# Minutes of Wotton-under-Edge Town Council Meeting held on

#  Monday 21st March 2022 at 7pm in the Civic Centre

## Present: Cllrs R Claydon, M Tucker, P Barton, J Cordwell, T Creese, J Lewis,

## T Luker, N Pinnegar, L Taylor, D Thomas,

## In attendance: A Durn (Town Clerk), Y Milsom (Deputy Clerk); District Cllrs K Tucker and C Braun; 2 members of the public.

## T.6494 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were noted from Cllr J Turner and District Cllr G James. County Cllr L Cohen would join the meeting later.

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##  T.6495 To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Declarations of interest: Cllr Pinnegar in respect of Accounts for payment.

## T.6496 Minutes of the Meeting of 21st February 2022

It was **resolved to** approve the Minutes of the meeting of 21st February 2022. Agreed all in favour.

## T.6497 Public Forum

One member of the public informed Council of a nuisance streetlight attached to the wall of a property in Bradley Street. The light was shining directly into the bedrooms of her house instead of being directed down towards the street. She had been communicating with County Councillor L Cohen for 6 months on this matter but it had still not been resolved. District Cllr Tucker was aware of this issue and confirmed it had been passed to Skansa, who provide the street-lighting for Gloucestershire County Council. He suggested that he meet with the resident tomorrow; and that she should also email the Town Clerk.

One member of the public spoke of his updated business case proposal for a Farmers’ Market in Wotton. Councillors had a number of questions and comments on the proposals, including concerns about the chosen site and day for the market.

## T.6498 Reports from County and District Councillors

The following report from County Councillor Cohen was noted:

1. **Highways Maintenance and Speed Controls**

I will be meeting with the Town Council on Wednesday 23rd March at 4.30pm to discuss 2022/2023 priorities.

I’m personally auditing some of the worst parts of Wotton for potholes and reporting these to Highways – including the Wortley Road up to Alderley and Hillesley (everything past the recently replaced stretch).

In other news: at the full county council meeting in February the Liberal Democrats secured £100,000 for a TRO reserve specifically looking at road safety schemes and safer crossings. This will be spent on the red tape that too often stops these schemes from progressing.

1. **Policing**

I met with the local neighbourhood team recently to discuss how we can work more effectively together to keep our residents safe.

We reviewed all the recorded cases, the numbers of which were up due to the new initiative to ensure every incident is reported but crime year on year is down.

The police are frustrated that complaints and reporting of crime on social media does not translate into reports to the police which means they are unable to act.

We will be collaboratively undertaking a campaign to: build awareness of the neighbourhood team; strengthen the relationship with residents; give residents all the information they need to report crime online and to receive regular bulletins.

We will be holding a Community Building Event in Wotton I would welcome your suggestions as to who should attend.

1. **A Welcoming Wotton**

The whole community is working very hard to ensure that Wotton looks as welcoming as possible to visitors but is also a wonderful place to live.

I’ve recently worked with the British School on their ‘tidy up’ campaign to celebrate the repair of the Wortley Road and the repainted road markings. The children enjoyed a talk about the environment and then went out in year groups to litter pick. The play area at Bearlands was also tidied and all the planters weeded. I’ve written to thank the children for their efforts.

Conversely the trees along the perimeter of Blue Coat School are now untidy with brambles growing up into the branches and the shade by the trees has led to the path becoming a mud bath. The view up to Wotton Hill is now completely obscured. I’ve written again to the Governors asking for a compromise and for the trees to be trimmed to fence level to protect the children but to allow the residents and walkers to enjoy daylight and the view. The residents have offered to pay for this work.

1. **The Nip Nap Footpath**

The section of the Cotswold Way (CWE 11) started to slide away a few years ago. This path as many will know runs parallel to Old London Road and goes to Wotton Hill towards Brackenbury Ditches. The PROW Officer has been able to secure a significant amount of money from Natural England as well as Highways to carry out the essential repairs.

Work started on the footpath last week and soil filled bags have been used to construct a wall. The bags will be covered with coir which is seeded with wild flowers. The whole lot should bind together and help to retain the footpath. It is a ‘greener’ way to effect these repairs and should look very good once complete.

I would like to place on record my thanks to Sarah Macaulay- Lowe who works tirelessly with a tiny budget to try and achieve imaginative solutions to problems as well as sort out disputes.

1. **Budget**

The Council approved the 2022/2023 budget last month. I have included the release including some detail below. It is still insufficient for the remedial work that needs to be done after years of under investment and much of the activity is weighted towards the north of the county. I will be focussing on trying to redress this balance, with first questions at the next county council full meeting about the new cycling infrastructure which ends in Stroud!!

Gloucestershire County Council has approved a £521 million budget for 2022/23 to help the county build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The budget is an increase of more than £38 million on 2021/22 levels.

Funding has been agreed for 26-miles of cycle track from Stroud to Bishop’s Cleeve, investment into our market towns and high streets, and ongoing support and protection of the most vulnerable in our communities

As well as this, the budget also includes:

* £100 million for our roads
* £150 million investment into school buildings in Gloucestershire
* £14 million investment into Children and Young People’s Services
* £1 million per year to tackle climate change
* £20 million invested into cycle routes across the county
* £9 million extra to support vulnerable adults and those living with a disability
* More investment into Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service

The council is expected to have one of the lowest council tax levels of any county council.

The budget will raise around £10.2 million to help fund services through a council tax increase of 1.99%. We will also apply the national social care precept at 1% to raise an additional £3.7 million to support the thousands of vulnerable adults we work with each year. Based on a band D property, this equates to a £3.50 monthly increase.

Amendments to the budget (i.e.proposed by the Liberal Democrats and the Green Party) which were approved by Council include:

* An additional £250,000 to Community Speedwatch, making a total of £550,000
* £33,000 to prevent increases to the costs of parking permits
* £45,000 to pay for a biodiversity management officer to identify opportunities on Council land
* £120,000 to establish a recycling shop pilot at one of the county’s household recycling centres
* £100,000 to reserve for traffic regulation orders (TRO)
1. **Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service News**

**Initial findings from GFRS HMICFRS**

**Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) was inspected by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in September and October last year (2021).**

Inspectors found improvements had been made in relation to the service’s fire protection work, specifically in improving the way they work and increasing the size of the team. The improvements made mean that ‘protection’ has been removed as an area of concern. But they also identified two ‘areas of concern’ that they require the service to begin addressing immediately.

The HMICFRS recognised that GFRS had introduced a new set of values and had engaged with staff on the importance of them, however, they have asked that more work is done to embed the values and their associated behaviours.

They also recognised that the service is using the values to underpin recruitment and promotion and that the service has recently employed a dedicated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) officer, but that they need to improve progress to promote ED&I further.

HMICFRS has asked GFRS to submit an action plan by the end of the month, setting out how it intends to deliver the necessary improvements in these areas. Inspectors will then review the plan; make any suggestions they think are necessary before ultimately signing it off. Once HMICFRS has approved the plan, GFRS will publish it in full.

The county council has invested more than £2m in revenue funding over the past two years and a further £2m of additional funding was agreed at full council last week which takes the figure to £4m. In addition it is also supporting a capital programme of over £8m to provide new operational vehicles and equipment.

HMICFRS inspectors will return to inspect the service on these specific areas of concern in the autumn.

**Helping with the war effort in Ukraine by donating an Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) and firefighting equipment.**

An ALP will be handed over to Ukraine, along with other equipment including portable generators, battery-powered saws, cable reels, portable lights, battery chargers, jerry cans and body armour.

It follows a request from the Home Office through the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) for all fire and rescue services to see what equipment or vehicles they had available for urgent deployment to Ukraine, to help the country defend itself against the Russian invasion.

The ALP is a specialist appliance which can be used to put water onto buildings from above, to assist in rescues from tall buildings or as an observation platform.

The one being donated is no longer needed by GFRS because of its age and has recently been replaced by a newer vehicle. It had been due to be sold at auction.

The other equipment being provided has also been identified as surplus, as the various items have been upgraded.

The ALP and other equipment are being transported to Ukraine via the NFCC.

1. **Secondary school places – some of this has passed but for reference**
* A total of 6,536 Gloucestershire children who applied on time will be offered a secondary school place for September this year, with 86 per cent of pupils receiving a place at their first preference school.
* On Tuesday, 1 March, parents of pupils going to secondary school in September 2022 received a place from Gloucestershire County Council. All parents in the county will be offered one school place for their child on the same day.
* Parents had until today (8 March) to accept their school place or request an alternative school. The 97 per cent of parents and carers who applied online received an email confirming their school place after 9am on 1 March and will be able to accept their place online.
* As well as the 86 per cent being offered their first preference school, 95 per cent are being offered one of their preferences.
* Those parents or carers who did not apply online should have received a letter on Monday, 1 March, including the place on offer and the reasons why. This letter will be specific to each pupil and will contain an explanation for the decision made.
* Parents are encouraged to accept their place online or return their reply forms as soon as possible. As we know from previous years, more places are likely to become available over the next few months as parents change their preferences.
* If parents ask for their child's school place to be reconsidered, they will be placed on the waiting list for their preferred schools. If places then become available, they will be offered a place in line with the school’s admission policy.
* Parents unhappy with their initial offer are encouraged to keep their place as this will ensure that, whatever the outcome of the reconsideration, their child will have a place at a school in September.
* The county council will write to parents with the result of the reconsideration after 29 March, and parents will have until 7 April to reply. Parents who are still not satisfied with their given school will be advised of the appeals procedure.
* The admission criteria and more information about waiting lists for every school is also available at [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/schooladmissions](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/schooladmissions)
1. **New support service for adults bereaved by suicide**

**The county council and its health partners are launching a new support service for over-18s in Gloucestershire bereaved by suicide.**

The new service which will be provided by Rethink Mental Illness, will give support predominantly to families and partners, however support will also be available for friends, colleagues, health and social care professionals, and those who may have witnessed the death. Support will be tailored to the individual’s needs.

The service is being funded through NHS England/Improvement’s national suicide bereavement programme.

The support offered to adults bereaved by suicide includes:

* 1:1 emotional and practical support beginning with six personalised weekly sessions with a Suicide Bereavement Worker, followed by six fortnightly sessions, and an option to extend if needed
* Practical support including help to navigate processes such as talking to police, funeral arrangements, Coroner's Court and inquests, responding to media and support to talk to employers
* Bereavement counselling with volunteer counsellors, beginning with six to eight weekly sessions
* Face to face and virtual bereavement peer support groups facilitated by a Suicide Bereavement Worker and a volunteer with lived experience of suicide. These will help people build connections, tackle the isolation they may be feeling and get support from others with similar experiences
* Signposting and referral to other bereavement services as appropriate.

All support is delivered through a mixture of face to face, virtual channels, phone, email and text to suit the individual’s needs.

Everyone who uses the service has ongoing access to an exclusive online Gloucestershire bereavement by suicide forum hosted by a mental health online peer support platform called Clic. This moderated forum is available 24/7 to help people share experiences and gain peer support.

**To find out more about the service or make a referral for yourself or someone else, please call 07483 375 516, email** **glossupportaftersuicide@rethink.org** **or visit:** [www.rethink.org/glossupportaftersuicide](http://www.rethink.org/glossupportaftersuicide)

1. **Careers in social care**

**Proud to Care is launching a brand new one to one care career telephone support to help job seekers interested in working in care, to find their perfect role.**

The Proud to Care ‘Care Career Support Line’ provides free one to one support to help people explore the many career opportunities available across the county and find their perfect role in social care and health.

Proud to Care is a partnership between the county council and NHS. The team supports Gloucestershire’s care providers by sharing their current job vacancies, showcasing the vast range of opportunities available for career progression, and supporting job seekers to explore options in the social care and health sector.

As a care worker you can make a real difference to someone’s life, whether that’s helping them to stay safe in their own home or in residential care, or by helping them with everyday activities.

If you are good with people, caring and with a desire to help others, there are rewarding, flexible jobs available in your community now.

Working in social care and health offers job security and lots of opportunities to develop your career, if that is what you want to do. Care experience is not essential, as training is provided.

**Telephone appointments are available Monday to Friday from 10am to 3pm. To chat to the team:**

* **Call 01452 426 452**
* **Send a message** **ptc@gloucestershire.gov.uk**
* **Visit the website** [**www.proudtocareglos.org.uk**](https://track.vuelio.uk.com/z.z?l=aHR0cDovL3d3dy5wcm91ZHRvY2FyZWdsb3Mub3JnLnVrLw%3d%3d&r=13702311728&d=15872032&p=1&t=h&h=3eac39d4bf0fc824d7792f6ae693ae64)
* **Connect on social media @proudtocareglos**
1. **Reuse, repair and share old items to help create a Greener Gloucestershire**

Gloucestershire Recycles is encouraging people across the county to bring items back to life by repairing them.

Many items are thrown away with almost nothing wrong with them, but lots of people don’t have the skills to repair things themselves.

Repairing and reusing items is even better for the environment than recycling, it can save money, reduce carbon emissions, reduce plastic waste, and reduce resource use.

If everyone in Gloucestershire repairs just one item, more than 600,000 items could be saved – the equivalent of 125 lorries worth of recycling.

Repair Cafes have been set up across the county, where talented volunteers can repair items for you. Items such as clothes, electronics, furniture, bric-a-brac, and bikes are all regularly brought along and repaired.

Those people that have DIY or crafting skills are encouraged to get involved and share their skills at their local Repair Cafe.

There are Repair Cafes all over Gloucestershire, including in Cheltenham, Cirencester, Yorkley, Newent, Tewkesbury, Stroud and Nailsworth.

Get involved using #GreenerGloucestershire on social media, with your stories, hints and tips on repair.

For more information, visit [https://www.gloucestershirerecycles.com/reduce/repair/](https://track.vuelio.uk.com/z.z?l=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ2xvdWNlc3RlcnNoaXJlcmVjeWNsZXMuY29tL3JlZHVjZS9yZXBhaXIv&r=13702329866&d=15872103&p=1&t=h&h=78dd07d361a111a4c5e8c12454119cf6), or email, waste@gloucestershire.gov.uk.

For the latest news in this area, subscribe to the [Gloucestershire Recycles Recycling and Waste Minimisation newsletter](https://track.vuelio.uk.com/z.z?l=aHR0cHM6Ly9wdWJsaWMuZ292ZGVsaXZlcnkuY29tL2FjY291bnRzL1VLR0xPVUNFU1RFUlNISVJFL3N1YnNjcmliZXIvbmV3&r=13702329866&d=15872103&p=1&t=h&h=305e57f5962a59bac90a51f74fdde94a), or the [Greener Gloucestershire Climate and Sustainability newsletter](https://track.vuelio.uk.com/z.z?l=aHR0cHM6Ly9wdWJsaWMuZ292ZGVsaXZlcnkuY29tL2FjY291bnRzL1VLR0xPVUNFU1RFUlNISVJFL3N1YnNjcmliZXIvbmV3P3RvcGljX2lkPVVLR0xPVUNFU1RFUlNISVJFXzE2OA%3d%3d&r=13702329866&d=15872103&p=1&t=h&h=7b55c5e530294890b717dd84ce73c53b).

1. **The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee News**

Gloucestershire County Council have waived its usual fees for street parties for Her Majesty the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee in June.

Special events, including street parties, that involve closing a road require a legal order to be in place, which requires a fee to be paid to the council.

However, for the Platinum Jubilee weekend of celebrations fees will not apply and licenses can be obtained free of charge.

The Platinum Jubilee will mark the 70th anniversary of the Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II’s reign. She is the first UK monarch to celebrate this milestone.

Events will take place throughout the year and a four-day Platinum Jubilee bank holiday weekend will take place from Thursday, 2 June, to Sunday, 5 June.

Applications take a minimum of 12 weeks to process. Anyone looking to host a street party should contact streetworks@gloucestershire.gov.uk with the street(s) affected, the date of the event, and a brief description. \*\*\*\*\* This of course takes us up to and past the Jubilee weekend. I will ensure that any residents who want to take advantage of this opportunity receive confirmation in time.

A new Platinum Jubilee Woodland, to be made up of 4,000 new saplings made available through collaboration between the city council, county council, the Woodland Trust and the Royal Forestry Commission.

It is all part of a tree planting initiative set up for the Platinum Jubilee called the Queen’s Green Canopy (QGC), which aims to encourage everyone from individuals to Scout and Girlguiding groups, villages, cities, counties and schools to plant trees during the Jubilee year.

The project aims to create a legacy to benefit future generations and highlight the value of trees and woodlands to slow the impact of climate change, clean the air we breathe, create wildlife habitats and improve our health and wellbeing.

Planting more trees will help us work towards a Greener Gloucestershire by improving air quality. To find out more follow #GreenerGloucestershire on social media, visit  [Greener Gloucestershire - Gloucestershire County Council](https://track.vuelio.uk.com/z.z?l=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ2xvdWNlc3RlcnNoaXJlLmdvdi51ay9wbGFubmluZy1hbmQtZW52aXJvbm1lbnQvY2xpbWF0ZS1jaGFuZ2UvZ3JlZW5lci1nbG91Y2VzdGVyc2hpcmUv&amp;r=13702308510&amp;d=15872029&amp;p=1&amp;t=h&amp;h=7fba274578fe3ad797cf3719e35b0406) and sign up to receive updates via our [Greener Gloucestershire newsletter.](https://track.vuelio.uk.com/z.z?l=aHR0cHM6Ly9wdWJsaWMuZ292ZGVsaXZlcnkuY29tL2FjY291bnRzL1VLR0xPVUNFU1RFUlNISVJFL3N1YnNjcmliZXIvbmV3P3RvcGljX2lkPVVLR0xPVUNFU1RFUlNISVJFXzE2OA%3d%3d&amp;r=13702308510&amp;d=15872029&amp;p=1&amp;t=h&amp;h=7b55c5e530294890b717dd84ce73c53b)

1. **COVID-19**

Cases

* In the week 28th February – 6th March there were 3,710 confirmed cases of COVID19 in the county.

Of these cases:

* + 704 were in Stroud
	+ 662 were in Gloucester
	+ 612 were in Tewkesbury
	+ 464 were in Forest of Dean
	+ 766 were in Cheltenham
	+ 502 were in Cotswold

\* Please note these figures are provisional and subject to change. (Source: <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/> as at 16.00 09/03/2022)

The rate of cases in the last 7 days per 100,000 is 504.8 in Gloucestershire, 422.3 in the South West, and 322.7 in England[9](#Fn9)

In week 8 (Saturday 19th February- Friday 25th February) there were 12 deaths mentioning ‘novel coronavirus (COVID -19), which is 10.1% of all deaths, this compares with 8 (6.1% of all deaths) in Week 7.

My contact details linda.cohen@gloucestershire.gov.uk . Mobile 07791110906

The following report from Stroud District Councillors was noted:

**Stroud District Councillors’ Report – March 2022**

Report of meetings during February

*All Stroud District Council and Committee papers can be found here:* [*https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/meetings*](https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/meetings) *Recordings of meetings are available via the Committee meeting webpage on the Council’s You Tube channel:* [*https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeH\_AmF0s-TShcYlM8Stweg/videos*](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeH_AmF0s-TShcYlM8Stweg/videos)

**Council meeting – 17 February**

Meeting papers can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=1134&Ver=4)

* **Budget -** Council agreed the SDC budget for 2022/23. New budget items include extra funding to replace diesel waste and recycling vehicles with electric versions, supporting the purchase of temporary accommodation to prevent homelessness, more resource to support climate change projects, retrofitting council homes to improve energy performance, a new play area strategy including capital investment, and a new tourism post to support market towns.

The budget will result in an average council tax rise of less than 10p per week per household, which means an increase of 2.3% by £5 to £222.52 at Band D. Although SDC sends bills to residents, most of the Council Tax is paid to Gloucestershire County Council (with the police and of course parish/town councils also receiving a share).

The budget will also cover the costs of key services provided by the District Council including waste and recycling, planning, environmental health, parking, parks and recreation, leisure centres, The Museum in the Park, canal restoration, animal welfare, benefits administration and advice, elections, youth work, upkeep of open spaces including Selsley Common and Cam Peak and Long Down upkeep, plus licensing and flood management.

* **Standards Sub-Committee –** A new Standards sub-committee of the Audit Committee was approved. This sub-committee will be responsible for considering allegations under the Code of Conduct in respect of District, Town and Parish Councils, and consider what sanctions, if any, to impose where allegations are proven.

Members of the new Standards Sub-Committee (to serve until the next Council AGM in May) will be the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee and the Chair of the Constitution Working Group, plus an Independent Person, Phyllida Pyper (and John Acton as a substitute). Cllr Muriel Bullock, Chair of Eastington Parish Council (and Cllr Steve Ponting of Rodborough Parish Council as alternate / substitute) were also appointed, on recommendation of the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC).

* **LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Review** – representatives from the Local Government Association will be visiting SDC again in March to review progress against actions identified in the 2019 Peer Review.
* **Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC)** – Council agreed that the Joint Committee should be further extended for another year until 31 March 2023. This Joint Committee allows Gloucestershire local authorities to work together and manage the funds held for economic development generated by the Business Rates Pooling arrangements in the county. Future governance arrangements for leading economic development in the County will need to be considered in response to the recent ‘Levelling Up’ white paper.
* The **Civic Timetable** agreed with meeting dates for 2022/23 ([link](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s3731/Item%209%20-%20Civic%20Timetable%202022%20-%2023.pdf))

**Audit & Standards Committee - 8 February**

Meeting papers can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=138&MId=1133&Ver=4)

* **New Contract Management Procedure** This was agreed to address the recommendations of previous audit reports. It will be supported by training, and SDC will investigate a new contract management system.
* **Risk Update** – the highest risks include risks to business continuity, risk of loss of income from recycling /incentive credits and the potential for increased costs of recyclates processing. Future funding from Government and inflation were also discussed as significant risks.
* **Internal Audit Report**: The Committee discussed the internal audit activity progress against the Audit Plan, and the Voids Management report - relating to void (or vacant) council homes which are not generating income and awaiting a new tenant.
* **Annual Governance Statement**: Set out that the improvement areas and actions, identified as part of the annual review of governance arrangements with the Council are on track.
* **Treasury Management Strategy**: sets out the Council’s prudential indicators for 2022/23 – 2024/25.
* **Ethical Investment Policy –** A new policy sets out the approach for investment (treasury investments or capital programme expenditure). SDC commits to avoid direct investment in fossil fuel companies and other sectors that have negative social and environmental impacts. Instead, there will be support for green investment products, renewable energy, and social housing, in line with the priorities set out in the Council Plan. These ethical considerations will be applied in addition to the standard investment considerations for security, liquidity, and yield.
* **Limited Assurance management update –** Out of Hours Emergencies – update on progress towards actions in the previous audit report.

**Development Control Committee – 15 Feb**

The Committee papers can be found at this [link](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=1135&Ver=4).

* Woodside Farm, Woodside Lane, Kings Stanley, Stonehouse (S.21/2829/HHOLD) (Pages 13 - 18) Erection of garage with store above – Permitted
* Sunnyside Nurseries, Cam, Dursley, Gloucestershire (S.21/1829/OUT) (Pages 19 - 38) Redevelopment of the site for an industrial and storage use (Use Class B2/B8) retail use (Use of class A1 now E(a)) and change of use of the existing dwelling to office use (Use class B1 now E(g)(i)) with associated works, infrastructure and improvements to the existing access onto the A38 with all matters relating to appearance and landscaping reserved – Permitted

**Other groups**

The Leisure and Wellbeing Review Board and the Corporate Service Agreement Boards are continuing well and will be reporting shortly to Community Services, Strategy & Resources and eventually to Council

**Ukraine**

The Ukrainian flag is now flying alongside the Union Jack at the council offices in Ebley Mill in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. Alliance Leaders have made a statement to condemn Russia’s illegal and immoral invasion, confirming that the council will end the its contract with Gazprom ([link](https://www.stroud.gov.uk/news-archive/stroud-district-council-alliance-leaders-joint-statement-on-ukraine)). If individuals wish to support the humanitarian response, it’s recommended to send a donation to DEC: [https://www.dec.org.uk](https://www.dec.org.uk/)

**Canal Strategy**

The draft Canal Strategy is now open for consultation and will inform a Council action plan. The draft strategy sets out how the council, its partners, communities, and landowners can work together to make better use of our canals for culture, recreation, leisure, to support the local economy and to enhance the environment and local wildlife. The draft strategy sets out initiatives to improve 14 canal areas in the short, medium, and long term. These include suggested community uses and activities, ideas for improving travel and movement along the canals, projects for wildlife enhancement and for people to connect with nature. The consultation will close on 18 April 2022: [www.stroud.gov.uk/canalstrategy](http://www.stroud.gov.uk/canalstrategy).

**Climate Action – Community Engagement Board**

Community representatives have now been appointed to the SDC 2030 Community Engagement Board and include representatives from business, education, and many sectors and groups from across the district . They will help to develop and deliver action in partnership to address the climate and nature emergencies. The Board members, council officers and partners from the Stroud Valleys Project met in February to plant more than 80 trees on council owned land. <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/building-a-sustainable-future-together>

**SDC annual newsletter**

All households in the district will receive the free annual newsletter about SDC initiatives and projects. It’s delivered to more than 54,000 homes and can be viewed online: [www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/about-the-council/communications/sdc-news](http://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/about-the-council/communications/sdc-news)

**Storm Eunice – 18 February**

Following the severe weather warnings from the Met Office for Friday 18 February, council officers supported the local response to the risk of tidal surge flooding and high winds. A Major Incident was declared, with a risk of danger to life, so 40 SDC staff and 20 police officers leafleted 1,400 homes from Sharpness to Epney, which were at risk of tidal surge flooding. Officers also set up rest centres for evacuated residents at Whitminster Village Hall and Sharpness Village Hall. On the day, the timing of the storm fortunately did not coincide with the high spring tides, meaning that flood defences along the Severn were not overtopped. Other impacts of the storm included postponing some refuse, recycling and garden waste collections, and many people were affected by loss of power and water, and fallen trees blocking roads.

**Brimscombe Port redevelopment**

Three developers have been invited to participate in the competitive dialogue stage of the procurement process, which involves discussions between the developers and the Council. All three developers have a strong track record in delivering projects of a similar nature. The successful candidate will be confirmed in the summer, and they will then engage with the public before submitting a planning application early next year.

**Funding for Council home energy efficiency improvements**

SDC has been awarded a grant of £1.8million to improve the energy efficiency of 187 council homes. The Council is committed to energy efficiency and carbon reduction and has already committed to invest £180m over the next 30 years to improve the energy efficiency of its 5,000 council homes. These investments will help to cut tenants’ energy bills and carbon emissions, boost the green economy and improve the health and wellbeing of residents in the properties.

The new funding is provided through the Government’s Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund which is administered by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Around 20,000 social homes across England will be made warmer and benefit from cheaper energy bills thanks to the £179m fund.

**National Apprenticeship Week**

Apprentices from SDC celebrated National Apprenticeship Week in February by planting seeds provided by the South West Apprenticeship Ambassador Network (SWAAN) in partnership with the Government's apprenticeship programme. This week was a chance for apprentices and employers to demonstrate the positive impact that apprenticeships have on individuals and employers. Stroud District Council has 12 apprentices in different departments all on different courses, from business support to digital marketing. The Council won the Gloucestershire Live Apprenticeship Employer of the Year award in 2020

District Cllrs will check whether the Town Council’s Code of Conduct will require updating with reference to the change from Standards Committee to the new Standards sub-committee. The Town Council’s comments on the Draft Economic Development Strategy were appreciated and had been taken on board. The new development on the site of the social housing between Bradley Street and Gloucester Street was due to commence this summer once the residents had been provided with alternative accommodation. The District Cllrs queried why the agenda item concerning the Wotton Youth Partnership was part of the confidential session. The Clerk affirmed that the discussions were of a sensitive nature and she would email them with an update to keep them informed.

## T.6499 Chairman’s Report

The report had previously been circulated and was noted.

## T.6500 Farmers’ Market

Councillors congratulated the author of the Farmers’ Market Business Plan. However, they had a number of concerns including:

* Location. Preference was for siting the market within the town, possibly Market Street or on one of the privately owned spaces.
* Vehicles to be moved from the Symn Lane car park on a Saturday evening. How would this be enforced and what would happen to any remaining vehicles there? The Chipping car park is always very busy on a Saturday evening so re-locating vehicles there is not an option.
* To be held on a Sunday. Preference would be for a different day to bring people into town when businesses were also open.
* Visitors to the market would need parking nearby which could not be accommodated if the car park was used as a site for the market.
* Timescale. It was unlikely that the car park would be ready for use by August 2022.

It was **resolved that** Cllr Tucker would meet with the author of the plan to go through it in detail. Agreed all in favour.

*1 member of the public left the meeting*

## T.6501 Accounts

1. It was **resolved to** approve the Town Council Risk Assessment as at March 2022. Agreed all in favour.

*1 member of the public left the meeting*

1. It was **resolved to** approve the Town Council Assets Register as at March 2022. Agreed all in favour.
2. It was **resolved to** approve fire extinguisher training for up to 15 people at a cost of £225 plus VAT. Agreed all in favour.
3. It was **resolved to** approve a First Aid at work course for 5 people at a cost of £425 plus VAT; and to close the Civic Centre to the public, other than hirers, whilst the course takes place. Agreed all in favour.
4. It was **resolved to** approve the quote from Playdale of £110 plus VAT for a replacement cradle swing for Symn Lane Play Area. Agreed all in favour.
5. The receipt of an M&G Dividend of £406.50 for the period 1/10/21 – 31/12/21 was noted.
6. It was **resolved to** approve the subscription to GAPTC of £1471.02 for the year commencing 1st April 2022. Agreed all in favour.
7. It was **resolved to** approve the quote totalling £5537 for IT equipment, including two laptops plus accessories plus a tablet device; and cyber security upgrades., including a domain change to gov.uk. Agreed all in favour.
8. A donation of £100 from St Mary’s Parochial Church Council towards an additional CCTV camera was noted.
9. Cllrs Claydon, Creese, Tucker and Thomas agreed to undertake the quarterly internal audits for April to June 2021, July to September 2021 and October to December 2021, although it was noted that Cllr Thomas was only available on Wednesdays. The Deputy Clerk would contact them to confirm dates.
10. The M&G Thermal Coal Investment Policy was noted.
11. The budget report to the end of February 2022 was noted.

*Cllr Pinnegar left the meeting*

1. It was **resolved** to approve March payments for the sum of £41,455.95 including VAT. Agreed all in favour.

*Cllr Pinnegar returned to the meeting*

## T.6502 Tourism

The market towns in the Stroud District had formerly agreed to set aside £5000 each to support a tourism manager for the district. Subsequently, Stroud District Council had decided to fund a tourism manager themselves. In order to support the new SDC person and to get the best outcomes for the towns, it was proposed to retain the £5000 funding from each participating town for use in funding a photographer and scriptwriter, who would prepare a brief publicising the towns, to include social media, data and website. This information would be passed to the new tourism manager. It was **resolved to** retain the £5000 for this purpose. Agreed all in favour.

## *County Cllr L Cohen entered the meeting*

## T.6503 County Councillor Report

A meeting with County Cllr Cohen and Town Councillors was arranged for Wednesday afternoon to discuss Highways and other matters. Cllr Cohen was fully supportive of community efforts to help with the Ukrainian refugees. Government response has been slow and information would be shared as soon as it was received. Cllr Cohen had received many enquiries regarding the large increase in the Town Council’s precept, particularly that there had been no information available to explain this. The Town Clerk confirmed that an explanation had been given in the March edition of the Wotton Directory and that further information had been posted on the Town Council website and social media. The Clerk would pass the information on to District Councillors Braun and Tucker.

*District Councillor Tucker left the meeting*

## T.6504 Wotton Directory

It was **resolved to** continue with the Mayor’s quarterly reports in the Directory and also to have a full page report twice per year for the annual budget and annual report. A 15% discount would be applied so the total sum would be £625. Agreed all in favour.

## T.6505 EV Chargers Grant Bid

Cllr Claydon had prepared an ORCS grant pre-application to fund EV chargers for the Symn Lane car park. The process was to submit the pre-application for comment, after which a formal bid can be submitted. Other funding avenues were also being explored. It was **resolved to** approve the grant pre-application and Cllr Claydon was thanked for his work on this matter.

## T.6506 Regeneration and Events including the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee

The full programme of events will be published in the May edition of the Directory. Discussions regarding the Big Lunch were ongoing. The Proclamation was now to be held at 2pm.

 *County Councillor Cohen left the meeting*

## T.6507 Play Area Security

Locking arrangements for the summer were reviewed. It was **resolved to** ask the community for volunteers to lock the play area to allow it to remain open later in the evening; and, if none were forthcoming, to further review the matter to decide whether to lock at 5pm or leave the play area unlocked.

## T.6508 Emergency Plan

Stroud District Council was holding an Emergency Plan workshop. Cllr Taylor would attend.

*District Cllr Braun left the meeting*

## T.6509 Lobby Day

Correspondence with MP Geoffrey Clifton-Brown had been circulated. The Clerk would continue to pursue the enquiries and would also ask when the MP was next holding a surgery in the town.

## T.6510 COVID-19 Hire Arrangements

 Draft COVID Terms and Conditions of Hire had been circulated for hirers of the Civic Centre, in line with current guidance for public buildings. Once agreed, the same terms and conditions would be applied to the Town Trust buildings. It was **resolved to** approve the terms and conditions. Agreed all in favour.

## T.6511 Armed Forces Covenant

The Town Council had previously signed the Covenant in 2015. It was **resolved to** sign the Covenant again. Agreed all in favour.

## T.6512 Annual Parish Meeting, 9th May 2022

The format of the forthcoming Annual Parish meeting was discussed. It was **resolved to** produce written reports from committee chairpersons and from organisations supported by the Town Council as done for previous meetings, but to use time at the meeting for other discussions such as Town Hall, precept and budget, town plan and possibly a speaker.

## T.6513 Thanks to Volunteers

Quotes and ideas for a new batch of thank you cards would be brought to the April meeting.

## T.6514 Brief Reports from Councillors

WACAN – Nearly 60 people had attended the talk about reducing heating costs. Heat pumps were very costly at around £15,000 and insulation could be problematic for some houses due to issues with condensation.

General Charities – A grant which had previously been given to the Bluecoat School would now be shared between the Bluecoat and British Schools. Cllr Barton was to become a Trustee of the General Charities and so would step down as a Town Council representative for this organisation.

## T.6515 EXEMPT ITEMS: Prior to consideration of the following agenda items, councillors are invited to pass the following resolution: Pursuant to the provisions of the Public Bodies (admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by S100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that its consideration would involve the disclosure of exempt information

It was **RESOLVED** to exclude the Press and public.

**T.6516 Wotton Youth Partnership**

There have been serious issues with ongoing anti-social behaviour in the Youth Centre, including abuse of staff, forcing early closure on several occasions. The Door were working with other organisations to resolve this issue. It would also be part of discussions tomorrow between The Door and the Town Council at the quarterly review meeting. It had been suggested that the Wotton Youth Partnership should close and that the balance of £2800 remaining in its kitty should be passed to The Keepers. Councillors did not support this proposal and would prefer that the chairmanship of the Partnership be passed to The Door, which they felt would revitalise the organisation. It was **resolved to** propose that Wotton Youth Partnership should remain operational, with The Door chairing the organisation; and that the Keepers should be invited to have a representative on the committee. It was noted that the Youth provision contract was due for renewal in September so it was possible that the contractor could then change. The Clerk would inform District Councillors Braun and Tucker as agreed earlier in the meeting.

## T.6517 Symn Lane Car Park

It was **resolved to** appoint Roger Taylor of Wellers Law Group at a cost of £975 plus VAT plus disbursements to undertake the legal transfer of the Symn Lane car park to the Town Council. Agreed all in favour.

## T.6518 National Pay Award

## A National Pay Award of 1.75% was noted, which would be backdated to 1st April 2021.

## T.6519 Plumbing Works

## It was resolved to appoint Berry’s Heating Services at a cost of £2599 to carry out the work in various Council and Trust buildings as identified in the Health & Safety assessment. This included the Heritage Centre and Chipping Hall, although advice was being sought from Loxley’s solicitors as to whether this should be the responsibility of the Town Trust or the tenants. If the latter, then the costs would be recouped from those organisations. Agreed all in favour.

## T.6520 Clerk’s Report

A NALC briefing regarding the Ukraine had been circulated and the churches in Wotton were arranging a public meeting next Monday. The Clerk and Cllr Creese would attend.

The Clerk had still not had the opportunity to take her annual leave from 2021. It was agreed to carry this forward.

It was **resolved to** exit the confidential session.

The meeting ended at 9.20pm

Signed: Date: