

## County Councillor Report –4<sup>th</sup> August 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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

### Wotton

Ludgate Hill

The work to repair the wall is underway. I am also investigating something to make turning out of the car park easier and safer.

Coombe Road

Speed monitoring to commence this month.

Symn Lane Car Park

The CEO of Stroud District Council attended the Wotton under Edge Town Council planning meeting to help resolve issues. I am hopeful that a productive discussion and negotiation by all parties will mean that we will shortly see some sort of resolution and a plan which will benefit the residents of Wotton, particularly those who live next to the car park, as well as visitors to the town.

Lengthsman work

This work is in progress.

- Please let me know of any areas of particular concern.

### **North Nibley**

Work continues with the Think Travel Team to conduct the reviews for a school crossing patrol.

I have asked Highways to collect remaining signage.

I am producing a planning checklist for councillors (District work – this will be available for all parish councils).

I am investigating whether we can replace the cemetery bin.

The pavement on the stretch from the cemetery to the Black Horse will be repaired this week.

### **Stinchcombe**

To confirm signage is in process for the old road / now trackway up to Stinchcombe Hill past The Buildings on The Street, to prevent large vehicles taking this route and getting stuck.

### **Hillesley**

I am chasing Gigaclear work on the stone wall.

### **Kingswood Road Safety**

I have requested a meeting to progress our TRO application

Speed monitoring will take place towards the 20mph TRO in the next fortnight. The VAS spec and siting will depend on the results.

The volunteer school crossing patrol are with the Think Travel team.

## **Alkington /Ham and Stone**

We will begin the A38 safety campaign project on 12<sup>th</sup> August when Gary Wilson returns from holiday.

I am meeting with South Glos this month to progress the use of South Glos recycling facilities. I will also launch the petition to prove need and will also distribute a simple questionnaire to determine what residents might be prepared to pay to dispose of green and general waste.

I am continuing an audit with the Highways and PROW officers of all maintenance issues to allow me to allocate remaining Highways Local budget. Please ask residents to share any trouble spots:

[linda.cohen@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:linda.cohen@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

The strip next to Shrubbery Cottage is an unresolved problem. I will work with Lindsey Green to resolve this during August.

Checking specification of gates for PROW project and that they can be used by hand cyclists.

Added requests to Lengthsman work including A38 from Lower Stone to garage. High Street. Berkeley from the Pill to Kennels.

## **Buses 84/85 (and all other services)**

I walked from Wotton to Yate with other protestors on July 19<sup>th</sup> which I think has helped to further highlight our cause.

Subsequently I attended a WECA meeting in Bristol with Barbara Lawrence and Martin Tucker to put our requests to Mayor / MP Dan Norris who appears to be completely resistant to any pleas for help to save the existing service or provide an alternative. However South Glos is determined to help and as I write Gloucestershire County Council officers are looking at every permutation to try and effect a service that can provide the vital link between Wotton and Yate. I am also talking to the existing bus providers to establish where opportunities exist. I expect that there will news during the week commencing August 5<sup>th</sup>.

I would reassure residents that I am working around the clock with all the parties involved to try and ensure we have a TIMETABLED bus service.

You can find all information here on facebook: @Save the W-U-E to Yate bus service

## **Leader of the Council announces decision to stand down after 14 years**

Having held the position for more than 14 years, Cllr Mark Hawthorne has announced that he will be standing down as Leader of the Council in September 2024. Mark will continue in the role until a new Leader is elected at the Full Council meeting in September and will carry on representing the people of Quedgeley until the elections next year.

Mark will not be seeking re-election at next year's county council elections so has decided to stand down as Leader now so he can support a smooth transition to a new leader and ensure his vast organisational knowledge and experience are not lost.

## **Get active and get free rewards for the Library Challenge 2024**

Families in Gloucestershire are being encouraged to sign up for this year's Library Challenge, to explore everything the library has to offer for free.

This year's theme is sport, so Gloucestershire Libraries are inviting you to get active, get reading and get free rewards.

Children can find out what their library means to them by completing a range of tasks, including reading any books they choose, connecting with STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and maths) and getting into nature.

It is free to take part in anytime during the summer with a library membership and is suitable for children aged 3+. If you are not a member it is free to sign up, just visit **[gloslibraries.uk](https://gloslibraries.uk)**.

Once you have signed up you will receive a free challenge journal, with nine exciting sports-themed tasks. Stamps can be collected for each completed task and special rewards are available at each level including stickers, certificates and much more.

Anyone who reaches gold level is entered into a special prize draw, with prizes on offer including tickets and vouchers for local activities and attractions.

More information on the challenge, which runs until Saturday 14 September, is available at:

**<https://gloslibraries.uk/welcome-library-challenge>**

A number of events and activities will be hosted throughout the summer by Gloucestershire Libraries for The Library Challenge for the whole family to enjoy.

They include healthy eating workshops, Zumba, LEGO workshops in the labs, martial arts, sports day games and crafts.

The events are free and suitable for children aged three to 12 and their families. Tickets are limited so book in advance at your local library or **[visit the library events webpage](#)**.

You can also follow Gloucestershire Libraries on social media for updates and share your journey using #TLCGlos

## **Novelist cuts the ribbon to formally open Stroud Library**

Best-selling Gloucestershire novelist Katie Fforde cut the ribbon to formally open Stroud Library at its new location in the Five Valleys Shopping Centre.

It has moved from its old location in Lansdown to a more central and accessible site in the centre of the town.

The library has proved extremely popular with customers since it first opened to the public in its new location in April, when it welcomed around 750 customers on the opening day.

In the period from April to June it has welcomed 35,778 visitors and 815 new members have joined. A range of activities are held at the library for people of all ages, including Story Time and Baby Bounce and Rhyme, dance and craft workshops and digital support sessions.

The library, based on the lower ground floor of the shopping centre in King Street, is in a completely refurbished area where you can browse a vast range of adult and children's books.

The Lab area provides the opportunity to experience 3D design/print, Virtual Reality, access to the full adobe creative suites, and much more. Other services include a new bookable meeting room, printing and free access to computers and self-serve digital tablets for members.

The library is free to join and people are encouraged to sign up at:

<https://gloucestershire.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/WPAC/JOIN>

For opening times, contact details and events, please see: [gloslibraries.uk/library/stroud-library](https://gloslibraries.uk/library/stroud-library)

Further information on plans for the old library and neighbouring church will be available at an engagement event very soon. This is currently planned for mid-August.

## **Call for unpaid carers to help shape local support services**

Gloucestershire County Council and NHS Gloucestershire are inviting unpaid carers to share their views on services which support adult carers.

The carers survey aims to hear from all adult carers aged 18+ about the support they need to help them to continue in their vital caring role. The feedback carers provide will help to shape future services and support for carers across the county.

The county council and NHS Gloucestershire jointly fund and promote a range of services to support carers in the county through Gloucestershire Carers Hub which includes:

- Information, advice and guidance for carers and professionals
- Variety of training and well-being sessions
- Carers assessments, support planning and the Carers Emergency Scheme
- Carers breaks and hospital liaison
- Emotional support and counselling, alongside peer support groups
- Carer Aware, a discreet way of identifying that someone is an unpaid carer which includes a discount scheme for carers from businesses who sign up

The purpose of the survey is to find out whether these services are helping carers in their caring roles and in their lives outside of caring, and to learn what other support they may need.

It is open to all adult carers who provide support or who look after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of frailty, physical or mental illness, addiction or disability. They do not need to be in receipt of Carers Allowance.

Carers can have their say now by visiting

<https://haveyoursaygloucestershire.uk.engagementhq.com/carers-survey-2024>

There is also a separate survey for professionals who support unpaid adult carers at

<https://haveyoursaygloucestershire.uk.engagementhq.com/carers-professionals-survey-2024>

The carers survey closes on Wednesday September 4 at 5pm.

### **£2million investment proposed on solar panels at schools**

Gloucestershire County Council is set to invest £2million on installing solar panels at schools in the county.

The council has committed to creating a carbon neutral county by 2045, as well as reducing emissions by 80 per cent by 2030. Investing in low carbon technology such as solar panels will help meet these targets.

A pilot scheme is currently in place at six of the council's maintained schools – Nailsworth CofE Primary, Harewood Junior in Tuffley, St John's Primary in Cheltenham, Ashchurch Primary in Tewkesbury, Stow-on-the-Wold Primary and Woolaston Primary in Lydney. This is to establish the costs of installation and will enable measures to be put in place to ensure an efficient roll-out of the project at other selected maintained schools.

Each of the council's maintained schools will be assessed to determine their suitability for inclusion in the programme of works. The county council aims to install solar panels on the maximum number of schools possible that meet the criteria and it is anticipated that 85 out of 100 maintained schools will be suitable.

The panels would generate average estimated annual savings of £4,360 per school and they would be expected to last over 20 years, subject to maintenance.

The project will see the panels installed in tranches to manage the process and is due to take place from October 2024 to March 2027.

You can [read the full cabinet report here](#).

## **County council saves bus service after contractor declares bankruptcy**

Last week operator Transpora declared bankruptcy, putting the 60 bus service which operates from Dursley, Wotton-under-Edge and Thornbury at risk. Gloucestershire County Council has found a speedy replacement and Stagecoach will officially take over the emergency provision until 31 August 2024, when a full procurement will take place.

Cllr Philip Robinson, cabinet member whose portfolio includes buses, said: "It's a shame to see any business cease trading but our priority here has been to secure the service for our passengers and I'm pleased to see that we've been able to do this successfully with no gap in service."

## **New centres to support families in Stroud and the Cotswolds**

The county council is opening two new Children and Family Centres in Cirencester and Stonehouse as part of exciting plans to introduce a family hub model to Gloucestershire.

The new centres are part of an investment of £35 million in the council's network of children and family centres in communities across the county. They will play a key role in exciting plans to move towards a family hub model in Gloucestershire, to ensure families have access to the right support, at the right time, in the right place. Each centre will act as a one-stop shop, offering a wide range of family support services in one location, or signposting to other services as needed.

Stroud Children and Family Centre is based at The Red Lodge in Stonehouse, and Cotswolds Children and Family Centre is on Lewis Lane in Cirencester.

The new centres will be run by Family Action, which was appointed by the council earlier this year. Family Action is a national charity that works from the heart of local communities across England and Wales. Knowing, first-hand, that early experiences of family stay with us, Family Action works closely with those they support, as well as through professional partnerships, to ensure they offer the right support at the right time.

This week, community groups and district partners from across Stroud and the Cotswolds were invited to learn more about the plans to reshape services available to support families and see how they can get more involved. They were welcomed by Cllr Stephen Davies, cabinet member for children's safeguarding and early years at Gloucestershire County Council and Sir David Holmes CBE, Chief Executive of Family Action.

The event was an opportunity for local organisations who support families to:

- Understand more about the council's vision for family hubs
- Meet the Family Action team and learn more about their plans
- View the recent refurbishment and renovations that have transformed the buildings into a fresh and inviting space for children, young people and families
- Build strong relationships to strive for the best outcomes for children and families in Gloucestershire by collaborating with partners

The new centres will offer opportunities for council services to co-locate with health partners and work more closely with local community and voluntary services, making it easier for families to access support when they need it. They will be part of a wider network of physical and virtual family support points across the county.

Families can find out more by visiting [Children & Family Centres - First steps to Family Hubs | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

### **Extra £2million invested in highways projects**

An extra £2million is being invested in highways projects this year, following an underspend in the county council's budget.

The 2023/24 budget had an underspend of £10million, which has meant an extra £2million funding can be allocated to highways.

The underspend was partly made up of £4.41million of additional electricity income generated by the Energy from Waste facility. The majority of the remaining £8million underspend will be put into general reserves, however £2.41million will be used to address some financial risks arising within the current year's budget, including the cost of children's placements, additional expenditure required to support the forthcoming CQC inspection and the introduction of the Procurement Act.

The highways projects where the funds will be invested are:

- £500k to maintain 8 Find and Fix gangs throughout the year. These teams focus on finding smaller potholes and fixing them before they become a problem
- £500k for refreshing lining across the network
- £300k towards the Cheltenham Spa station cycle access ramp project
- £200k for further vegetation (grass and tree) cutting gangs to improve safety on the network
- £200k towards maintaining footways in our town centres
- £100k increase to the schools safety programme
- £100k to refresh zebra and other crossings across the network
- £100k to deliver the Merrywalks bus station resurfacing

### **Have your say on proposed Merrywalks revamp**

Gloucestershire County Council is inviting residents to give their views on proposed improvements to Merrywalks transport hub in Stroud.

The project aims to transform the hub into a transport interchange that is user-friendly, accessible and inviting for people to use.

The proposed improvements include new, high quality bus shelters, improved displays showing 'real time passenger information', lighting improvements, CCTV and a better waiting environment.

Other options to improve and expand the hub include secure cycle storage, parcel collection and a bike repair station. The public are being invited to comment on what they would like to see at the hub and can submit additional ideas.

The project is being funded with £200,000 from Gloucestershire County Council, £98,000 from Stroud District Council through its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding for 2024/25, and £14,000 from Stroud Town Council.

The county council is inviting people to give their views by taking part in a survey and adding comments to an interactive map and ideas board. The engagement runs until Monday 9 September.

For more information on the project and to give your views, please visit:

<https://haveyoursaygloucestershire.uk.engagementhq.com/stroud-merrywalks-transport-hub>

## **New mental wellbeing helpline launched**

Gloucestershire County Council is investing up to £1.4million over the next 7 years in a new helpline to support the mental wellbeing of adults in the county.

The new helpline, 'Connect and Offload', or CandO (pronounced 'can do') for short is designed to provide support when someone first notices signs and symptoms of their mental health worsening. It will be open to any adult who is experiencing issues with their emotional wellbeing, such as low mood, anxiety, stress and loneliness.

It also includes support and advice for individuals seeking help with self-harm allowing them to receive the support they need, alongside wider support for their overall emotional wellbeing.

The 'Connect and Offload' helpline will:

- Offer support to adults (aged 18 plus) without the need for a referral, or an appointment.
- Enable people to access help anonymously, between the hours of 2pm-9pm, seven days a week, 365 days per year, via
  - Phone on 0808 801 0606
  - Text 07537 410 022
  - Webchat via [gloucestershirecando.org](https://gloucestershirecando.org)
  - Email [cando@rethink.org](mailto:cando@rethink.org)
- Provide emotional support, information on local services and a 'listening ear'.
- Promote coping strategies, safety planning and advice on self-care.
- Give advice and support to carers, friends or family.
- Signpost to sources of community-based support and other mental health services, or to organisations who can help with wider issues such as concerns over finance, debt, bereavement, or employment.

The new helpline is delivered and managed by Rethink Mental Illness, a leading mental health charity that offers a range of services across England and Gloucestershire, including award winning helpline services.

Siobhan Farmer, Director of Public Health at Gloucestershire County Council said: "We are committed to helping everyone to look after their mental wellbeing and receiving help and support early is crucial to prevent symptoms getting worse.

“The new Connect and Offload helpline is a great addition to the range of mental health support services available in Gloucestershire and I know it will make a difference to individuals, and their families and friends. I’d encourage anyone who is struggling to get in touch, so we can help you to get the support you need.”

## **The Robin**

### **A reminder:**

An 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.

The Robin is a local, friendly bookable bus service. Passengers search for their ideal journey and book a pickup and drop off location that suits them.

It's £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.