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

# Monday 20th June 2022 at 7pm in the Civic Centre

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

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

## In attendance: A Durn (Town Clerk), Y Milsom (Deputy Clerk); District Cllrs K Tucker and C Braun; 6 members of the public.

## 

## T.6565 To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted from Cllr T Creese; District Cllr G James; County Cllr L Cohen.

## T.6566 To Consider Candidates for Co-option

This item was deferred to a date when all candidates were available to attend.

## T.6567 To receive Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

Cllr Turner in respect of accounts for payment.

## T.6568 Minutes of the Town Council Meeting of 16th May 2022

It was **resolved to** approve the Minutes of the meeting of 16th May 2022.

## T.6569 Public Forum

No comments.

## T.6570 Pass Wide and Slow Campaign

A member of the public spoke of an event to be held on 18th September 2022, when horse riders, walkers and cyclists will be following a route through Wotton to raise awareness of road safety matters for these road users. Town Council support for the event was requested and it would be appreciated if Council representatives could attend. It was **resolved to** support this event, the Mayor confirmed he would attend. The Council thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting.

*2 members of the public left the meeting*

## T.6571 Community Purchase of Land

A member of the public spoke of a proposal to investigate the community purchase of land at Brown’s Piece, to be owned and managed by the community for recreation and wildlife. A professional valuation had been commissioned funded by a few members of the public, this would provide a basis for negotiation with the landowners and, if agreement was reached, the task of fundraising would then begin. The members of the public would welcome contacts with experienced fundraisers. Funding from the Town Council was not being requested but the Council was asked for moral support and advice. There followed a lengthy discussion. It was **resolved to** support this proposal. The Council asked to be kept informed of updates. The members of the public were thanked for attending the meeting.

*2 members of the public left the meeting*

## T.6572 Reports from County Councillor and District Councillors

County Councillor Cohen was unable to attend but had sent the following report:

1. **Meet your councillors**

With the Town Council’s agreement, I plan to hold my next meeting on Saturday 10th September. After discussion with fellow District Councillors it makes sense to open this up to allow everyone to be present if they wish and to be able to help residents to understand our different roles and have all questions answered.

1. **Highways and Safety**

I will be meeting with The Town Council and Highways before the end of June to finalise the annual plan which will include road resurfacing, signage and lengthsman work.

1. **EV Charger / ORCS application**

I met with officers at Gloucestershire County Council to put forward our case for Wotton becoming a priority pilot project which would command OCRS and potentially LEVI support.

We have had an extremely positive response and officers are now working with WUE Town Council to progress.

1. **Buses**

The Bus Services 84 and 85 are under threat of being withdrawn as they are subsidised by Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils . These services are vital for surrounding villages and for the people of Wotton who shop in Yate and get connections into Bristol and Hospitals. See article below:

<https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/26-supported-bus-services-facing-7149861>

I contacted my equivalents on the relevant councils to express our concerns in advance of their meeting on June 14th. I have already subsequently heard back from the leaders of B&NES and South Glos and we have arranged to meet with colleagues from GCC to look at new and improved but sustainable ‘on demand’ / community services – creative solutions to solve the issue rather than accept the loss of these bus services. I would welcome hearing from residents and members of the Town Council with thoughts about how we might design a new service.

Prior to this development I was already in discussion with my fellow County Councillor in Dursley as well as District Councillors in Berkeley and Berkeley Vale to explore a new community bus service linking Wotton, Dursley and Berkeley.

1. **Road Safety**

**County Council Motion**

At the most recent county council meeting (18 May), councillors supported a Liberal Democrat motion welcoming the council’s road safety policy review and backing a focus on consultation and local community involvement.

As part of the motion, councillors agreed:

To ask officers to provide Environment Scrutiny and Fire and Rescue Scrutiny with a thorough briefing on recent accidents and their causations.

To call on cabinet to ensure that communities and all levels of governance in Gloucestershire are thoroughly consulted on the refreshed Road Safety Policy.

To call on cabinet to work with Environment Scrutiny and Fire and Rescue Scrutiny to develop a policy of ongoing dialogue with our residents to see road safety measures proactively installed in our communities.

**New Fund**

A new fund has been launched to help create a greener, safer and healthier county, as part of a partnership between Gloucestershire County Council and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC).

The £600,000 Community Speedwatch Safety Fund will give communities the tools they need to combat speeding in their areas.

The fund aims to make the county’s roads safer for the pedestrians, cyclists and motorists that use them.

Applications can be made for a range of measures, including Road Safety Officer support, speed surveys, ‘Twenty is Plenty’ wheelie bin stickers, vehicle activated signs to encourage drivers to slow down, and community speedwatch cameras.

Bids must be supported by the local county councillor and submitted by 31 August.

For more information on the fund, visit:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/your-community/the-community-speedwatch-fund/>.

**\*\* I would mention that I receive regular communication from residents concerned about vehicles that have been parked on double yellow lines or in disabled bays / bus stops. This behaviour compromises the safety of our pedestrians, drivers and cyclists as well or making life more difficult for those who already find mobility challenging. I would ask every car user in Wotton to think before they park. Thank you!**

1. **Council’s £200,000 Digital Innovation Fund open for applications**

Gloucestershire County Council’s Digital Innovation Fund will support community projects with £200,000 of funding.

The fund, which launched in 2020, has already given grants 33 projects which have helped local organisations and people to make the most of technology to support their independence, health and wellbeing.

This is the third year of the fund and applications of up to £20,000 per project are welcomed, with the deadline for applications on 1 July. Collaborative partnership bids will be considered for combined funding but would need to clearly demonstrate the added benefit of the collaboration.

Further information on this grant, including access to application forms, can be found at [www.yourcircle.org.uk/Information/Digital-Innovation-Fund](http://www.yourcircle.org.uk/Information/Digital-Innovation-Fund).

Cllr Cohen has asked for any queries to be sent to her. The Councillors thanked her for all that she does for Wotton Under Edge.

Stroud District Councillors had sent the following report:

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

Report of meetings during May

*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)

**Development Control Committee – 3 May**

The following issues were discussed:

* Unit 1 Parcel E4 Land West of Stonehouse, Grove Lane, Westend, Stonehouse (S.21/**2758**/REM) (Pages 21 - 40) Reserved Matters Application for a proposed employment development (Class E(g), B2/B8) pursuant to outline planning permission S.14/0810/OUT including details of landscaping, design, scale, and layout. (Description updated 13/04 to reflect outline permission) – Permitted.
* Parcel E4 Land West of Stonehouse, Grove Lane, Westend, Stonehouse (S.21/**2759**/REM) (Pages 41 - 62) Reserved Matters Application for a proposed employment development (Class E(g), B2/B8) pursuant to outline planning permission S.14/0810/OUT including details of landscaping, design, scale, and appearance. (Description updated 13/4 to reflect outline permission) – Permitted.
* Application and Enforcement Performance Statistics Q1 2022 – this report includes reference to the enforcement cases in progress ([link](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s4905/Item%205%20-%20Planning%20Statistics%20Q1%202022.pdf)).

**Council Annual General Meeting – 19 May**

* **Election to roles** - There was no change to Co-operative Alliance leadership at the annual full Council meeting. Cllr Doina Cornell (Labour) was re-appointed leader of the Council, with Cllr Catherine Braun (Green) continuing as deputy leader. There were a small number of changes were made to Committee vice chair positions but no change to the Committee chair roles. A full list of members of each committee can be found [here](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1.).
* **Council Plan -** The focus for the Council will be on delivery of the Council Plan, which is the council’s vision for the district up to 2026 ([link](https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/1822558/31-council-plan-2021-2026.pdf)).
* **LGA Assessment -** The meeting also discussed a recent report from the Local Government Association (LGA) on the performance of Stroud District Council. Three years ago, SDC asked the LGA to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge. The peer team came back for a three day visit in March 2022 and their feedback report has now been published. The report praised the council’s response to the pandemic and improvements to IT systems, and particularly the new (soon to be introduced) digital platform that will improve the council’s digital offer to residents and businesses, and its case management and back-office systems.

The LGA’s recommendations (report [pages 4-6](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s4964/Stroud%20District%20Council%20CPC%20feedback%20report%20Final.pdf)) include an action plan for improvement to housing services, more effective working with town and parish councils and a more efficient, centralised approach to improve customer services. The Strategy & Resources Committee meeting in June will discuss an action plan to implement these changes.

**Standards Sub-Committee – 31 May**

The first meeting of the Standards Sub Committee was held. Members include the Chair and Vice Chair of Audit & Standards Committee and Chair of the Council’s Constitution Working Group, as well as a Parish Councillor. The Sub Committee adopted the proposed procedure for conducting a Standards Hearing. ([link: item 5](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=273&MId=1373))

**Levelling Up Fund bid**

An outline of the Council’s bid for £15.9 million for infrastructure improvements has now been published, ahead of discussion by the Strategy & Resources Committee meeting in June, and the bid submission deadline in July. The proposals focus on gateway spaces, cultural landmarks and transport connections in Stroud, with a view to supporting the economy of the whole district. Some projects in the bid have been under development for many years. If the bid is successful, all funding must be spent by March 2025, so there has been a focus on projects which can be delivered within this timescale. According to the Government’s rules for the Levelling Up Fund, the bid must be submitted for a particular parliamentary constituency and with the support of the local MP. Full details can be found here ([link: item 5](https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=137&MId=1362&Ver=4)) and in a press release [here](https://www.stroud.gov.uk/news-archive/levelling-up-fund-bid-proposals-revealed).

**Other issues**

**Ukraine**

Stroud District Council officers continue to work with other authorities to support the Homes for Ukraine programme, through the Gloucestershire Strategic Housing Partnership and with the support of Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS).

By 27 May, 187 visas had been issued for Ukrainian refugees to come to Stroud District under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and of these guests, 101 have arrived. A further 33 visas are still being processed. Stroud District Council has undertaken 97 checks on properties – with 5 checks outstanding.

Across Gloucestershire 989 visa applications have been received, of these 870 have been issued, and 514 Ukrainian refugees have arrived. There have been 138 applications for school places in the county (80 primary, 58 secondary).

**Council Tax energy rebates**

Eligible households in the district have started to receive their £150 energy rebates. The first payments have been made to residents who pay their council tax by direct debit. The remaining households which do not pay their Council Tax by direct debit will be contacted and invited to apply via an online portal, with letters being sent out by post with other options for those who do not have an email address. SDC has additional funding of £166,000 which will be distributed to the most vulnerable residents, who were not entitled to the government’s £150 council tax energy rebate, with details of this discretionary funding available in June.

**Dogs walking advice – ground nesting birds**

Dog owners and walkers are asked to help protect ground nesting birds when enjoying country walks by parking in designated bays, keeping to footpaths, and ensuring dogs are walked on the lead. Commons and farmland provide the ideal breeding ground for birds who make their nests on the ground including skylarks and meadow pipits, whose numbers have declined over recent years. The ground nesting bird season lasts from spring until early summer.

**Dog fouling**

SDC Animal Welfare Officers and Neighbourhood Wardens teamed up recently to reinforce key messages for dog owners, offer safety advice and hear concerns in two operations this month, in Stroud and Nailsworth, with more planned. They officers handed out bags containing poo bags, dog collar lights, personal alarms and advice leaflets, and put up new signs about keeping dogs on leads and picking up after dogs.

Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) require dog owners to: pick up dog faeces; put dogs on leads when directed to do so by an officer; keep dogs out of areas signed as exclusion areas, e.g. children’s play areas; keep dogs on leads in designated areas such as allotments, cemeteries, car parks, canal towpaths, designated cycle tracks and specified footpaths used to reach schools and colleges.

These were reviewed in consultation with the public in 2020. The council can issue a £75 fine or prosecute in court with a fine of up to £1,000 in cases where dog faeces is not picked up.

Links:

* Dog fouling facts and myths: https://www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/environmental-health/animal-welfare/dog-warden-service/dog-fouling-facts-and-myths
* Report dog mess or fouling problems (it’s an offence to let a dog in your control foul on ‘designated land’, if you don’t clean up immediately afterwards) <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/report/report-dog-mess-or-fouling-problems>
* Full litter bins can be reported at <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/report/report-an-overflowing-litter-bin>

**Mental health Awareness Week**

SDC staff took part in a variety of activities as part of the Mental Health Foundation’s week of events aimed at helping people address loneliness with practical help (9 – 15 May). Across the district there are lots of opportunities that people can take part in, that can help combat loneliness. These include Community Hubs, which are places that act as a central point of contact and support for their communities. The Hubs are connectors of people, communities, local groups and voluntary sector organisations and a place where people can find friendship, positive things to do, acquire new skills and share their expertise, and get help and advice on food, housing, finances, health and wellbeing: https://www.stroud.gov.uk/community-health-and-wellbeing/community-hubs

For help and advice: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/campaigns/mental-health-awareness-week/loneliness-help-and-advice>

**Innovate to Renovate Project**

SDC is working in partnership with other local councils and The Retrofit Centre, to commission a new kind of partnership to help them better understand what is required to encourage homeowners to undertake low carbon retrofit. This will look at both the market and supply chain to generate awareness, capacity and interest in both suppliers and consumers.

In June they will be running a workshop facilitated by experienced professionals to explain the opportunity and the vision of the partnership; help the councils understand more about attendees’ expertise and bring potential providers together to evolve collaborations ([link](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/an-innovate-to-renovate-workshop-registration-333680927637)).

**Stratford Park Lido, Stroud**

Stratford Park’s 50 metre, spring-fed Lido reopens on 28th May. Improvements include a modest amount of heating, new morning sessions and a changing room revamp. After securing funding for heating options, a heat exchanger, which takes excess heat from the neighbouring Stratford Park Leisure Centre’s electricity generator was installed earlier this month. This should raise the temperature in the Lido by a degree or two but will also allow for more heat to be fed into the water if longer-term plans for heating are realised.

**Ocean Railway Bridge reopens**

On 23 May, the new bridge at Ocean, near Stonehouse, was officially opened, and renamed ‘Ocean Jubilee Bridge’ in honour of Her Majesty The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee. The opening ceremony was attended by the Network Rail Chair and Deputy Lord-Lieutenant for Gloucestershire, as well as councillors, representatives from all the partner organisations, canal volunteers and local residents. This work marks a major milestone in the regeneration of the Stroudwater Canals. A team of 150 operatives from Network Rail and its contractor Alun Griffiths worked to replace the bridge while the railway was closed for seven days between Christmas and New Year 2021.

**Forest Green Rovers promotion**

A civic reception was held on 8th May to congratulate Forest Green Rovers Football Club for winning the English Football League Two title and securing promotion. This event was attended by national media, with FGR showing off the trophy for the first time.

Questions were asked about why the Levelling Up Fund was being spent in Stroud town rather than distributed throughout the district and it was explained that the strict criteria of the Fund did not allow for such distribution. It was also awarded to the Stroud political constituency and, as Wotton is not a part of this, it could not have benefitted from the funding.

District Cllr Tucker gave an update on the difficulties at the local pharmacy. It was hoped to recruit a new pharmacist shortly which should improve matters.

The District Councillors were thanked for all they do for the town.

## T.6573 Chairman’s Announcements

A report had been circulated and was noted.

## T.6574 Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2021/2022

1. It was **resolved to** approve the annual accounts for the Financial Year ending March 2022.
2. The Independent Internal Audit Report was noted, and it was **resolved to** approve the report.
3. The Annual Governance Statement Section 1 was reviewed and completed.

It was **resolved** to approve the completed Annual Governance Statement Section 1.

1. The Accounting Statements Section 2 were reviewed. It was **resolved to** approve the accounting statements in Section 2.
2. The period for the exercise of public rights relating to the annual accounts was noted as from 27th June to 5th August 2022 inclusive.

The Council thanked the staff for all their hard work on this.

## T.6575 Accounts

1. The receipt of M&G Dividend of £975.60 was noted.
2. Budget 2022/23– the report to the end of May was noted.

*Cllr Turner left the meeting*

1. It was **resolved to** approve the June accounts for payment, an amount of £14, 506.50 net of VAT.

*Cllr Turner returned to the meeting*

## T.6576 GWR Community Fund

The deadline for applications to this fund is next Monday. It was suggested that a bid for lighting on the OK Path and the Greenway could be submitted. In view of the short timescale, it was **resolved to** delegate to the Clerk and Chairman, in consultation with District Councillor Braun, to formulate and submit bids.

## T.6577 CIL Strategic Infrastructure Funding Scheme

It was **resolved to** defer this item to a future meeting.

## T.6578 Levelling Up Fund Bid

Stroud District Council were requesting support for their bid to the Levelling Up Fund. Some councillors reiterated their disappointment that the fund was not shared around the Stroud district but the reason for this had already been explained. After a lengthy discussion, it was **resolved to** support the funding bid.

## T.6579 Community Speedwatch Safety Fund

This £600,000 fund aims to give communities the tools they need to combat speeding in their areas and is a partnership between Gloucestershire County Council and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. Applications can be made for equipment and support. Bids must be supported by the local county councillor and submitted by 31 August. It was agreed thatthe Clerk and Chairman would meet with County Cllr Cohen and bring this item back to a future meeting for decision.

## T.6580 UK Shared Prosperity Fund

This fund is the new post Brexit regional fund and Stroud District Council has been allocated £1.3million to be shared across the district for the period 2022-25. The deadline of 1st August is very tight and the full terms for funding applications is still not known. Stroud District Council is meeting with the market towns next week to try to put together criteria for the bid, which also has to tie in with the Stroud District Local Plan. The bid will be signed off by Stroud District Council on 21st July 2022. It was **resolved to** delegate to the Chairman and Clerk to put forward projects for inclusion. Email suggestions from other councillors are encouraged.

## T.6581 Ash Dieback Replanting Scheme

This item was deferred to allow for consultation with WACAN.

## T.6582 Bus Services

Bus service numbers 84 and 85, which cover routes between Wotton and Yate, are under threat of being withdrawn. County Cllr Cohen has been meeting with Councillors from the Councils responsible for these bus services to try to find a solution. It was **resolved to** arrange a meeting with South Gloucestershire Council, District and County Councillors and Officers to discuss this further. Cllrs Taylor, Cordwell, Turner and Tucker would attend.

## T.6583 Election of Membership to Committees and Partnerships

This item was deferred. Councillors were asked to complete the forms sent to them to show their preferences.

## T.6584 Appointment of Representatives to organisations

This item was deferred.

## T.6585 Youth Services Committee

This item was deferred.

## T.6586 Appointment of New Committees and Working Groups

This item was deferred.

## T.6587 Brief Reports from Councillors

The PROW Working Group had met, and a summary of issues had been sent to the office for forwarding to the County Council. It was suggested that the dedicated Councillors email and the Fix My Street app were a good way to inform the County Council of such issues.

*Public and District Cllrs left the meeting*

## T.6588 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.6589 Staff Overtime

It was **resolved to** approve staff overtime payments for work relating to the long Jubilee weekend. Staff were thanked for their hard work and contribution to the successful four days of events.

## T.6590 Youth Services Contract

1. The quarterly update from The Door was noted, including issues with anti-social behaviour and poor attendance. The Door had requested that the computers in the Youth Centre be removed as they were now obsolete.
2. The current contract expires on 9th September 2022, and it was **resolved to** agree an extension to 31st December 2022 to give time to review contract requirements and follow proper processes.
3. It was proposed to commission a consultant to develop the contract specification and Service Level Agreement for youth services for 2023/26 as per the National Youth Agency Framework. It was **resolved to** get quotes for this work and bring the item back to Council for decision.

## T.6591 Symn Lane Play Area Repairs

Several councillors had visited the play area to see for themselves the work required. The priority in the first instance is to repair/replace the matting and wet pour surfaces, remove the timber edging and ramp the wet pour into the grass to reduce trip hazards. Quotes had been received but additional information was still required. It was **resolved to** delegate to the Clerk and Chairman to appoint the best value contractor to carry out this work. Cllr Lewis would investigate solutions for the gate closer. Further works would be assessed, and a plan developed to carry out further improvements.

## T.6592 New Road Allotments

This item was deferred until more quotes were received. Concerns were raised about the paths at Knapp Road allotments site.

## T.6593 Town Hall

1. It was **resolved to** retrospectively approve the quote from the current scaffolding contractor for a sum of £3500.00 + vat plus the GCC pavement licence fee, weekly inspections at £80.00 per week, for a period of one year.
2. The former project engineer for the works had died suddenly and, after lengthy enquiries, it had now been established that his files could not be accessed, and it would be necessary to start again on this project. A meeting has been arranged with Stroud District Council specialist officers to discuss. The Government had not permitted an extension to the Public Works Loan agreement due to the extenuating circumstances therefore a new application would have to be made once updated estimates for the work were available, as there was likely to be a significant increase in costs. A further report will be brought to Council.

*Cllr Cordwell left the meeting*

## T.6594 Old Town Toilets

Building regulations regarding public toilets had recently changed and the architect needs to send the plans to Building Control for assessment and liaison. When approved, an estimate for the works would be sought and funding reviewed to enable a decision on progressing the project. It was **resolved to** approve the Stroud District Council Building Control fee of £195.

## T.6595 Symn Lane Car Park

An Action Plan had been circulated and the actions had been agreed with the developer. The lighting bollards had also been agreed and there was some discussion concerning the wattage required. Clarification was needed that the developer would install the lighting. It was **resolved to** delegate to the Clerk in collaboration with Cllrs Tucker and Claydon to meet with the developer to agree the landscaping detail in Action 4.

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

The meeting ended at 9.40pm

Signed: Date: