FEBRUARY 2025

COLN VALLEY COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

Forthcoming Committee Meetings
Mon 6 February 4.00 pm Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Thurs 9 February 6.00 pm Cabinet
Wed 15 February 2.00 pm Planning and Licensing Committee
Wed 22 February 2.00 pm Council
Tue 28 February 4.00 pm Audit and Governance Committee
Thurs 30 February 2.00 pm
Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis, Private Hire, and Street Trading
Recent Committee Meetings (underlined texts are linked to calendars of meetings with Agendas including Report Packs & Webcasts).
Thurs 9 January 6pm Cabinet
Wed 15 January 2pm Planning and Licensing Committee
Wed 22 January 2pm Council
Tue 28 January 4pm Audit and Governance Committee
Thurs 30 January 2pm
Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis, Private Hire, and Street Trading

CABINET DECISIONS - 9 January

Issue(s) Arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit and Governance
There was one recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committee relating to a report the Committee had considered on the Climate and Ecological Emergency meeting held on 6 January 2025 - That the Council ensures that it has processes in place for testing and developing the value of the work it is undertaking on the climate and ecological emergency with a view to providing positive ongoing investment in this field. The Chair stated that the recommendation was accepted.
Business Rates Relief 2025/2026, retail, hospitality and leisure scheme
To consider a scheme of rate relief for retail premises as outlined by the Government in the Autumn Statement 2024.
Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Collaboration Agreement
To seek approval of the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit Partnership Collaboration Agreement between Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Borough and Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Stroud and West Oxfordshire District Councils.
Corinium Museum Collections Development and Human Remains policies
To review and approve the Collections and Human Remains Policies of the Corinium Museum, and to agree a delegation to the Cabinet Member for Health, Culture and Visitor Experience
Disabled Facilities Grants Policy Update
To seek Cabinet approval for the implementation of the updated Disabled Facilities Grant Policy.
Financial Performance Report - Q2 2024/25 (Update)
To set the budget monitoring position for "Planning Services" for the 2024/25 financial year.
No vote required
Contract Award for the Parking ICT system

To agree the contract award for the Parking ICT system.

2DEVOLUTION FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE – UPDATE

• Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) is now scheduled for elections in May 2025.
• Leader Cllr Steve Davies applied to the Government for a delay due to ongoing discussions about devolution proposals that could lead to a Unitary Authority.but this has been postponed.
This would merge the current county and district councils into one entity.
• Devolution proposals require a minimum population of 500,000 to qualify.
Gloucestershire's population is 659,000 which would comfortably exceed the minimum. figure for a county-wide unitary.
• The cost of the May 2025 elections is estimated at £825,000, plus additional costs for inducting a new council. Postponing elections until May 2026 could save money, as the elections might be unnecessary if a new unitary council is created soon after. The decision to postpone the May 2025 elections is purely a matter for Ministers.
• A temporary council would serve a short period before the new unitary authority is established, likely triggering another election.
* The government has indicated that retaining the current two-tier system is not an option.
Politically, the County Council believes it will be financially advantageous for the county to be the "leaders of the pack" rather than waiting for unitary-status to be forced upon them.
2. Current Council Structure and Devolution Plan
Gloucestershire has a two-tier council structure: County Council (GCC) and six district councils (Gloucester, Cheltenham, Stroud, Tewkesbury, the Cotswolds, and the Forest of Dean).
Under devolution, Gloucestershire would join a combined authority with a Metro Mayor (which would manage housing, transport, and economic growth), but only if it switches to a unitary model.
Options for joining a combined authority:
1. Worcestershire and Herefordshire
2. West of England Combined Authority (WECA): Includes Bristol, South Gloucestershire, and Bath and North East Somerset (BANES).
3. Swindon and Wiltshire
4. Oxfordshire
33. Challenges and Concerns
We have concerns about rural representation and the need for a mechanism to protect rural interests. Rural communities might be side-lined in a combined authority model that might prioritize urban areas due to the concentration of power in larger towns and cities.
The shift to a unitary authority could lead to more efficient planning, better infrastructure alignment, and holistic solutions for issues like police, health, housing and transport.
4. Political Positions
The Conservative Group supports a single unitary authority for the whole of Gloucestershire, aiming to reduce complexity, streamline services, and foster stronger economic and housing growth.
Gloucestershire's economic ties are seen as more aligned with the south WECA (Bristol region), although discussions with Herefordshire and Worcestershire are also under

consideration. A partnership with Oxfordshire and Swindon is also a possibility. Opposition Groups favour creating two unitary authorities however this division falls well below the 500,000 population threshold required for unitary authority status. Presented as more "locally representative", there's an underlying political strategy: to gain control over one half of the county. The split would prevent Gloucestershire from fully benefiting from devolution because it wouldn't meet the required population size for a combined authority with a Metro Mayor. Furthermore, there would be duplication of services in Gloucestershire, such as:

Two planning departments
Two Adult Social Services structures
Two Children's Services structures
Two housing authorities
Two Waste Disposal structures
Two Highways authorities

In my opinion, splitting the county into two unitary authorities is a lose-lose option, it would create unnecessary complexity and incur additional costs and will not address the unique needs of rural areas like the Cotswolds. However, my caveat is that there needs to be a robust mechanism in place which enables the interests of rural communities to be taken very seriously within a devolved authority.

4PLANNING AND CHANGES TO NPPF

The government has made major updates to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), designed to support the Prime Minister's Plan for Change, which targets the delivery of 1.5 million homes over five years. Principal authorities, such as district and borough councils, are tasked with reaching a combined annual target of 370,000 homes to meet this goal.

The Cotswolds are expected to deliver a significant increase, an extra 1,000 houses per year. 80% of the Cotswolds is CNL (Cotswold National Landscape - formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), which means that it cannot be built on, there are protections in places to stop development. Tetbury, Cirencester, Lechlade, Moreton, Stow and other areas are already under unsustainable pressure of house building. There is a crisis to deliver the infrastructure and also there aren't enough builders and contractors to actually do the work. Furthermore, it is the 'type' of housing which is important in the Cotswolds, not just the number. Not enough small, affordable or social housing is being built.

Emphasis on Social Rent and Affordable Housing

The revised NPPF places greater emphasis on providing homes for social rent. Developers and principal authorities are expected to prioritize affordable housing, with local authorities gaining additional powers to facilitate delivery. While these changes may help accelerate housing development, broader challenges remain, including workforce shortages, infrastructure gaps, and affordability barriers.

Neighbourhood Planning

For town and parish councils, neighbourhood planning remains a vital tool. While there are no significant changes to the status of Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs), they must still align with strategic policies set by principal authorities. However, the government's push for updated local plans with increased housing targets presents challenges for NDPs, particularly during the transitional period.

Local planning authorities are now required to produce updated Local Development Schemes by 6 March 2025, outlining timetables for plan updates. This accelerated

timeline may leave existing NDPs out of step with emerging local plans, increasing the likelihood of required updates. Councils are strongly encouraged to review and update their NDPs promptly to avoid them becoming outdated.

5Climate Change and Renewable Energy

The NPPF places a stronger emphasis on climate change in both plan-making and decision-making. The updated framework makes it easier to develop onshore wind energy projects and introduces new guidance for renewable and low-carbon developments. Additionally, greater clarity is provided on flood risk assessments, encouraging the use of sustainable drainage systems in housing developments.

Permitted Development and Planning Fees

The government has widened permitted development rights for home extensions and loft conversions, making these processes simpler for residents. Regulations for installing electric vehicle charging points and air source heat pumps have also been relaxed, supporting the transition to greener technologies. Planning fees for householder applications will increase to ensure full cost recovery, with local planning authorities gaining the power to set their own fees under the proposed Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

What This Means for You

Town and parish councils have a critical role in responding to these changes. The emphasis on social rent, affordable housing, and climate resilience offers an opportunity to advocate for developments that reflect the unique needs of our communities.

BINS & WASTE COLLECTION

This continues to be an issue in some wards. It is particularly irksome when collections are on Fridays. If a lorry breaks down during the week,
or if collections elsewhere are missed, it is always the Friday collection which suffers from the accumulative effect.
It is such a shame that our villages so often have bins cluttering up the roadside over the weekend, at no fault of homeowners.
For those of you whose bins have not been collected on a Friday for literally months on end, it is perfectly reasonable to beg the question, what is the point of putting bins out on a Friday if they are not collected? Communications need to be improved. I shall be following this up.
6Garden waste collections were suspended over the Christmas period, this was for the whole district and is part of the contract. Check your collection day here.

UNSUNG HEROES

Please nominate your Unsung Hero here: www.cotswold.gov.uk/unsungheroes

A417 MISSING LINK PROJECT UPDATE

The Air Balloon roundabout is suffering delays at the moment, even during low traffic periods.
The A417 will be closed between the A46 Brockworth junction and the Air Balloon roundabout for two full weekends:

- 11pm on Friday 21 February to 6am on Monday 24 February

• 11pm on Friday 7 March to 6am on Monday 10 March
To install drainage and utilities. This will require full weekend
closures, with work continuing day and night to remove the closure as quickly as possible.
DAYTIME AND NIGHT TIME CLOSURES - A417 MISSING LINK - COWLEY JUNCTION
From 7 January to approximately 1 April
• Closure Point 1: Follow Climperwell Road towards Cowley.
o Follow diversion via Cowley to the A435.
• Closure Point 2: Follow High Cross Road towards Cirencester.
o Follow diversion via Elkstone to the A417.
• Closure Point 3: Follow Climperwell Road towards Churchview.
o Follow diversion via Brimpsfield to Birdlip.
• Closure Point 4: Traffic will not be able to exit the A417 onto the link road at Cowley Junction.
• The A417 will remain open and mainline traffic will not be affected.
• There will be no pedestrian access through the road closures.
• Emergency access will be maintained at all times.Diversion routes will be in place as approved by Gloucestershire County Council.
For an upgraded drainage system, utilities, and a new footpath beneath the A417 Bridge at Cowley Junction.
All roadworks and planned road closures on motorways and major A roads, including the A417, are published on the Traffic England website: www.trafficengland.com.
7Road Closure Reports, which includes a seven day look ahead of planned road closures, are updated twice daily, Monday to Friday except for bank holidays: www.nationalhighways.co.uk/travel-updates/road-closure-report/.
To find the latest information about local road closures, please visit: https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/roads/roadworks/.
Webpage: www.nationalhighways.co.uk/a417-missing-link/
Email: A417MissingLink@nationalhighways.co.uk
Phone: 0300 123 5000
X: @HighwaysSWEST
Facebook: @HighwaysSWEST

CDC BUDGET CONSULTATION

Cotswold District Council invited residents, businesses, and organisations across the district to share their views on the Council's finances as it prepares to set the budget for the next financial year. The budget consultation was on Tuesday 7 January 2025, until midnight on Tuesday, 28 January 2025, and provided the opportunity for the community to influence important financial decisions; including council tax and car parking charges.
Residents, businesses, and organisations are encouraged to take part in the consultation online at
https://your.cotswold.gov.uk/en-GB/projects/budget-consultation-2025-26

FARMERS

Parliament is going to debate the petition – "Don't change

inheritance tax relief for working farms".

https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/700138

The debate is scheduled for 10 February 2025.

Cllr David Fowles

Conservative District Councillor COLN VALLEY Ward, Cotswold District Council

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07747 012256

Coln Valley Ward PCs: Coln St Dennis, Bibury, Quenington, Coln St Aldwyns, Hatherop, Southrop, Eastleach

If you are contacting me as a local constituent please be aware I may need to share your personal information when contacting District Council officers or other agencies relevant to your query.