkeley Close. Following concerns raised by local residents WTC objected to this application.
- Dryleaze Court. WTC supported this application and suggested changes to the plan.
- District Local Plan 2020-2030 SDC is required to provide 12,800 new homes most will be towards Gloucester City and does not include Wotton. Public consultation on the final proposal will take place in the Autumn.

**Footpaths** (Cllr R Claydon)

Cllr Claydon thanked members of the committee for their work over the past year. The report in the booklet included the following points:

- The committee surveyed over 70 footways and problems were reported to GCC.
- Wotton is to become part of the “Cotswold Gateway Project” the Cotswold Conservation Board will be installing noticeboards and markers for several routes.
- Wotton Walking Festival was held recently and has been very successful attracting more walkers to the town.

**Allotments** (Cllr P Barton) Nothing further to add to the written report provided in the booklet.

**Regeneration** (Cllr A Wilkinson) No report available and Cllr A Wilkinson was not present at the meeting.

**Wotton Youth Partnership** (Cllr June Cordwell) Nothing further to add to the written report in booklet.

**Wotton Library.** No attendee, however a written report provided in the booklet.

**Wotton in Bloom.** (Mrs J Tebb) A written report provided in the booklet.

**Wotton Pool.** No attendee, however a written report provided in the booklet.

**Wotton Community Sports Foundation** No attendee, however a written report provided in the booklet.

**Synwell Playing Field.** (Mrs A Hartley) A written report provided in the booklet.

**Heritage Centre** (Mrs J Walshe) A written report provided in the booklet. Mrs Walshe highlighted that visitor numbers have increased and that she was disappointed that SDC have no tourism officers. It was pointed out that the Heritage Centre does not get any funding from SDC but is supported by WTC.

**Wotton-under-Edge & District Community Recreational Trust.** (Mrs J Walshe) A written report provided in the booklet Mrs Walshe added that Beaumont le Roger will be joining the trust as an affiliated group.

**County Council Matters** (Cllr John Cordwell) A written report was provided Cllr John Cordwell highlighted the following points;

- It was noted that there has been an average of 35% cost increase in tenders from local bus operators to retain the existing service provision.
- The conversion of street lighting to LED in Wotton will continue until the end of July.
- Last year councillors were allocated £30k over three years to support local projects. Allocations to date include a total of £6.36k to the two primary schools in Wotton.
- This year resurfacing work is planned for Synwell Lane.
- Safety concerns have been raised regarding the queuing traffic at the recycling centre at Horsley which can at times back out along the B4058 to the junction with the road leading to Cockadilly.

**District Council Matters** (District Cllr Catherine Braun and Cllr K Tucker) A written report provided in booklet.

#### 7) **Questionnaire Results** (Cllr R Claydon)

From the results the Town Council have agreed that the way forward would be to proceed with Old Town Toilets and commission architects plans, secure funding from SDC (£40k now available) and seek a Public works loan. The area could easily accommodate a unisex modular toilet that would allow for seating and a garden similar to the garden in front of the Rope Walk Toilets. The Town Market would wait until Symn Lane car park is available. The OK Path lighting requires further analysis to ascertain the real need and it may become part of the “Greenway” which could lead to alternative funding.

#### 8) **Public Forum**

##### **Old Town Toilets**

- It was suggested that a local architect could be approached who might give services at a reduced rate.
- As a new building was being considered for the toilets could it be designed to be dementia friendly with different coloured doors walls etc.
- It was important to include baby changing facilities.

##### **Ok Path KLB**

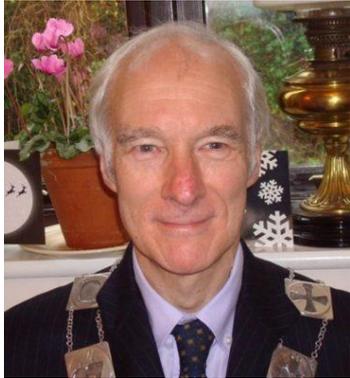
- It would be beneficial to conduct a survey of the students at KLB to ascertain support for the project.
- There was strong feeling that GCC should contribute to the project rather than the WTC.
- It was noted that residents from Kingswood and Wotton use the path regularly in day light but not at night due to the lack of lighting.
- It was suggested that the new Head Teacher Mr T Rand be approached to discuss the project.

The Assembly concluded at 8.45pm

Signed.....Date.....

Chairman & Town Mayor

## Mayor's Report



### Overview

Although this is a report covering the past 12 months of Council business, the Coronavirus Pandemic has affected us all so significantly over the past few weeks that I thought it appropriate to comment on this first.

We are now facing the enormous challenge of the Coronavirus emergency and its adverse impact will be with us for a long time to come. It has affected everyone and all our normal activities. The Town Council is no exception. The “lock-down” has prevented Council meetings from taking place and we have been operating with a skeleton staff during the “lock-down” period. Council decisions have been taken in accordance with delegation arrangements agreed at an “Extraordinary Meeting” held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. This meeting also agreed to the Council’s Pandemic Contingency Plan, prepared in accordance with national guidelines and which we have been following. We have also been exploring holding “remote” meetings which are now allowed by changes in law applicable during the emergency. This is “work in progress”.

During this difficult period we have been working with District Councillors to ensure that the local volunteer group “Wotton Action Mutual Aid (WAMA)” has the resources it needs to provide support to vulnerable people in the Community. The District Council generously awarded WAMA a grant of almost £1500 in early April. WAMA has more than 400 registered volunteers and its commendable efforts are much appreciated by the Council. Also commendable in the fight against Covid-19 is local company Renishaw, who, as part of the VentilatorChallengeUK Consortium, have been manufacturing vital components for the ventilators much needed by the NHS. Although of a different scale, we are privileged to have such organisations within in our community.

As you are probably aware the local council elections planned for Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2020 have been delayed by a year. This means that all Councillors are able to remain in office until the elections next year. Sadly several of our number had decided to retire in May and so it is with regret that I have to report that Councillor June Cordwell resigned on 7<sup>th</sup> May after more than 28 years of service, along with Councillor Alex Wilkinson on 18<sup>th</sup> May. June and Alex will be greatly missed. During the year we have had a number of other personnel changes. Councillors Lucy Farmer and Mike Short departed and were replaced by Councillors Steve Wood and Sally Smith. We also lost our long-standing Buildings Manager, Mark Schofield and the recent Caretaker Wayne Smith. In their place we welcome Phil Wilson and Andy Burns.

As always I’d like to pay tribute to Town Clerk Sue Bailey and her hard-working team for their support during yet another challenging year.

The “lock-down” has delayed the Annual Parish Assembly, which was to have taken place on 11<sup>th</sup> May. In anticipation of holding the meeting at a future date it was decided to prepare this booklet which is, in effect, the annual report of the Town Council’s activities. I hope you will find it interesting and informative.

## **Activity Report 2019-2020**

A report on the year's activities for each area of the Council's work has been included in this booklet by the Chairs of each Committee, Working Group or Partnership. There are also reports from groups and organisations which have benefitted from Council support during the year.

As Mayor and Chairman of the Council I would like to highlight the following Council initiatives which have been progressed over the last twelve months:

### **Old Town Toilets**

Replacing the Old Town Toilets with a modern unisex facility was the top project emerging from the community questionnaire conducted early last year. It has taken a while for the project to get going but, with the generous help of a local architect, we now have agreed plans and the process for securing planning permission has started. We would hope the new facility to be in operation towards the end of next year. The project will be funded partly by SDC (who have offered us £40,000), use of reserves and the remainder will be financed by a Public Works Loan. Our intention is to make the building as "green" and sustainable as possible.

### **Civic Centre Re-modelling**

I am sure some of you will have noticed the building work being undertaken in the Civic Centre. This is being carried out to enable the One Stop Shop to move upstairs, to be collocated with the other Council operations. Once complete, this will create a more efficient and better working environment for staff and also free up the road-side office which we intend to rent out. This will provide the Council with a modest additional income to offset the cost of the building work.

### **Action on Climate Change**

At its June 2017 meeting, Council decided to see what local action it could take to start addressing the increasing concerns about climate change. An action plan was prepared and the Council started a number of initiatives. We now have a "green" energy supplier and are improving the insulation on all Council buildings. Working with the Wotton Climate Action Network, we have agreed to tree planting on a number of areas of Council land, chief among these being Knapp Field, where some 400 trees will (hopefully) be planted in the autumn. We are also looking at the possibility of installing solar panels on some buildings. The Council intends to install eight Electric Vehicle (EV) charge points in the planned Symn Lane car park, possibly powered by a solar canopy, if grant funding can be secured.

### **Town Crier 50<sup>th</sup> Celebration**

In October, we were delighted to hold a Civic Reception for our Town Crier, George Carpenter in celebration of his 50 years of duty. George was also made a Freeman of the Town of Wotton-under-Edge.



### **Support for Local Organisations**

The Council has continued its financial support for the Swimming Pool and much appreciates the improvement work being undertaken there by the Pool's operating company. We also gave significant financial assistance to Wotton-in-Bloom, the Library and the Heritage Centre (the latter providing a Town Information Centre). The Council also provides the Youth Centre and has a youth services contract with The Door.

### **Community Governance Review**

Subsequent to initial unsatisfactory proposals from the District Council, the Town Council and Kingswood Parish Council reached an agreement on the boundary between the two parishes. This has resulted in most of the old "Wotton South" parish ward, including KLB School, moving into Kingswood Parish with the Wotton Community Sports Foundation site and the hamlet of Wortley remaining in Wotton. Under the agreement reached with Kingswood, the strong links between KLB School and the community of Wotton will remain unchanged.

### **Remembrance Sunday Parade**

Following a request from the Royal British Legion, the Town Council has agreed to take on responsibility for organising future Remembrance Sunday parades. Some changes to the format of the parade are under consideration and will be published in due course.

**Councillor Roger Claydon OBE, Mayor and Chairman**

## **Draft Accounts for FY19/20**

### **Wotton-under-Edge Town Council DRAFT Accounts for Financial Year 2019/20**

*The following figures are before internal and external audit and before Town Council official approval of the Financial Year just ended 31st March 2020. The Town Council continues to manage its finances well and prudently, with much of its Reserves represented by Earmarked funds for specific projects.*

<b>Income</b>	<b>31/3/2019</b>	<b>31/3/2020</b>
Precept	£294075	£309688
Burial Fees	£5570	£10280
Bank/Investment Interest	£3713	£4022
Civic Centre Lettings	£15405	£17289
Town Trust Admin. Contribution	£7000	£7000
Allotment Rents/Deposits	£2608	£2627
Grants Received	£0	£2000
Miscellaneous Income	£5946	£19374
VAT Town Trust	£1473	£3958
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£335,789</b>	<b>£376,238</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Salaries/Wages	£123722	£133311
General Administration	£26864	£27846
Amenities	£12364	£11615
Cemetery/Churchyard	£14149	£13766
Old Town Toilets	£4328	£4590
Civic Centre Costs	£26965	£29059
CCTV	£1922	£1950
Youth Projects	£20978	£17800
Allotments	£2960	£2262
Maintenance Operations & van	£2240	£3669
Swimming Pool	£28000	£28000
Travelling & Training	£1539	£2585
Footpaths	£340	£153
Town Regeneration	£7200	£6402
Reserve Expenditure	£7231	£38218
Public Works Loan	£3725	£3628
Town Hall Capital Expenditure	£2000	£2000
Support to Town Trust	£4700	£4700
Election Costs/Legal fees	£6321	£5700
VAT transfer to Town Trust	£1473	£3958
Contingency spend	£4317	£0
Petty cash	£159	£129
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£303,496</b>	<b>£341,340</b>
<i>Surplus for year</i>	<i>£32,293</i>	<i>£34,898</i>
<i>B/fwd funds</i>	<i>£95,293</i>	<i>£127,586</i>
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>£127,586</i>	<i>£162,483</i>
<i>Increase/decrease in earmarked reserves</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>£125,496</i>
<i>Reserves c/fwd</i>	<i>£127,586</i>	<i>£36,987</i>

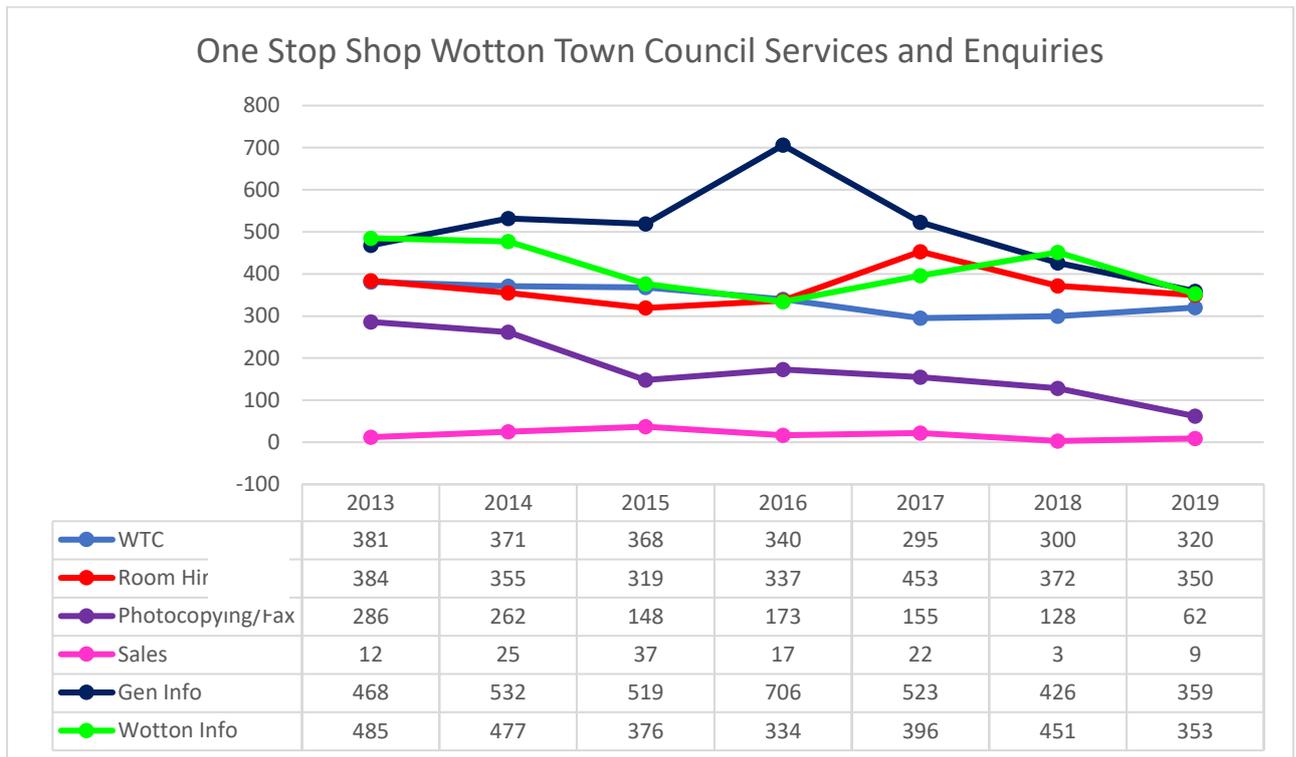
## One Stop Shop Statistics 2019

Month	SDC	GCC	WTC	Other	CC/TH Booking	Photocopy	CAB	Sales	Gen Info	Wottonl nfo	Totals
Jan	32	20	20	2	44	9	4	2	28	33	194
Feb	4	24	65	1	25	8	1	1	30	32	191
March	10	13	35	5	30	5	5	0	24	26	153
April	13	15	19	7	32	5	4	0	26	35	156
May	10	20	27	3	39	3	7	0	18	40	167
June	10	12	20	5	26	1	1	0	17	31	123
July	8	14	21	6	26	5	9	0	37	24	150
Aug	11	18	30	3	25	4	1	0	63	24	179
Sept	18	17	28	3	23	10	8	0	61	35	203
Oct	39	29	26	4	30	7	2	1	25	25	188
Nov	23	20	24	8	24	4	4	3	17	33	160
Dec	16	9	5	1	26	1	3	2	13	15	91
Totals	194	211	320	48	350	62	49	9	359	353	1,955

2018	131	264	300	92	372	128	51	3	426	451	2,218
2019	194	211	320	48	350	62	49	9	359	353	1,955
	63	-53	20	-44	-22	-66	-2	6	-67	-98	-263

As you can see from the table above there has been an increase in enquiries for SDC, this is due to the OSS assisting SDC with the collection of beige refuse sacks by residents from the office. There has been a reduction in enquiries for GCC, this is partly due to changes in bus pass renewals and technical problems with the card management system which has now been resolved. There has been a slight increase in WTC enquires this could be due to the questionnaire that was sent out to residents. There has been a decline in visits to the OSS regarding the facilities hire/fee payments, this could be due to the increase in hirers using the online payment system. There has been a fall in requests for photocopying as most households have printers/computers and are tending to send information via email. We have seen a reduction in general information enquiries, this could be due to wider use of the internet. With the Heritage Centre offering information to tourists and residents this maybe the reason for a drop in the number of enquiries for information on Wotton.

## One Stop Shop Visit Analysis from 2013 – 2019

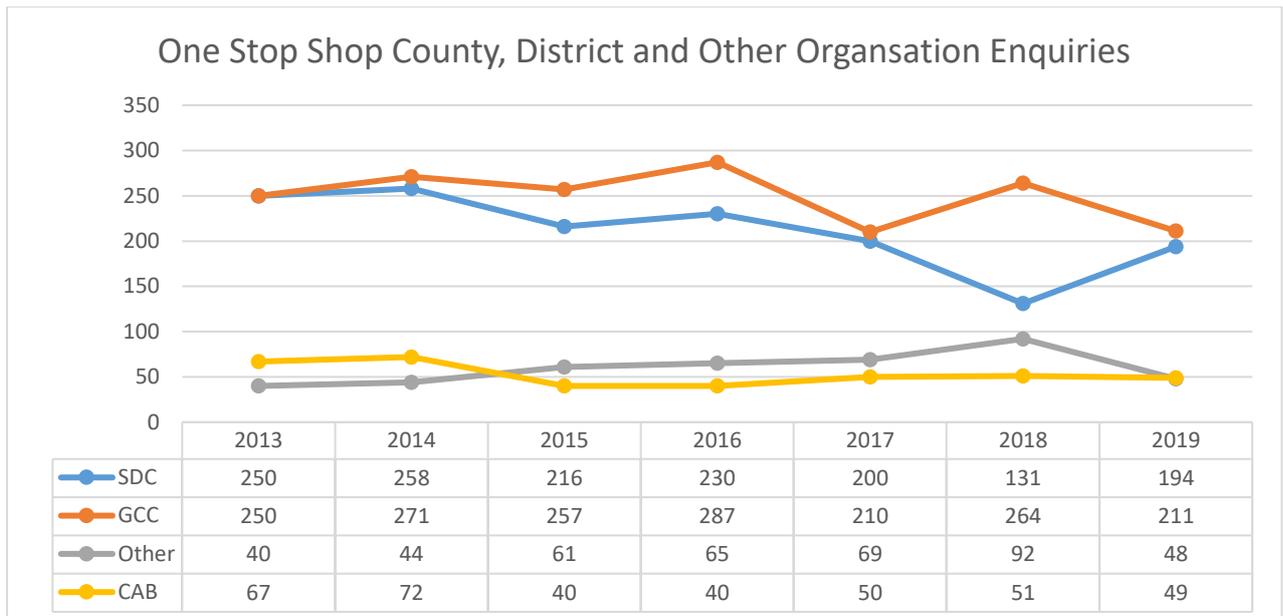


The graph above shows that in 2016 there was an increase in requests for general information. This was probably as result of people moving into the area following housing developments. From then until 2019 we have seen a reduction in these enquiries, this could be due to the wider use of the internet.

From 2018 to 2019 there was a reduction in the number of visitors requesting local information. This could be accounted for by more information being made available on the Town Council website, other websites and the Heritage Centre offering an increased service for tourists and residents.

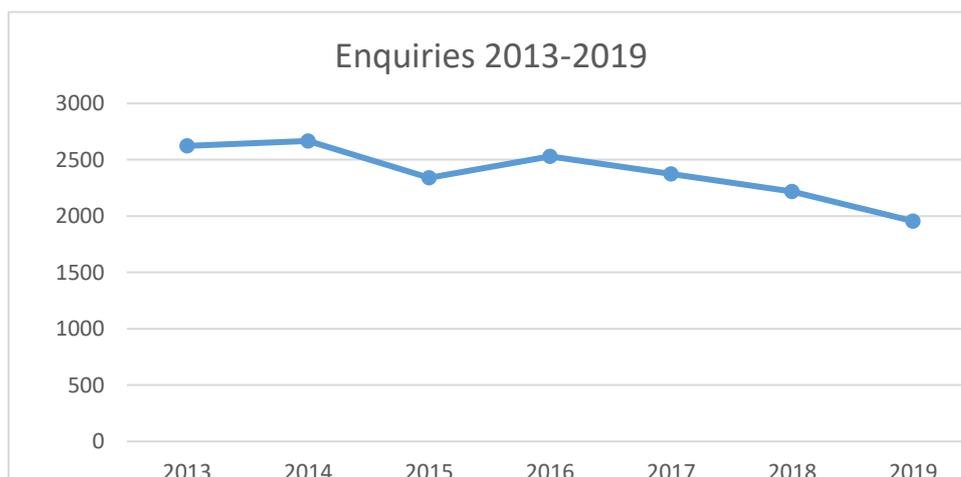
There was a spike in enquiries for room bookings in 2017, this could be due to wider use of the Chipping Club Room for smaller events and classes. From 2018 to 2019 fewer visits were made regarding room hire, as hirers were encouraged to use online banking for making payments.

From 2014 there has been a steady decline in requests for photocopying. There are other outlets in the town providing this service and many people now have printers at home. In addition, the Town Council no longer offers a faxing service as most residents are tending to send information via email from home.



In 2015 the number of enquiries for SDC decreased following visits from a SDC Customer Services Officer on Tuesday mornings being withdrawn. An increase was seen in 2016 with the introduction of visits made by the Neighbourhood Warden of twice a month to help residents with their enquiries. However, there was a reduction in SDC enquiries in 2017/2018 this could have been due to a reduced Neighbourhood Warden Service and residents being able to report issues direct to SDC using an online system. There was a notable increase in visits to the OSS in 2019 as WTC assisted SDC with the collection of beige refuse sacks by residents.

There was a fall in 2017 of enquiries for GCC, this was probably due to residents using the “Report it” page of their website. However, we saw an increase in visitors to the OSS requesting age related bus passes and with changes to the renewal system. In 2019 we experienced technical problems with the bus pass card management system which resulted in a fewer enquiries, but this has now been resolved.



The graph above shows the number of enquiries over the past 6 years. There has been a decline mainly due to the public sourcing more information online and reporting issues with SDC and GCC via the internet.

## Planning Committee

The Town Council's Planning Committee considers planning applications within the parish and makes recommendations to the Planning Authority (Stroud District Council (SDC)). The Planning Authority (either the Development Control Committee (DCC) or Planning Officers) make the Final Decision on whether to permit or refuse planning applications.

### **Significant Planning Applications**

Over the past year, the Council Planning Committee has considered the following significant planning applications:

#### **Garages, Mount Pleasant**

This application proposed demolition of the Mount Pleasant garages and replacing them with five dwellings (a previous application for four dwellings was permitted last year). The Town Council objected to this proposal and a decision is awaited from SDC.

#### **Dryleaze Court**

This application proposed the demolition of existing social housing buildings and replacing them with 22 dwellings. The Town Council, following its support of a previous application last year, commented on parking provision, absence of single storey properties for old people, lack of affordable housing and failure to provide Electric Vehicle charging points.

#### **Land at Berkeley Close**

This application proposed demolition of existing garages and their replacement with three new houses. The Town Council objected to this application with principle concerns being the adverse impact on neighbours and lack of parking provision. Unfortunately SDC permitted this application.

#### **Land South of the Chipping**

This application proposed 12 new houses and an 80 space car park with parking for two coaches. This was finally given permission by SDC in August 2019 and three follow-on applications for discharge of planning conditions are still under consideration. Work has yet to begin.

#### **Malt House, Bear Street**

This application proposed converting the old Malt House site into ten flats and two houses. The Town Council objected to this application considering it to be over development of the site, with an unsafe access, lack of adequate on-site parking, no affordable housing and no climate change energy efficiency measures.

#### **Bradley Street/Gloucester Street**

This application proposed the demolition of four existing council houses and their replacement with eight new affordable homes. The Town Council supported this application but expressed concern about the on-site parking and access arrangements. Unfortunately the Council's comments about the safety of site access onto Gloucester Street were ignored and SDC permitted the application.

### **Agricultural Building, Coombe**

This building has been subject to several applications, the most recent being for a Certificate of Lawful Development. The Town Council, in its comments, expressed concern that the owner may be using the building for professional interests other than agricultural and (if confirmed) then an application for Change of Use should be applied for. This application was rejected by SDC on grounds that the existing agricultural building did not benefit from the prior approval obtained by the previous owner because the applicants did not have formal agreements to farm an agricultural unit of five hectares or over at the time that construction began. The application has now gone to Appeal.

**Councillor Nicholas Pinnegar, Chairman, Planning Committee**

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## **Public Rights of Way Partnership**

The Partnership continues to meet quarterly and has a membership of six Town Councillors and six members of volunteer walking groups from the town. There has been a change in personnel of the group, but with the efficient support of the Town Council Information Officer this has not affected the work of the group.



### **Footpaths**

There has been no survey of the footpaths in the parish during 2019/20 although problems and issues continue to be reported at the meetings. These issues have been reported to Gloucestershire County Council for remedial action and progress is monitored at subsequent meetings, by the Information Officer who now keeps a spreadsheet so progress can be monitored.

### **Gateway Town**

The Partnership have continued to work with the Cotswolds Conservation Board on the town's involvement in the "Cotswold Gateway Project". Four walking routes have been finalised and members of the group have walked the routes and advised on any adjustments required. Cycle routes have also been completed. It is hoped that the routes will be available soon both online and in hard copy. The routes will be marked by signs (way markers) and these are starting to be seen on the routes around the town. There will also be two notice boards which will give information about the routes and information on local resources. It has been established these signs do not require planning permission and it is hoped they will be sited near the Heritage Centre and Civic Centre.



### **Holywell Leaze**

The Group also continues oversight of the Holywell Leaze amenity area which continues to be maintained by the Cotswold Wardens. The area has also been highlighted as an area which can be used for tree planting by the Wotton Climate Action Group. In March 2020 the tree planting was started when two disease resistant Elms, purchased by the Town Council, were planted by the Mayor.

### **Walking Festival**

At the time of writing it has just been announced that the fourth Wotton Walking Festival due to be held in May 2020 has had to be cancelled because of the Coronavirus (COVID -19) outbreak. This is sad news as so much work has been put in by volunteers to arrange this festival, which is enjoyed by both visitors and people living in the area. I would like to acknowledge all the hard work that has gone on throughout the year by the volunteers and hope we can look forward to an extra special festival in May 2021.

**Councillor Stephen Wood, Chairperson, PROW Partnership**

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## **Allotments Partnership**

### **Report for New Road Allotments**

- There are currently two full plots and two and a half x half plots vacant at the site.
- Two large Poplar trees have been pollarded because of branches being damaged in the winds due to previous pollarding.
- The Best Kept Allotment Competition was judged by Mr David Wilson (Chairman of Wotton Gardening Club) and Mrs Ruth York (Committee member of WGC).

First Place	Plot 11
Second Place	Plot 4
Third Place	Plot 38
Best Newcomer	Plot 6
- Some paths on the site need shoring up and some levelling is also required around plots 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10. The tenant of plot 5 has offered to carry out some of the work to improve the condition of his plot.



## Report for Knapp Road Allotments

- There are currently two full plots and two half plots vacant on the site along with two full and one half by the main entrance for a proposed disabled plot and tree nursery.
- A community group has recently taken on plot 15.
- A mature dead Elm tree alongside Knapp Road was felled.
- The middle entrance steps have been infilled and an area just inside the gate has been created, so the gate can be opened and closed without having to struggle and a handrail has been installed.
- The steps near Locombe Place have been infilled so there is no lip on the front of the steps. One rotten gate post has been replaced and the gate treated and refurbished by Town Council resources.
- The edge of the main path next to plots 7 & 8 has been shored up.
- The Best Kept Allotment Competition was judged by Mr David Wilson (Chairman of WGC).

First Place	Plot 18
Second Place	Plot 11
Third Place	Plot 6
Best Newcomer	Plot 12B
- The top and middle paths require shoring up and widening and once a detailed survey is carried out quotes for the work will be sought.

Following the tenants meeting in October, guest speakers of Wotton Area Climate Action Network presented a proposal to create a wood in Knapp Field to help combat climate change. Twenty members of the public attended the meeting including neighbours and allotment tenants. After the presentation there was a question and answer session regarding the proposal and both neighbours and allotment tenants were fully supportive of the project going ahead.

### General notes circulated via the Allotment News Newsletter

Advice has been given to tenants regarding pesticides and weed killers and how these can have a detrimental effect on pollinating insects. Tenants are encouraged to use more environmentally friendly alternatives.

Following complaints regarding bonfires, tenants have been advised that they are allowed to have a bonfire, but must comply with Stroud District Council guidelines and to be mindful of how smoke can affect local residents and fellow tenants.

I would like to thank the Town Council staff for their support in helping me in my role as Allotments Partnership Chairman.

**Councillor Paul Barton, Chairman, Allotments Partnership**

## Wotton Swimming Pool

Last summer was a great season for attendance and activity. As ever, I am grateful for the support I have seen coming to the pool from dozens of kindly and generous people giving their time, money, effort and skills to help with the running and the development of the facility. We have also enjoyed the benefit of a core of dedicated and professional employees providing the operational support needed to run the pool day-to-day. The season benefited from continued use of the veranda area and the cost saving brought about by use of solar heating of the pool water -- rather than off-peak electrical heating.

The main news though is the two developments to the pool carried out in the autumn (tiling the pool tank) and in the spring (refurbishment of the interior of the changing rooms). The beautiful tiling was carried out by local firm Rio Pools, who



delivered the job at a price lower than their quotation; it has made the pool nicer to look at, easier to clean and will avoid the tedious and expensive job of repainting the walls every few years. The job was mostly financed by a grant from Sport England, but other local money raising (particularly Wotton Triathlon and Heaven of the South Mountain Biking Club) were crucial.



And the reduction in cost given by Rio was an enabler for the subsequent changing rooms refurbishment -- together with the local money raised and a grant from the Ibstock Enover Trust. Also, the Town Council assisted by letting us bring forward our maintenance grant for next season. As a result we have been able to put drainage in the floors, refurbish the sanitary



facilities, incorporate the entry kiosk into the main building and provide a gender-neutral changing area with two large cubicles for families or people with privacy preferences. There is also an enabling WC for general use. The improvement is spectacular, but we may not get much benefit this summer due to the viral pandemic, which is a pity after all this effort!



And through all this, we have continued to operate in accord with the keynotes we defined for the facility, namely: safe, high quality, indefinitely ongoing, low maintenance, community enterprise and fun for all.



**Alan George**

## Synwell Playing Field

Once again, we have had a quiet year, with our main fundraising efforts being directed towards a new MUGA pitch. However, despite our best efforts this has now stalled. We received a number of objections to demolishing the old exercise wall and we have recently started to consider doing that up, replacing the old play surface and hopefully lowering the wall itself.



We have had concerns for a while about children climbing the wall and then being unable to get down. In parallel to this we would also like to install the modern-day equivalent of the wall some distance away so that the two items together could form an informal MUGA. Our fundraising events this year were the Charities Fair, Wotton Christmas Event, our Pedal Car Race/5 A side Football (on one of the hottest days of the year). The fair returned and is planning to visit again this year. Committee members also stewarded at North Nibley Festival and subsequently received a grant from the festival.

New windows and door were fitted to the football changing rooms in the autumn and our thanks go once again to the Recreational Trust for their grant. 'Build It' have donated paint and our plan is to repaint the outside of the changing rooms in the spring. We also now need to apply for grants to replace the water heater which heats the showers.

Last year I mentioned working on the new 20-year lease on the Pavilion Sports and Social Club, this was finally signed in September last year. Our huge supporter and Trustee Bill Derham died last summer and we are extremely grateful to his widow Joan for agreeing to take on this role. A tree has now been planted on the field in memory of him.

The tree felling which took place last spring was very timely. We could not have predicted the extremely high winds and rain which hit us last winter/spring but the committee feel that the houses of Court Meadow are significantly safer without those trees.

Things have changed dramatically since I started to write this report the field is now 'locked down', football is no longer taking place; and the Social Club is closed, so revenue is going to be a huge problem going forward, both for ourselves and those organisations. Several other organisations had plans to use the field this spring/summer and time will tell whether those events are able to take place. Following government guidelines, we have put signs on all the play equipment and gates to the playing field to warn parents not to let their children use the equipment during the pandemic and we hope that they will heed this advice. So future events are looking at risk and it's hard to finish this report on an optimistic note. Except to say we are lucky to live in Wotton under Edge.

As always, we would like to thank Wotton Town Council for their support during the year.

**Anne Hartley, Secretary**

## Wotton, Charfield & Kingswood Greenway Group

The Greenway Group has a vision for a safe, shared use path to connect our local communities. Over the past year, the Group has continued to make the case for a traffic free route for walkers and cyclists and made progress towards making this a reality.



### Working with local councils

We have formed a Greenway Steering Group bringing together representatives from Wotton Town Council, Kingswood Parish Council, Charfield Parish Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Gloucestershire County Council and Stroud District Council, to share information and ensure the Greenway is considered in the development of local plans, transport strategies and other initiatives. The

Steering Group has reviewed findings of the initial Sustrans feasibility study on possible route alignments and, in March 2020, appointed Sustrans to deliver a further, more detailed, route design study. The new project manager met with the Steering Group in March to set out the project plan.

### Fundraising activities

Thanks to the generous support of the Town, Parish, District and County Councils, as well as other private and charitable organisations the Greenway Group has raised over £23,000 towards the cost of the route design study. Our contract with Sustrans is staged with inbuilt break points, meaning we can commence the route design study straight away, as we continue to fundraise to cover the full costs of the work. The timetable for Sustrans to complete the project may be subject to modification due to the current coronavirus restrictions.

### Consultations

The Greenway Group has continued to engage positively with consultations and strategic planning to ensure that the Greenway is fully supported in future transport and development plans, particularly with respect to the ever-advancing work to re-open Charfield Station in 2024/25.

### Local support

We continue to enjoy strong local support and are keeping all relevant organisations informed of developments – including Wotton Community Sports Foundation, Katharine Lady Berkeley's School and Renishaw.

In May 2019 we again took part in the annual Wotton Walking Festival, with Greenway supporter Steve Hake, leading a fantastic walk along public rights of way between Wotton, Kingswood and Charfield, following the Little Avon tributary and exploring the history of local mills. In December 2019 we ran a fundraising stall, jointly with Wotton Area Climate Action Network at the annual Christmas Under the Edge event and we continue to work in partnership with the Climate Action Network.



**Alex King, Chair, Moira Buist, Secretary, Catherine Braun, Treasurer**  
[wckgreenway@gmail.com](mailto:wckgreenway@gmail.com) [www.facebook.com/wckgreenwaygroup](http://www.facebook.com/wckgreenwaygroup)

## Wotton in Bloom

Wotton in Bloom are a small committee of enthusiastic individuals who meet annually from early February to late September with the specific aim of brightening up the main streets of Wotton-under-Edge with containers of flowers.

There are a number of aspects to this that require constant attention:

- Planting, watering and maintaining the flowers.
- Essential maintenance to make sure that the brackets are strong enough for our hanging baskets.
- Recruiting enough volunteers to put up and take down the baskets safely.
- Responding to enquiries and keeping people informed.
- Talking to all the traders and residents who want to participate in Wotton in Bloom.
- Liaising with our suppliers.
- Fundraising to pay for the flowers and all associated works.



In 2019 we raised £11,987, including a contribution of £2,000 from the Regeneration Partnership of Wotton Town Council towards the costs of watering.



We organise fundraising activities, hold a street collection, collect donations from businesses, individuals, clubs and societies in Wotton. Our two big tubs are sponsored by Wotton Lions and Wotton Round Table, we also run a basket sponsorship scheme so that our charity shops can join in.

In 2019 Wotton in Bloom put up 150 hanging baskets and seven hanging troughs and filled two large tubs and the five tubs at the War

Memorial!

We are always grateful for people who volunteer to put up and take down the baskets in late May and early October. If you, or anyone you know, would like to be part of these teams please look out for our notices around the Town and on social media. You can follow us on our Wotton in Bloom Facebook page.

**Sue Hunt, Wotton in Bloom**



## Wotton under Edge Historical Society Museum & Heritage Centre

The Chipping, Wotton under Edge, Gloucestershire, GL12 7AD

Telephone: 01453 521541  
Email: wuehistsoc@gmail.com

Facebook: Wotton Heritage Centre  
Website: [www.wottonheritage.com](http://www.wottonheritage.com)

### Wotton under Edge Historical Society, Museum and Heritage Centre -2019/20.

In 2020, the Wotton Heritage Centre levelled off in terms of visitor numbers and income. While continuing to invest in upgrading and developing the centre, we were not as busy in terms of visitors over previous years. We maintained a program of three exhibitions combined with strands of promotion to encourage visitors to come to Wotton under Edge. This involved advertising in Cotswold publications and on social media.

In the Museum in 2019 we held three exhibitions and nine talks:

- 1) Exhibition 1: "Changing Face of Pubs"
- 2) Exhibition 2: "Off to Work We Go"
- 3) Exhibition 3: "Time They Are a Changing"



In early 2020 we held an exhibition called "Let's Go Shopping". This has sadly had to close early due to the Corona Virus Lockdown.

In the Museum, we have continued to build and refine the Adlib database, this takes a considerable amount of time and is important to the future preservation of information for Wotton under Edge. At the same time, we have been relocating many of the artefacts into easy-to-access locations while disposing of a great deal of duplicated material. We have now purchased a new range of Bisely drawers that enable the flat storage of documents that replaces vertical storage (not good for conservation). These were purchased with the aid of grants and fundraising activities. So successful were these, we purchased a further batch second-hand from ebay. Our conservation team is growing and working hard to collate and preserve many "forgotten" items we found stored away. Bringing these to light matters greatly in the long term aims of the centre.

In order to reduce a major financial overhead, we disposed of the old photocopier and purchased a new one. Smaller and more efficient it will serve us for some considerable time in the future. This was also paid for via grants and fundraising. The annual Wotton Calendar we produce providing much needed funds again.

Our Curator David Baird gave talks to many local groups and continues to work with our schools giving presentations and demonstrations related to the History of Wotton under Edge. It is much appreciated by the children as demonstrated in letters they write to show their how much they enjoyed Davids talks.

We joined in and promote as many town initiatives as possible including Winter Wonderland while selling tickets for many local events that took place throughout the year.

In 2019 we attended meetings with the Cotswold group of Visitor Information Managers. We have developed a 2020 Events Postcard for Wotton and finally completed a new map/Leaflet with help from Cotswold.com. It has been printed and awaits distribution. A new revised leaflet for the Heritage Centre has been printed and is now being circulated.

We stay in touch with the Tourism Network set up by Dursley Town Council in Trying to attract more visitors to the area.



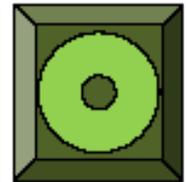
*Our Winter Wonderland  
Exhibit by volunteer Emma*

The Historical Society held eight talks at the Civic Centre in the period either side of the summer which were well attended and stimulating. It's a core activity to the running of the Heritage Centre and we appreciate all the work put in by the organisers.

As in previous years we continue to raise funds through Town Hall Teas and grants where we can. We are grateful to the Town Council for their continued support and strive to give value for money in our objectives. Sustaining a record, educating and exhibiting the history of Wotton while attracting visitors to come to Wotton-under-Edge.

By Jeff Walshe, Historical Society/Heritage Centre Committee.

[wuehistsoc@gmail.com](mailto:wuehistsoc@gmail.com)



**Report from Wotton under Edge & District Recreational Trust-2019/20.**

In the 2019/20 period the Recreational Trust Members continued to support the Bowls Club and other affiliated organisations to the Charity.

We have now fixed a ceiling for reserves of £5000 to cover cost for the foreseeable future. This sum will decline gradually as expenses are paid but it will be topped up to some extent by fees from the affiliated groups. This means funds available for distribution from the cash injection made by the Cinema volunteer management in 2016 has almost run out. Unless there is a cash injection from a grant or benefactor this situation is unlikely to change.

Applications were invited from various groups in Wotton and the surrounding District as there is a small amount available over and above the reserves. Two applications were received but these did not meet the criteria required. The parties were invited to try again at some point in the future.

The Constitution regulates the way funding is distributed and is intended to stimulate new activities in the Town. Applications for match-funding new projects and require some fund raising activities to take place. The applicants must be constituted; the Trust does not fund the running costs of organisations preferring Projects with legacy aspirations.

This has been a year of business as usual with our ten affiliated groups working well for the benefit of the Community. We were joined by two new affiliated groups:

The Beaumont le Roger Twinning Society and the Wotton Area Climate Action Group. Both gave presentations at meetings on their objectives and provided the necessary criteria to join us. We look forward to working with them in the future.

There was a little concern from the Bowls Club over land adjacent to the Green which is likely to be re-developed. The Trust is working with the Town Council to ensure there are no infringements of regulations should a re-development take place.

The affiliated groups operating under the umbrella of the Trust as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 are:

Bowls Club	Streamfield
Wotton & District Silver Band	Wotton-in-Bloom
Wotton Arts Association	Wotton Rovers Junior Section
Wotton Youth Liaison Group	Wotton Blues Festival
Bearlands Play Area Association	Greenway Group
Beaumont le Roger Twinning Society	Wotton Area Climate Action Group



*Wotton Blues Festival*

The affiliated groups all reported throughout the year and submitted accounts which we consolidated into a document submitted to the Charity Commission after a review by Burton Sweet accountants.

As we close this report in March of 2020, we note that most, if not all activities are being suspended due to the Coronavirus Pandemic Lockdown. We will continue to monitor groups and maintain reports where possible.

Jeff Walshe/Chair – WRT

jeffwalshe@gmail.com

## Wotton Youth Partnership

This year has seen three different aspects of the OK Footpath sorted. Firstly, the farmers hedge, which was extremely overgrown. Both SDC and GCC could not get the farmer to cut the hedge and letters from me had no effect. A member of our committee finally was able to get a response from the farmer, who did not want to cut the hedge himself, so eventually not the height, but branches protruding onto the footpath were cut.

Also, lighting of the footpath is needed. Solar panels were found to be the most cost effective, but money must be raised, without any help from GCC, who do not fund solar lighting. A letter from a KLB student, concerned about litter on the footpath and its ecological damage to wildlife, prompted a SDC District Councillor to have a litter bin installed just above the traffic lights. So, we have had some successes.



The grant money for Mental Health £7,783 of which £2,650 which the former Youth Provider did not use, has been returned to SDC. The Door, our present youth provider, made a successful bid for the money.

The Heritage Intergenerational Project, where students from KLB record reminiscences of older Wottonians, has made a lot of progress this year. Money is now needed to edit and transfer the material to DVD and the internet. Currently we are seeking a grant of £2,500 from the Mercers Company to continue the work.

We have again given money for youth projects to the Wotton community. Synwell Playing field committee are hoping to build a MUGA, a multipurpose pitch. We have given them £500.

We continue to receive reports from youth providers. The Scouts are continuing to make improvements to Conygres, their outdoor centre and eventually expanding this into their main meeting place. The Door have settled in at the Youth Centre with varied activities. Their summer programme was a great success and they have increased the number of young people attending. 'Pulse' at the Baptist Church, has many plans for activities, including the 'Baked Bean homework club'. The junior branch of the Dramatic Society has participated in the Pantomime and The Play. The Wotton Community Sports foundation was mentioned in the Local Plan as the best sports facility in the District, which will help with further fundraising. WCSF are making progress now with the sensory garden which will be for all ages. SDC Youth Participation Officer, has formed a new Youth Forum. Lions continue to raise money, collecting the litter on the OK Footpath and giving money to the community. We have an excellent representation of other leaders in the community including the Neighbourhood Warden and Town Councillors. Thank you to all who give their time to our young people.

Obviously, all this good work is at a standstill, because of the Coronavirus. The Door is operating an online link, reaching out to the young people. Our AGM has had to be postponed until life returns to normal.

**June Cordwell, Chairperson**

# Wotton Community Sports Foundation

It is exciting to look back and review what has been achieved in the last 12 months. We achieved this thanks to the fantastic support from the rest of the committee, many of whom put in many volunteer hours to ensure that the PARC continues to thrive. The total of all these volunteer hours equates to at least the equivalent of one full time salaried member of staff.

## Capital Projects

### New Road Parking

After delivering the BMX track in 2018 this was a chance to address the final phase of our access improvements to the site.

The project was funded by drawing down a phased grant award from the Barnwood Trust, long term partner and supporter of WCSF.

The net result is that we now have 16 car parking bays permanently accessible to PARC users. This has removed the need for ad hoc users of the facilities such as the BMX track to park in the bell mouth entrance to the site. This was both awkward and potentially dangerous.

### PARC Hub and Pitch Provision

Huge steps have been taken this year in developing the Trust's vision for a hub building for the PARC and extra pitch provision. A big vote of thanks must go to Mike Marshall for the commitment and vision he has shown in the leading the working party that have now delivered a high quality and detailed feasibility report for delivery of circa £1.5m of new investment on the site.

Meetings have already been held with local sponsors and contacts made with national funding sources

Key components of the new investments would include:

- Social hub and changing facilities for all PARC users
- Bookable space for community groups
- 100 + new parking spaces
- Additional full size 3G pitch provision.

Whilst the scale of the fundraising challenge is not underestimated, we have taken positive steps forward towards delivering a project that would transform the profile of the PARC.

### Sensory Garden

Funds now stand well in excess of £10k and quotations have been to undertake the enabling groundworks. This will then permit Sarah Watt and her group to deliver their vision for an accessible community garden in the heart of the PARC. The garden will now be located close to the Safe Path. As a result it will be close to the community orchard and easily accessible to all users

## Events

The PARC continues to be used for one off events. This year we have hosted a visiting circus, the Cotswold Challenge running event and the Wotton annual fireworks display. We were also delighted to see the HOTS cycling event using the BMX track as part of the event. If we are to build up our revenue incomes it is essential that we continue to look for partners who are looking to host events.

### Party in the PARC

This was our most challenging year to date for Party in the PARC. Weather conditions for June were hostile and many local events were called off. The team worked tirelessly to ensure that the event went ahead. We ultimately had a successful if somewhat soggy event.

### Running

Park Run is now firmly established and regularly has 70+ runners each week. It is famous for its muddy conditions and is popular with some because of them. The site has also been used for one off cross country events. These are in addition to the events already hosted by KLB on their site.

### Community Links

The last year has seen the continuation of links with HMP Tortworth. The regular working parties they provide have made a big impact on routine site maintenance.

There has also been further tree planting. Hundreds of new trees have been planted in the last 12 months. We thank John Ferraby for his contribution. It will exciting to watch this new planting take hold and develop.



Simon Weston, WCSF Chair



## wotton-under-edge chamber of trade

[www.wotton.biz](http://www.wotton.biz)

**The Wotton-under-Edge Chamber of Trade and Commerce** is a business development and networking group, including retail and commercial businesses, sole traders and public limited companies.

We are committed to developing our rural market town to its true potential. We are positive, self-motivated and work in partnership with other organisations to enhance our community and ensure that Wotton-under-Edge thrives in today's very tough economy. We have regular meetings to decide our way forward, our priorities and to review our progress. It is essential as a business group that we stay relevant and forward thinking to help our members.

During the year I have attended many meetings at Gloucester University which is the operating base for gfirstLEP (Gloucestershire First Local Enterprise Partnership). I also attend meetings of their Business and Retail and Tourism groups, networking with other business leaders to help them better understand the challenges to our local businesses.



Again last year, the Chamber helped the Christmas under the Edge group although in a much smaller way than previous years. Unfortunately Nikki and Sonia who have done a fantastic job have decided to stand aside and let someone else organise the event. Hopefully it will be able to run this year and if that is the case the Chamber has decided to take the lead and run the event for the town.

Last summer, I became a Town Councillor having attended many council meetings in the previous couple of years to better understand the workings of local government. I am really enjoying it and hope that my experiences from around the country during my working life are contributing to the work of the council.

The last year has been a tough one for grants. Money has not been as available as in previous years and we only succeeded in getting grants of £9,800 which was way down on last year. However they were well received and appreciated by the businesses who benefitted. Going forward this year I think money will be even tighter and harder to come by.

I am sitting here five weeks into the lockdown for COVID-19 thinking how all our lives have changed in a matter of days. I would like to pay tribute to all of the businesses who have carried on opening and diversified to meet their customers' new and emerging needs. Special thanks must go to the shops going over and above their normal operations: the

baker and butcher who changed their business models to ensure that bread or meat is in good supply and delivered to the surrounding area, the produce team packing up fruit and vegetable boxes to be collected and delivered all around the area and the Wotton Area Mutual Aid group doing amazing work supporting people locally in this unprecedented time. What an amazing community we live in.

I am in awe of the staff in our town shops: be they the owner or an employee who do not know whether the next person they serve has COVID-19. For once you can say they are risking their lives serving us all every day. We are so lucky to have such fantastic people in our town!

There are of course many businesses that are closed and their staff furloughed. It will be very tough on those businesses when they are allowed to re-open so please **Shop Local, Eat Local, Spend Local, Enjoy Local.**



Please think about our local businesses. If we do not support them when life returns to whatever normal becomes, they may not be here in the future. Five weeks ago, we would never have predicted our lives now. If we don't support the local businesses that are supporting us and our community and are caring and working hard for us, they might not be here to support us if the need arises again.

**Martin Tucker, President Wotton-under-Edge Chamber of Trade and Commerce**

# Stroud District Councillors' Report 2019/20



## Planning strategy review

A further consultation, on an updated version (the Draft Plan) took place from Nov 2019 – Jan 2020. This now includes support for progressive zero carbon construction and design standards, increasing renewable energy provision, and prioritising sustainable transport options. Currently 456 homes per year are being built in Stroud District – but higher targets are being set by central Government. The final plan

will be submitted to the Government in November 2020.

## Elections

It was a busy year for the SDC Democratic Services Team who had to organise two elections at short notice, the European Parliament Election on 23 May 2019 (for the South West region), and a snap General Election on 12 December 2019 (for The Cotswolds and Stroud parliamentary constituencies). Due to the Covid-19 situation, elections for District, Town and Parish councillors and for the Police & Crime Commissioner have been postponed from May 2020 to May 2021.



## Housing issues

Twenty-two new affordable homes were completed (March 2020) at Dauncey Close on Fountain Crescent, thanks to support from SDC which sold the land to the Platform Housing Group and provided a grant to support construction. Following delivery of 228 new council homes over five years, in June 2019, the Council agreed to a new council house building programme on

SDC land, including eight properties on a site in Gloucester Street / Bradley Street.

## Changes at Stroud District Council

Chief Executive Kathy O’Leary, who took over in Nov 2018, called in the Local Government Association to undertake a ‘peer review’ of the council, which reported in May 2019. The review team found that SDC is a ‘good council, providing good services’ and highlighted a need for better collaboration at an early stage and a strengthened senior management team. The Council has now set out a ‘Delivery Plan’ to implement all the recommendations and has appointed four new Strategic Directors (for Resources, Place, Communities, and Transformation & Change,) to a new top team to steer improvements at the Council.



**Carbon Neutral Commitment** – SDC has appointed a Carbon Neutral Project Officer, who is working to secure funding and develop partnership working, focusing on Stroud District but also working with the County and beyond. In 2019/20 SDC also supported tree planting, increased the specification for housing standards in the new Local Plan, provided financial support for cycling and walking (including for the Greenway project in Wotton), upgraded the small and aging SDC fleet to electric vehicles, worked to reduce the carbon footprint of

buildings, and supported Transition Stroud to coordinate community groups across the District – including the Wotton Area Climate Action Network.

- **Recycling Success** In June 2019, Stroud District Council won a National Recycling Award for the District's Food Waste Initiative, which has helped to reduce residual waste to the lowest rate of any council in England.
- **Annual satisfaction survey** - Residents' and businesses' satisfaction with Stroud District as a place to live and work remain high – and well above the national average. 90% of residents said they are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, and 96% of businesses were satisfied with their local areas as a place to do business (Feb 2020)
- **Stroud District Youth Council** was awarded the Youth Voice Star award for Youth-Led Organisation of the Year by the British Youth Council, the UK's national youth voice body in Jan 2020.
- **Community Governance Review** – District Councillors worked to support the Town Council on this review, which included a proposed change to the Wotton/Kingswood Parish Boundary, and in Dec 2019, SDC approved an amendment to the recommendation which was supported by both parishes.



District Councillors: Ken Tucker, Catherine Braun, George Butcher,

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## Report on County Council Matters 2019/2020

### County Council

Conservatives retain their overall majority with Liberal Democrats the largest opposition party. Since last year two councillors have died, a Liberal Democrat and a Conservative. The by-election for the first resulted in no political change and the other by-election scheduled for 26<sup>th</sup> March has had to be postponed. Another Conservative left the party and is now sitting as an independent.

### Coronavirus, Covid-19

In mid-March, all County Council meetings were cancelled until further notice. It is intended to set up a video conferencing system to enable some meetings to take place remotely. Mention of future meetings in this report assumes they will take place in some form!

### My roles on the County Council

My committee memberships remain unchanged. I am currently Vice-Chairman of the Environment Scrutiny Committee, the Planning Committee, and the Commons & Rights of Way Committee. I am my group's lead member on the Traffic Regulations Orders Committee having stood down as Vice-Chairman. I continue as a member of Gloucestershire's Local Access Forum.

I continue to be a member of the Highways Cabinet Panel, which monitored the awarding of the three new highways contracts. It was intended to monitor their progress but has not met for a long time and I

am chasing this with the Cabinet member. I am my group's representative on Road Safety Cabinet Panel which has been set up recently.

I am one of the county's two representatives on the Berkeley Site Stakeholder Group. I also chair the Stroud Road Safety Liaison Committee. More widely I continue as a representative on South West Councils and its Resources and Management Committee, and on the Severn Estuary Partnership.

### **County Council Budget 2020/2021**

The agreed revenue budget of £468.183 million is based on a 1.99% general increase in Council Tax plus a continuation of the 2% Adult Social Care Levy permitted by the Government specifically to support the growing cost of services in that area.

The budget included a £1M Climate Change and Air Quality Action fund, the only part of the Cabinet's Climate Change Strategy 2019/20 to 2024/25 that needed full Council approval.

A number of amendments, which did not increase the precept, were proposed by the opposition parties. Those accepted in whole or in part included:

#### **Liberal Democrats**

- £265k to restore the Highways Local budget to last year's level of £25k per councillor. (The administration had originally proposed £10k and later increased it to £20k.)
- £30k for a study into barriers to movement for people with a disability, i.e. in using public transport, taxis and footways.
- £50k for Traffic Regulation Order schemes to part reinstate a fund that previously existed for this.
- £50k for new bus shelters.
- £50k to repeat the same sum in the previous budget to continue to support suicide prevention work.

#### **Green Party**

- £20k to increase the grant to the eight community libraries by 25% to reverse the real terms cut due to there being no increase in this grant since it was set up. Locally, Berkeley Library will benefit from this.

#### **Labour**

- £30k: to support families to feed children during school holidays.
- £20k for a feasibility study into providing wifi for care leavers and a further £20k for a study in to providing driving lessons for them.

Other Lib Dem proposals that were not supported by the administration were associated with addressing climate change and included:

- £1M to support bus services and £400k for cycleway construction. These were turned down by the administration, saying that they would be dealt with by the Prime Minister's promise for these areas. However, it is not known how much the county will receive or when.

- £500k for solar panels on County Council buildings which would have reduced its energy emissions by up to 10%.

- £200k to upgrade the engines of at least 10 of the county's buses to make them less polluting.

Other Green Party proposals that were not supported included:

- £500k to ensure that recyclable materials were not sent to the Javelin Park incinerator.
- £1M to be removed from the county's support to Highways England, to making the restricted access of J10 of the M5 all-way and reallocated to climate change work and the remaining further £1M from that source applied to support cycle and public transport infrastructure.

### **Highway Contracts and Road Maintenance**

As I mentioned previously, the Cabinet Panel overseeing these contracts has not met for a long time. At my request, at its July meeting the Environment Scrutiny Committee will examine how the Ringway Term Maintenance contract is progressing. This seven-year contract delivers routine highways maintenance such as pothole repairs, grass cutting, gulley cleansing and the delivery of minor improvement works. Despite the much-flaunted increase in funding in this area, councillors continue to get many complaints.

The Structural Maintenance contract was put out to tender and won by the existing contractor, Tarmac.

**Motions at County Council meetings during the year** This is necessarily a very brief description but indicates the range of subjects covered.

**Statutory Youth Service (Labour)** This decried the drop in funding on youth services since 2010 and the impact this had on the lives of young people. It proposed writing to the county's MPs asking them to support and campaign for statutory youth services with dedicated ring-fenced funding. The Conservatives opposed the motion which was therefore lost.

**Highways (Conservative)** This was a self-congratulatory motion on the money being invested in highway maintenance and the outcomes achieved. This motion was set to last 20 minutes but filibustering by the Conservatives meant it lasted over an hour of the total of two hours permitted for motions.

**Fairer Funding for Gloucestershire Schools (Lib Dem)** The motion noted that nearly 20 schools in Gloucestershire were not receiving the minimum funding, as guaranteed by the Government's National Funding Formula (NFF). Between 2015 and 2020 Gloucestershire's schools are predicted to have lost more than £11 million in real terms funding despite costs rising substantially. A Conservative amendment weakened the original motion but was accepted unanimously by the council. It calls on the County Council Leader to make representations to the national government on the situation.

**Carbon Action Plan (Lib Dem)** This welcomed the declaration of a climate change emergency by Parliament. It was the subject of a series of amendments from the Green Party and the Conservatives but ended up very close to where it started with a unanimous vote to commit to an 80 per cent reduction in the council's corporate carbon emissions no later than 2030, striving towards 100 per cent with carbon offsetting by the same date.

**Gloucester Crown Court (Lib Dem)** This called for the council to write to the Justice Secretary saying that the current Crown Court which handles criminal cases is not fit for modern day criminal justice. In a unanimous vote the council agreed to this.

**Every Child Matters (Labour)** Recognising that every child in Gloucestershire deserves the best education possible, and that some schools do not meet the required standard to deliver a high quality education, this called on the cabinet member to report back on the attainment and achievement of students living and educated in the county. It was unanimously agreed to refer this to a scrutiny committee.

**Terminally ill employees (Labour)** Terminally ill employees are not always protected under national disability legislation and can therefore be dismissed if they are no longer able to conduct their role with reasonable adjustments. This can mean that terminally ill people can be subjected to stressful assessments, subsequent dismissal and the loss of death in service benefits. The Council resolved to review its procedures.

#### **Gloucestershire Youth Council (Lib Dem)**

There are nearly 40,000 young people, aged 11-18 in Gloucestershire, representing a significant proportion of the county's population. It was agreed to work with Leadership Gloucestershire to establish a Youth Council to give young people a voice on the issues that affect them.

**SkillZONE Centre (Lib Dem)** This is an interactive learning environment in Gloucester which, amongst a range of other life skills, teaches road safety to school children. The motion asked for the reinstatement of free transport to the centre for children mostly in Year 5 of their primary education. When this was removed, the number of pupils attending almost halved. It has now been reinstated.

#### **Enabling road safety measures (Lib Dem and Green)**

This called for the Cabinet to review the council's policies in this area. It led to the setting up of the Road Safety Cabinet Panel of which I am a member. Its remit is to:

- review County Council policies relating to traffic calming, including the use of physical design and vehicle activated signage, to aid councillors in securing evidence-based road changes.

- consider the road safety budget for 2021-22, including the suggested introduction of a ring-fenced budget for each council division.

- assess how to build on existing local road safety initiatives to establish 'road safety partnerships' for each of the six districts, and to formalise the relationship between road safety partnerships and the highways authority and County Councillors. (*The County Council one covering the Stroud District, which I chair, has existed continuously for at least 40 years.*)

It is due to report back to the County Council's September meeting.

#### **Future proofing public buildings and developments in Gloucestershire (Lib Dem)**

This requested that the Cabinet ensures that all new public buildings commissioned are carbon neutral throughout their entire lifespan and to work with developers to ensure that all residential and commercial developments on GCC disposed land are similarly carbon neutral. A Conservative amendment watered this down to "moving towards" carbon neutrality.

**Tree planting (Labour)** Proposed planting two trees for each Gloucestershire resident by 2030 (ca 1.2 million) and to work with GCC tenant farmers to encourage at least two trees per field for most pastureland. A Lib Dem amendment proposed one tree per resident per year every year to 2030 – around 6 million trees. The Conservatives referred it to a Cabinet meeting which then decided on 1 million trees as part of the council's Climate Change Strategy.

#### **Responsible investment policy (Lib Dem and Green)**

Proposed reviewing the council's investment strategy and ruling out new investments in fossil fuel companies and calling on the Gloucestershire Pension Fund to divest from fossil fuels. A Conservative amendment noted that Gloucestershire is part of a pension partnership which has already made a commitment to decarbonisation. This was carried.

#### **Opposing a Cotswold National Park (Lib Dem and Conservative)**

A Government-commissioned review (the Glover Report) has proposed turning the Cotswolds AONB into a National Park. The motion proposed *inter alia* to write to Natural England and relevant ministers rejecting this designation. This was agreed unanimously.

#### **Private schools in Gloucestershire (Conservative)**

This opposed the (national) Labour Party proposal to abolish all private schools and to write to all county MPs setting out the Council's opposition. The Conservative majority ensured this was agreed.

#### **Fire and Rescue Service**

In April last year the County Council responded to the Home Secretary on the Police and Crime Commissioner's takeover bid for the service, pointing out that it would impact on public safety, reduce the level of funding available to the service, minimise public scrutiny of decisions and jeopardise the partnership between the service and the NHS, which currently helps protect some of the most vulnerable people in Gloucestershire. Later the Policing and Fire Minister announced that no decision would be made until after the Police and Crime Commissioner elections this May due to "significant parliamentary and policy pressures". The PCC election and presumably the decision on the Fire & Rescue Service, is now postponed until May 2021.

#### **Pyke Quarry HRC**

I received complaints last autumn that in addition to queues arising from the reduced hours causing some residents to turn back, the previous helpfulness of site operatives had ceased; they are said to stand around whilst people struggle and don't ensure rubbish goes in the correct container. Also swinging heavy machinery close to people's heads and, for example, allowing a filthy mattress to disintegrate at height across the bins.

The reply I received from the Cabinet member included:

*The observations received have been raised with Ubico management and GCC has been assured that the site staff will undergo customer service refresher training and the monitoring and inspection frequency increased by its supervisory team.*

..and that access improvements would be considered later in the year.

All the HRCs are currently closed in view of Covid-19.

## **Climate Change Strategy 2019/20 to 2024/25**

This strategy has its origins in 2015 and has evolved with consultation since last July with several County Council committees and the setting up of a Youth Climate Panel. It was tabled at the December meeting of the Cabinet where it was approved, only needing the agreement of the full Council budget meeting to accept the inclusion of £1M for a Climate Change and Air Quality Action fund, which of course it did.

The vision of the strategy is:

*By 2050 we will create a carbon neutral county that provides quality of life now and for future generations, having improved the quality of our natural environment. By 2030 we will have reduced our carbon emissions by 80%.*

The plan includes 25 actions including the following key actions:

- £1million action fund to fight the effects of climate change;
- Million Trees Challenge – working with partners across Gloucestershire, the council commits to planting a million trees by 2030;
- To use only 100% renewable electricity to power council buildings and Gloucestershire’s lit road signs, bollards and 60,000 streetlights – which would see the council having cut its CO2 emissions by 89% since 2007;
- Request all contractors to report a “carbon and environmental cost” on competing bids;
- Make another £1million available from our Salix fund to support other public sector organisations with carbon reduction projects;
- Consult on the revised plan for transport – challenging the way we travel looking at cycling, roads, rail and on foot travel; and
- Install 200 new electric vehicle charging points by 2023.

## **Local Transport Plan (LTP) Review**

This review contains policy updates from the current Local Transport Plan (2015-2031) which was adopted in June 2016. The intention is to include an additional chapter looking towards 2041.

The review went out to public consultation in January and this ends on 26<sup>th</sup> March.

Reports on the outcome of this consultation will be tabled to a joint scrutiny committee meeting in May, Cabinet in July and adoption by the County Council in September. One concern is that it is light on climate change items, such as modal shift.

In brief, the emerging draft review sees the following policy updates:

- 1** Policy documents have been revised in response to the update of the National Planning Policy (NPPF) and local priorities as result of recent studies and reviews.
- 2** A new Walking Policy Document (PD6) replaces the former ThinkTravel document. This reflects the priorities identified through the emerging LCWIP.
- 3** The former ThinkTravel policy document informed travel choices. This will now be integrated into ‘all mode’ policy areas and the LTP Overarching Strategy to ensure a delivery mechanism that runs through the whole plan.

## **Ofsted Report on Gloucestershire’s Children’s Services**

Ofsted’s monitoring of the county’s children’s services which were judged inadequate in March 2017 has continued. Whilst the situation is improving there is still concern over the uneven nature of the service provided to some individuals. Ofsted have delayed their most recent planned visit, allegedly because they are finding too many councils being judged inadequate.

## **Javelin Park Incinerator**

The incinerator is now in operation and generating electricity but has not yet been locked in to an electricity supply contract as the present output is inconsistent.

Challenges continue over the way the contract was awarded and are being vigorously defended by the Administration.

## **Highways Development Management**

Last year I reported on the concern of County Councillors and others that no highway officers were attending District Council development control meetings where highway issues were involved. This

had arisen through a shortage of senior staff to attend and difficulty in recruiting new ones. New appointments have been made and officers are now attending when needed.

**Growing Our Communities Fund**

This started in the 2018/19 financial year and amounts to £30k allocated to each County Councillor over the three years then remaining for this council's term of office.

To date just under £15k of my £30k has been awarded, a further request for £3k submitted with my approval and two further grants of £5k each awarded in principle, being subject to the balance of the funding being raised.

**Highways Local**

Of my £25k available during the year I included:

- contributions to resurfacing of Synwell Lane and patching of Knapp Road;
- repairs to a section of footway in Parklands;
- a change in the Bear Street zebra crossing beacons to LED halo type, to make the crossing more visible.

The Lengthmen Scheme is no longer a separate allocation to councillors. It has been renamed the Community Maintenance Gang and has to be bought in from the Highways Local allocation at £2500 per week.

**John Cordwell**

***Regeneration Partnership – no report received***

***Wotton-under-Edge Library – no report received***

**Clerk to the Council Ms Sue Bailey**

Wotton-under-Edge Town Council

The Civic Centre, 2 Gloucester Street, Wotton-under-Edge, GL12 7DN

01453 843210

**W:** [www.wotton-under-edge.com](http://www.wotton-under-edge.com)

**E:** [clerk@wotton-under-edge.com](mailto:clerk@wotton-under-edge.com)

**F:** [@WottonUnderEdgeTownCouncil](#)

**T:** [@WottonTwnCouncil](#)