

County Councillor Report –7th May 2024

Prepared by Cllr Linda Cohen

MY CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any ideas that you'd like to discuss or community / personal issues that need my help please get in touch. Email linda.cohen@gloucestershire.gov.uk 07791110906

My remit includes: Education, Highways, Children and Families Services, Health and Social Care, The Environment, Apprenticeships, Employment and Business, Fire and Rescue, Police, Trading Standards and Waste Disposal (not collection).

Stroud District Council

I am delighted to report that I have been elected to Stroud District Council. This will allow me to have a broader understanding of all issues and be much more effective in helping residents who often are unclear about the individual council's responsibilities. I would thank everyone who voted for me.

Highways

At the risk of repetition, after a cursory post bank holiday review today I see that rainfall has meant that the roads have suffered again and there are new potholes. I'll be taking to social media to ask residents to report the holes and any other damage.

Please continue to promote:

[FixMyStreet \(gloucestershire.gov.uk\)](https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fixmystreet) Raising a Fix My Street ticket results in an immediate safety inspection which will trigger immediate resolution if there is any safety risk or a commitment to complete work e.g. potholes within 28 days.

I would continue to ask residents to do all they can to keep drains outside their homes clear of superficial debris and also not to park over drain covers if an incident has been reported, to allow maintenance work to be completed.

Playgrounds, children and youth facilities

Bearlands – the sign is being fixed. A group of children from The British School will be working with residents after school on May 13th to weed and clear litter.

Symn Lane Road Safety

I met with residents last week and have discussed with Highways the traffic problems and road safety issues on Symn Lane when children are making their way to school. The ability to make a material difference hinges on getting the Symn Lane car park finished and open.

This would achieve the following:

Drivers picking up and dropping off could drive straight into the car park without going down Symn Lane. Children could walk through to school using the gated car park access.

All coach trips would start and end in the car park and not need to use the lane.

We could use the TRO for the road markings in the car park to put back the double yellow lines opposite Chipping Close.

Wotton Pool could go ahead with plans to reclaim scrub land behind the pool and create an access to the pool from the car park.

** Separately the school caretaker has agreed to speak to disabled drivers who are currently parking on the pavement on the approach to Chipping Close and invite them to use the disabled bays in the school car park.

Symn Lane Car Park

This must be resolved as a priority. The residents are in despair, and it is hampering progress on a number of fronts, and damaging the commercial opportunities of businesses in the town.

Wotton Town Council and GCC can not adopt the car park or the roads until resolution has been reached with the developer.

The car park is already being used by drivers and it's not fit for purpose.

Separately I am organising a tidy up of the car park – it's covered in weeds and litter and looks neglected. Not good for the residents or Wotton.

Developments

I have been part of ongoing discussions about the Renishaw Old Town proposal. These will be covered in future Stroud District Council reports. However, it is vital that before we incur any further disruption in Wotton we complete the existing projects including the rewilded site on Gloucester Street and focus on repairs to key buildings including the Town Hall, Under The Edge Arts and the toilets.

Tabernacle

I met with the owners of Wotton Auction Rooms. The road markings on Tabernacle will be repainted by Highways. A new bookings system will be operated from the next sale with drop off and pick up slots, with instructions not to obstruct entrances. Drivers attending for longer meetings will be asked to use the staff car park. Great cooperation for which I'm very grateful.

British School Road Safety

I have asked the GCC Think Travel team to work with The British School to try and tackle the parking problems during drop off and pick up periods. There will be tactical use of wooden children figure signs to keep the entrance clear.

Kingswood Road Safety

There have been a number of objections to the consultation as part of the TRO process regarding putting in parking restrictions opposite Tubbs Turf. A village meeting will be called this month.

Lengthsman Tidy

I've brought forward the hedge trimming and path clearing to try and start work in August. Separately I have raised a job to have a cursory tidy up where hedges are already overgrown. I will be working with the town and parish councils to have a summer litter pick and weeding event to ensure everywhere looks as good as possible.

Buses 84/85 (and all other services)

More meetings this week with cabinet members and officers. Barbara Lawrence and Janet Young continue to collect evidence and impact statements and to lobby. I am hugely grateful for their work. I will update on this on social media and at parish and town council meetings throughout the month. The next few weeks will determine the outcome.

Highways / PROW Alkington /Ham and Stone

I will be conducting an audit with the Highways and PROW officers in the next month. Please ask residents to share any trouble spots: linda.cohen@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Build Back Better

This month I have agreed to support the setup of nursery provision at Hillesley School to help protect the future of the school and to also support the village hall kitchen project.

I will be supporting a grant for The Heritage Centre.

I still have some money to allocate and welcome final approaches from community groups and projects that need support. In particular I would welcome approaches from youth projects. In the first instance email linda.cohen@gloucestershire.gov.uk with details of the project and your contact number and I will follow up with a phone call.

Worth noting

Please try and highlight this item – I will be doing something on social media. Due to cuts 1 in 3 children can't swim when they leave primary school. This has jumped from 1 in 4 last year. It's predicted that number could rise to 6 in 10 by 2025.

Be Water Aware to reduce the risk of drowning

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) is urging people to stay safe in and around water to reduce the risk of accidental drownings.

The National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) Be Water Aware campaign runs from 22 to 28 April and aims to raise awareness of the risk of accidental drowning as well as provide safety advice ahead of the warmer months.

In 2022, 266 lives were lost due to accidental drowning in the UK and 40 per cent of those had no intention of entering the water.

Slips, trips and falls are often the cause of these accidents and many people also underestimate the dangers of jumping into water or taking a dip to cool off, especially those with limited experience of outdoor swimming.

Unseen hazards and cold water shock can mean even strong swimmers can get into trouble.

Simple tips to stay safe include:

- Keep to proper pathways and stay clear of the water's edge
- Don't enter the water after drinking alcohol
- Walk a safe route home after drinking, with friends and away from water
- Cold water shock can kill, walk into the water rather than jump in to reduce the risk

If someone is in trouble in the water, you can help by staying calm, staying on land and remember 'Call, Tell, Throw':

- Call 999 for the emergency services
- Tell the struggling person to float on their back
- Throw them something that floats

For more information and advice on the Be Water Aware campaign, please visit <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/glosfire/your-safety/safety-outdoors/water-safety/> and look out for #BeWaterAware on social media.

More work needed to embed improvements in fire and rescue service as HMICFRS report published.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has today (Friday 3 May 2024) published its report on Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) following an inspection in November/ December 2023.

Chief Fire Officer, Mark Preece and Cabinet Member, Dave Norman are pleased to see progress recognised in discharging a number of the recommendations from previous causes of concern in workplace culture and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). With strong foundations now in place, GFRS are well positioned to address the remaining concerns raised by HMICRS by continuing to deliver their improvement plans and embed the outcomes.

Improvements in staff engagement, a new workplace charter and signs of staff being increasingly confident to provide feedback to senior leaders were recognised as addressing previous recommendations made by inspectors.

A further cause of concern has been identified, which relates to arrangements for inspecting certain buildings, such as high-rise buildings, and when necessary, requiring building owners to comply with fire safety legislation. Steps towards addressing this are already underway including recruiting additional roles to increase capacity in this area.

It was recognised that the Service is effective within our communities at preventing fire risks and improving community safety. Most importantly, it was noted that the service responds well in emergencies and provides updates about emergency incidents to the public to ensure they can take any necessary action.

