

District Councillor's Update for Blockley Parish Council, October 2023

Residents can contact me, Clare Turner, at Clare.Turner@cotswold.gov.uk

Privacy Statement

As a Councillor I may need to collect personal data to process constituents' requests for assistance or respond to their enquiries. As a Councillor I will only collect the personal data from constituents that is needed to provide them with relevant information, services or support. I will not give information about you to anyone else or use information about you for any other purpose, unless the law allows me to. Further privacy information see our Councillor Privacy Notice <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/support/privacy-and-data/service-privacy-notice/councillors-privacy-notice/>

1. Planning

The appeal hearing relating to case APP/F1610/C/22/3311035 (Draycott) was heard 16/11/23. I attended the hearing in Cirencester and a site visit was scheduled (for Planning Inspector, CDC officers and appellant only) for 14:30 on 16/11/23. Around a dozen residents also attended. We now await the Planning Inspector's judgement (the target date to complete the report is 6 weeks).

The latest status of an appeal can be found by searching the Appeals Casework Portal here <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/> (using the case reference number).

2. Publica review

Since 2017 all but 3 CDC officers are employed by Publica rather than directly by the council and 3 other councils are also shareholders in Publica (Forest of Dean, West Oxfordshire and Cheltenham Borough). As part of a review process undertaken in 2022 it was recommended that a further review of how well this outsourcing works for the Councils. This piece of work is now complete and the recommendation was to return the majority of services to the council control; cabinet will recommend this to full council next week. There is a cost associated with doing this but it is anticipated it will generate cost savings in the long run and make the council better equipped to respond to change and manage its finances. Cheltenham have already repatriated many of its services and the Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire are also planning on moving away from the Publica model and bringing services back "in-house".

3. Casework

I continue to support residents with issues around waste collection and highways. I met with a CDC flood officer on site in Blockley (02/11/23) to discuss the flooding issues near Lower Brook House and also the flow of water from Greenway/Park Rd down into the village. By chance, it was a day of heavy rain and the area near Lower Brook House was flooded. The CDC officer liaised directly with highways and their team attended on 08/11/23 and successfully unblocked the culvert (see photos filed here if you're interested https://blockleypc.sharepoint.com/:u:/s/FullCouncil/EfaPypmFB_IDttNCGJ4x7NQBTB7AwnYrUMcJM-qGBbo0eg?e=qrkqav). The flood officer recommended appointing a volunteer flood warden to keep an eye on this particular culvert inlet to prevent future blockages (leaves, mud and silt on this occasion); once flooded it's very challenging to locate it to clear it (deep water). Unfortunately, we were advised that due to budget constraints, further maintenance on the other drains/gullies will be postponed until the next financial year.

With regards to road sweeping Blockley currently has a September and November sweep scheduled. Leaf fall and grass etc is not deemed as detritus until such time as it decays and has broken down. However there is a standard that should be met with regards to litter and detritus, and this is covered under the EPA 1990 revised 2003 (see link <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-on-litter-and-refuse>). The Waste Contract Manager was reviewing CDC's Street Cleansing activities when I contacted him in late October, which includes Ubico's current sweeping regime and litter picking along with on street bins. The results are currently with the responsible director.

The waste contract manager noted that it may be challenging to synchronise a sweeper with a gully sucker, as it involves two different authorities with two different levels of responsibility, but considered it "not insurmountable and something we can work on assuming funding is available".

Following a recent meeting with Parish Clerk and Cllr Alison Fowlie to discuss the various highways issues in the Parish, I will be creating a spreadsheet for all councillors to track progress/history of issues raised (it won't store any personal information but may make reference to the number of residents that have contacted us about a particular issue).

For information, residents ordering a new/additional bin or waste sacks are advised they may have to wait up to 6 weeks for delivery, though it is often much quicker. Sacks e.g. for garden waste can be collected from Cirencester and Moreton offices however, to speed up this time. Paper garden waste sacks are available to residents living in properties without a suitable curtilage to store or transport bins.

4. Cllr Angus Jenkinson (Moreton West) will be taking on the role of Councillor for Regenerative Agriculture and Ecology. This appointment is closely aligned with the recently shared draft of the "Climate Change Priorities Plan for 2023-2027." Working in collaboration with Cllr Mike McKeown, the Cabinet Lead for Climate Change and Sustainability, Councillor Jenkinson will play a crucial role in positioning Cotswold District Council as a leader in environmental stewardship and sustainable agricultural innovation. His responsibilities will cover a broad spectrum of agricultural practices, including regenerative, organic, mixed, and conservation farming, as well as rewilding where appropriate. This initiative is designed to create a supportive and forward-thinking, climate-friendly environment that will serve our agricultural and rural communities.

5. **Coming up**

Meeting with GWR Before plans to close ticket offices were dropped, a meeting was organised with GWR representatives. The meeting with GWR's Business Development Director is going ahead with a focus on GWR's future plans for railway services and their staffing throughout the Cotswolds

Retrofitting. A training session for councillors, covering retrofit in listed and traditionally constructed buildings, is scheduled for early December, so I'll report back on that at our January meeting.

Next full council meeting is 22/11/23. Councillors have the opportunity to ask questions (as do residents) so please flag up any issues you would like me to raise.