

County Councillor Report –30th September 2024 (includes some District activity)

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).

Build Back Better – Supporting Community Projects

If you have a project which needs support, please contact me: linda.cohen@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Highways / Public Rights of Way

[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. This can be used for any road problems including overgrown hedges, damaged pavements or bridges.

Please can I ask all parish and town councils to put something on their website about 'leafing it out' to encourage residents to clear leaves and debris from the drains in front of their homes. The leaves are falling and the drains are become clogged at a time when we are experiencing unprecedented downpours. The reality is that highways are stretched with all the problems arising from the weather and keeping drains clear is one simple way to reduce the flooding and surface water risk.

Wotton

Disabled Parking Coop

The road marking and signage work will take place at the end of October.

Benches

I met with our senior residents to discuss their immediate bus transport requirements and we had a conversation about siting of the benches throughout the town to allow residents to make the trip independently into Wotton but with somewhere for a breather. I would thank Jill Tebb for keeping

this on the agenda. I now have a list of sites which I will discuss with the town clerk before the visit from Highways to look at the suitability of the proposed locations.

North Nibley

Road Safety

The quickest and most effective way to set up a school crossing patrol would be for us to recruit our own team and to put them through DBS and safeguarding checks and then for them to take part in GCC school patrol crossing training. NN Parish Council to confirm they have public liability insurance and then to start recruitment process, I will help with all of this.

Wood Lane

The drainage channel and gully have been inspected and cleared again in the last fortnight in a number of places. Residents have been informed.

Cemetery Grit Bin

I have reported the broken lid to Gary Wilson. If this is highways property and yellow it will be replaced. Failing that it will be the parish council's responsibility.

General bin will need to be emptied and rubbish put out on road for usual fortnightly collection.

Stinchcombe

Dursley RFC Flood Lights

I will speak to the about limiting the time that lights are left on

Abandoned Road Signs

I have spoken to Highways about collecting signage

Hillesley

Gigaclear – trying to get resolution on this.

Tresham road markings to be renewed

Kingswood Road Safety

We have agreed that we will recruit, DBS check and safeguard train our own volunteers. I will arrange school crossing patrol training with GCC.

There has been resistance to the TRO for the parking restrictions opposite Tubb's Turf. The matter has been escalated within the TRO team at GCC. We will write a further letter this week outlining the background to the request.

We have agreed to wait to progress the 20mph TRO until there is a change of administration which would make this process easier.

Alkington

Road Safety

We need residents to come forward with testimony about accidents / injuries at the Swanley Turn. The GCC records do not have any serious collisions.

Signage will be put up this month to alert drivers to the Swanley turn and the Cricket Club.

Household Recycling

A petition has been set up for all residents to express their wish to use the tip and to give us a measure of interest. Separately every household will be asked to give their opinion about whether a cost could be applied for household or garden waste.

Ham & Stone

As above for household recycling.

Parish Council to look at any other requirements for Build Back Better funding

Ongoing concerns about paths being overgrown and unpassable for all users – reported to Highways.

Buses 84/85 (and all other services)

There has been some movement by WECA and a suggestion that funding might be considered for an extension of the 40 route. The feasibility of this plan is being explored by officers at GCC in discussion with the service provider. I expect some news on whether this is possible and can be proposed to WECA later this week.

Separately I met with the senior residents of Wotton and bus campaigner Barbara Lawrence with former councillor Ken Tucker to look in greater detail at the requirements of residents who have mobility issues and depended on the service to travel to Wotton for daily shopping and activities and to see if a more localised service could be set up using community vehicles that are not in service during the daytime. We have reviewed all the options and are now trying to develop a plan which we could take to GCC for immediate funding.

A reminder that the GCC lift sharing app is available. [Gloucestershire County Council community - part of the Liftshare network](#)

I would ask every parish council and Wotton Town Council to promote this as widely as possible. Many people drive daily to Yate and Bristol and there are opportunities for lift sharing but this depends on everyone populating the app with details about what they can offer.

Meanwhile I will continue to fight for this fundamental service on which Wotton, Kingswood and Hillesley residents depend.

The Robin

On-demand bookable bus service providing a link between Wotton, Kingswood and Cam and Dursley station as well as giving access to Berkeley and Stonehouse. £2 per journey and connects passengers with transport links such as bus stops or directly to a location if there are no other transport options available.

Passengers can book by: Phone – 0345 263 8139 Web - [The Robin | Gloucestershire County Council](#) App - search for The Robin. Pay in advance on card or with cash or card to the driver.

Swimming

I am concerned that our children are increasingly growing up without the necessary skills with which they should be equipped for life. This obviously includes reading but the most recent statistics about children's ability to swim are troubling. It is expected that by 2030 60% of primary school children will be unable to swim. At the full council meeting in September I seconded a motion that the council should have an action plan to ensure that all children are able to swim at least 25m by the time they leave school. The motion was passed and an action group has now been set up to review the current provision in the county and to look at a plan to ensure that all our children learn to swim at school.

New council campaign asks residents to 'hand it back'!

Gloucestershire County Council has launched a campaign asking residents to return any mobility equipment they are no longer using.

The county council, in partnership with the NHS, provides the Gloucestershire Equipment Loan Service, which lends free equipment to people for as long as they need it, for example, after a hospital visit or to maintain their independence. Equipment ranges from hospital grade beds and wheelchairs, to crutches and perching stools.

Gloucestershire residents return around £500,000 worth of equipment each month, freeing up council funding to help more people get back on their feet. However, the Gloucestershire Equipment Loan Service thinks there could be even more equipment and daily living aids in people's homes that aren't being used.

There are multiple drop-off points across the county, including libraries for smaller items. You can also arrange a free collection from your home during working hours, Monday to Friday.

Equipment handed back to the council is cleaned and fully refurbished before being loaned to anyone else, and anything damaged beyond repair is recycled.

Residents can return equipment at multiple locations around the county, or they can arrange a free collection from their home. Call 01452 520438 or fill out a short form on our website

www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/return-equipment

Drop-off locations:

Any equipment can be returned to Hempsted and Mitcheldean sites within working hours (8.30am until 4.30pm).

Smaller pieces of equipment like walking sticks, walking frames and crutches can also be dropped off at libraries and county council offices across the county:

Libraries:

Charlton Kings, Cheltenham, Chipping Campden, Cinderford, Coleford, Dursley, Fairford, Gloucester, Hesters Way, Hucclecote, Longlevens, Lydney, Moreton in Marsh, Newent, Prestbury, Quedgeley, Tewkesbury, Tuffley, Up Hatherley, Winchcombe and Wotton under Edge.

County council offices:

- Shire Hall Members Car Park, Westgate Street, Gloucester, GL1 2TG.
- Forest Locality Office, Dean House, Station Street, Cinderford, GL14 2JF.
- Stroud Locality Office, Redwood House, Beeches Green, Stroud, GL5 4AE.
- Cotswold Locality Office, The Old School, 47 Lewis Lane, Cirencester, GL7 1EB.

Find out more about the Gloucestershire Equipment Loan Service at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/gloucestershire-equipment-loan-service

Brighter journeys ahead for Gloucestershire

This summer after a competitive process the council has awarded a new £13.5m street lighting contract to Milestone, which began on 3 August 2024 and will continue for five and a half years.

Under the new contract, Milestone will be responsible for maintaining the 62,500 streetlights and 8,000 illuminated signs and bollards that are located on the highway network within Gloucestershire. Works will include reactive repairs in the event of lighting outages, maintenance works and street light replacements for inefficient equipment.

Throughout the contract both parties will work closely together to bring continued improvements and efficiencies to the service. Part of this will see the use of more carbon efficient materials and technologies that will support the council's 2030 net zero emissions target.

New suicide prevention strategy published

Gloucestershire County Council has published a new suicide prevention strategy to coincide with Suicide Prevention Day; a day when organisations and communities come together to raise awareness about how we can work together to prevent suicide.

Preventing deaths from suicide remains a national and local priority.

The new Gloucestershire Suicide Prevention Strategy has been developed by the Public Health team at the county council; working with the [Gloucestershire Suicide Prevention Partnership](#). Engagement with people affected by suicide and professionals helped to inform where partners should collectively focus to improve mental health and wellbeing, and prevent suicide and self-harm.

The strategy sets out seven priorities for Gloucestershire:

- Reducing the risk of suicide in high-risk groups, such as men, people with a history of self-harm, people in contact with mental health services and those in contact with the criminal justice system.
- Addressing common risk factors associated with suicide at a population level; for example, physical ill-health and disability, bereavement, financial difficulties, unemployment, and social isolation.
- Reducing access to the means and methods of suicide: working with relevant agencies to understand potential high-risk locations and making sure we are alert to any evidence of new and emerging methods.
- Providing information and support to those affected by or bereaved through suicide.
- Promoting online safety and responsible media reporting of suicide and self-harm.
- Providing effective crisis support for those who reach crisis point.
- Supporting research, data collection and monitoring to better understand the Gloucestershire picture and what the local approach to suicide prevention should be.

[One in five of us will have suicidal thoughts in our lifetime](#), but a recent poll found that [only 45% of people feel comfortable talking to family and friends about suicidal thoughts](#), compared to 74% who said they feel comfortable talking about mental health.

For guidance on how to support someone you are worried about, the Samaritans have some simple and easy guidance to follow: www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/if-youre-worried-about-someone-else/how-support-someone-youre-worried-about

If you are experiencing thoughts of suicide, please contact the Samaritans on 116 123.

If you have been bereaved by suicide, the [Gloucestershire Support After Suicide Service \(GSASS\)](#), delivered by Rethink, can offer specialist support. Call 07483 375516 or email glossupportaftersuicide@rethink.org.

[Read the Gloucestershire Suicide Prevention Strategy \(2024-2029\) here.](#)

Support for people affected by historic forced adoption

Gloucestershire County Council is working in partnership with Adoption West to ensure any mothers, or children who are now adults, impacted by forced adoption practices have access to readily available support.

Between 1949 and 1976 an estimated 185,000 babies in England and Wales were taken from unmarried mothers and placed for adoption due to pressure from their families and society.

Evidence from across the UK suggests that many of the adoptions during this time were 'closed', meaning that children were given new names, identities, and birth certificates, were not informed that they were an adoptee and had no ongoing contact with their families.

The impact of this on women and children should not be underestimated, having lifelong and significantly distressing effects. The county council has commissioned Adoption West, a Regional Adoption Agency who amongst other adoption related activity provide support to adults who were adopted and families affected by forced adoption practices.

Adoption West can support adopted adults, birth parents and birth relatives affected by historic adoptions in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

The Adoption West Birth Links Service works with adopted adults and birth parents to provide:

- Support to apply to the Registrar General for the information needed to obtain a certified copy of their birth certificate
- Access to birth record services
- Up to six sessions of emotional support for birth family and adopted adults
- Advice about intermediary services
- Birth parent support groups

To access support please visit the Adoption West website:

[Adopted Adults - Adoption West](#) or telephone 03303 550 333.

SEND programme shortlisted for national award

Gloucestershire County Council's 'Preparation for Adulthood' programme has been shortlisted in the National Association for Special Educational Needs (nasen) Awards.

The 'Preparation for Adulthood' programme at SkillZONE is a finalist in the 'Co-production Initiative of the Year' award. In their eighth year, the nasen awards recognise schools, individuals, and organisations for their outstanding work to ensure that children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and learning differences reach their full potential.

'Preparation for Adulthood' is the result of a successful collaboration between educators, policymakers, and the community who have worked together to design a programme which will empower young people as they transition into adulthood. It combines an experience-based learning model and real-world scenarios, with the exceptional facilities at SkillZONE to equip young people with the tools they need to thrive and succeed in their future endeavours.

Led by accredited instructors, the programme offers tailored support and resources to meet the diverse needs of each young person, fostering independence and resilience. Through a series of engaging and interactive sessions, participants gain essential life skills, knowledge, and confidence to navigate various aspects of adult life, including education, employment, independent living, and social interactions.

By offering a safe and secure environment, SkillZONE enables young people to take part in real-life activities and apply their classroom knowledge in practical scenarios, enhancing their learning experience and preparing them more effectively for the challenges of adult life.

To learn more about the 'preparation for adulthood' programme visit [Preparation for Adulthood Programme - SkillZONE \(glosfire.gov.uk\)](#). For more information about the awards, please visit [nasen Awards | Nasen](#)

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service undertake multi-agency training exercise at Moreton-in

Marsh Fire Service College

The training exercise was organised by GFRS with the aim to test and assure a multi-agency approach to a simulated large-scale Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA).

The simulated incident tested the extensive skills and expertise of multiple agencies in response to a variety of simulated attacks including, vehicle, fire, bladed weapon, and improvised explosive device.

This exercise is part of contingency planning and is standard national practice. Although we hope that we will never be called to such an incident, we train regularly and extensively to ensure that we are fully prepared and can respond effectively and appropriately when we are needed.

Mark Preece, Chief Fire Officer at Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, said: "This large-scale, dynamic training exercise highlights the extraordinary level of skills, knowledge and expertise of ourselves and our emergency service partners.

We always hope that we will never be called to such an incident, but by taking part in regular training exercises and continuously testing and developing our skills we can ensure that we are prepared when we are needed".

New council leader elected

Cllr Stephen Davies has been elected as the new Leader of Gloucestershire County Council. Cllr Davies takes over from Cllr Mark Hawthorne who announced in July that after 14 years leading the council he had decided to stand down.

Having first been elected to the county council as councillor for the Hardwicke and Severn division in May 2017, Stephen was appointed Cabinet Member for Children's Safeguarding and Early Years in May 2021. Stephen also served as leader of the Conservative group on Stroud District Council until February 2023.

Stephen worked in the technology sector for 40 years in a range of technical, sales and management roles.

Cllr Davies' priorities for the remainder of the council term are to:

- Continue to improve the county's roads – building on the progress that has been achieved in recent years, including making sure information and engagement with residents continue to get better
- Stand up for communities - making sure where new housing is being proposed that the impact on roads, schools and other key services is well understood and the necessary financial investment is committed to address it
- Make sure the council continues to operate in a financially responsible way – prioritising investment into those areas that will have the greatest impact on the lives of Gloucestershire residents
- Take action to improve our SEND response in the face of rising demand - work harder and smarter to support young people with SEND and their families to access the support and services they need
- Support the adults that need our help the most - make it easier for adults and those supporting them to access the care or support they need and to help people to begin to think about the years ahead and what their needs may be
- Deliver continuous improvement – making sure council services continue to evolve a mindset where they are always looking for ways to deliver a better, more efficient services that achieve better outcomes for Gloucestershire residents

Reuse clothes to help create a Greener Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire Recycles is encouraging people to reduce the amount of clothes wasted by reusing them.

Gloucestershire Recycles is a partnership of Gloucestershire County Council and the six district councils and together they have launched a new clothing campaign this September called 'Wear Not Waste'.

The campaign aims to reduce clothing waste and tackle the carbon emissions created by the fashion industry. Globally, the industry creates 10% of the world's carbon emissions and around 711,000

tonnes of clothing and textiles are discarded each year in the UK, rather than being reused, donated, or recycled.

On average, everyone in the UK throws away 35 items of unwanted clothing and textiles every year.

As part of the campaign, the Gloucestershire Recycles partnership have made a clothing swap kit available to borrow for anyone who wants to host a clothes swap. The kit contains rails, hangers, signs and mirrors to make holding a pop-up clothes swap event easy.

The kits can be ordered easily and collected from Gloucester. Contact Waste@gloucestershire.gov.uk to find out more.

There is also a handy information pack (on the website below) for teachers to help educate young people on the topic of fast fashion.

Gloucestershire Recycles is also running a giveaway to win two £50 charity shop gift cards to help two lucky residents shop second hand. To enter, there is a short questionnaire about

To find out more go to gloucestershirerecycles.com/fashion

Gloucestershire on track with million trees target

Gloucestershire County Council has moved another step closer towards its goal of planting one million trees by 2030, increasing the current county total planted under its scheme to almost 400,000.

The most recent season's figures include over 100,000 trees planted across 250 different projects right across Gloucestershire. These trees were planted by the county council with the support of partners and volunteers. Among the projects were partnerships with parish and town councils, district councils, private estates and many individual landowners.

The million trees project is part of the county council's wider commitment to tackling climate change and delivering a Greener Gloucestershire.

The county council helps to ensure the survival of new and existing trees by providing advice to landowners on how best to care for trees particularly when they're first planted or when the weather is drier.

Gloucestershire County Council is currently planning projects for the 2024-25 planting season, which starts in November and runs through to March, and is inviting anyone who would like to take part to get in touch. Whether its envisioning woodlands that provide habitat and tranquillity, orchards bursting with fruit or lush hedgerows that create natural boundaries and wildlife corridors like Bournside we can offer support. If you have a possible planting project, you [can submit your expression of interest here](#).