

County Councillor Report – 7th January 2024

Prepared by Cllr Linda Cohen

Happy New Year,

It's been a turbulent couple of weeks for Highways with the challenging weather conditions but the break for Christmas and New Year has been a good time to take stock and look at priorities for 2024 and consider how I can more effectively help residents. I have listed my areas of focus. If you need more detail, please let me know: linda.cohen@gloucestershire.gov.uk. **I would like to hear from all residents about their concerns and ideas to allow me to create an action plan for the first half of 2024 on which I will report monthly.**

Gloucestershire County Council issue press releases regularly with new activity but these are often only days before the initiative begins. I will produce a weekly snapshot on a Friday which will be circulated to all parish and town councils which can be uploaded to the website or used as a facebook post.

There is no question that budgets will be under greater pressure than ever before with rising costs and every attempt being made to keep council tax rises to a minimum. But I will be continuing to take GCC to task about how the budget is spent, to ensure we get the very best value for money.

We will all need to be pragmatic and try and be as self sufficient as we can and to take individual responsibility for tasks that we can manage ourselves, to conserve precious resources for specialist work and services. I know that some residents don't share my view but unless we want to see a significant increase to council tax charges in the future, we need to do what we can.

I have a small pot of Highways Local budget remaining for emergencies, the rest has been allocated to projects.

I have remaining Build Back Better and Youth funding which I will be allocating in January so please get in touch if you need small grants for community projects. (Email above).

My Priorities for 2024

Highways

Our local roads are some of the worst in the country despite the heroic efforts of officers who manage to perform miracles with available resources but due to underinvestment on resurfacing projects. Our call to declare a 'pothole' crisis and create an emergency action plan was rejected by the Conservative administration at GCC.

The good news is that the 'Fix My Street' service is proving to be very, very effective and I have received excellent feedback from users. So please use this as your first port of call:

[Fix My Street](#) - a new, easier and more efficient way for residents, businesses and organisations in Gloucestershire to report and get updates on everything from potholes to problem paths.

Through an interactive online map, a broad range of issues can be reported simply and easily. This might be the condition of the roads, broken traffic lights, issues with streetlights, flooding issues or drainage through to road markings and grass verges.

Residents can use it to:

- Report issues,
- See where issues have been reported already,
- Sign-up to receive updates on work when it's completed or inspected,
- View the total number of repairs made by the county council.

Fix My Street is available on the [county council's website](#) and you can save the page to your home screen on any device. Or alternatively, download the app from Apple's App Store or Google Play.

Once reported, a safety inspector will make an assessment of the work needed and whether a repair needs to be completed. Works are prioritised based on the urgency of the situation, for example, a problem on a busy road may be resolved within 24 hours. The council aim to repair all significant potholes (more than 4cm deep and 30cm wide) within 28 days.

Drains: There is a programme of work in place but where possible please clear drains outside your property, of leaves and any other debris. This makes a major contribution to managing run off.

Road Safety

I continue to lobby for 20mph areas but there is resistance from the administration at GCC and Government to devolve power to allow these to be put in place more easily. The Traffic Regulation Order process is lengthy (more than 2 years) and costly (£15,000) and needs modernising to make it fit for purpose.

Campaign Hotspot Focus for 2024

Road Safety / Highways

- Kingswood Tubbs Turf to KLB
- Symn Lane – Wotton under Edge (Junction of Haw Street/ New Road/ Symn Lane)
- **Swanley Junction – New full campaign**
- Hillesley (approaches to village)
- Stinchcombe – Tait's Hill
- Old Town

Please continue to promote and share these messages



Buses 84/85 (and all other services)

- Lobby to retain the services (priority in January / February 24 before budgets are confirmed)

I would continue to reiterate the absolute importance of everyone trying to use the buses whenever possible, the passenger figures will continue to be a key part of the criteria used to assess our merit to receive support.

Worth noting

Rivers and Sewage

I know that many residents are concerned about the water quality of our rivers, streams and brooks.

You may find this useful: <https://theriverstrust.org/sewage-map>

Contact

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).