

District Councillor's Update for Blockley Parish Council, February 2025

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. Cotswold District Council Budget

The Council meets to set its budget and council tax on for the financial year ahead, on 24 February 2025. The Council's Cabinet has agreed what should go forward to the whole Council for decision. The funding that the Council receives from the Government to run its services is lower than in 2024/25. The Government has scrapped the Rural Services Delivery Grant which helps councils with the higher cost of running services in rural areas which was worth over £800,000 to the Council this year. The proposed Council Tax rise of £5 a year for a Band D property will only just make up for the lost income in Government grants. There is one piece of good news though - on top of normal funding, the Government has given the Council EPR £1.5 million to support its recycling work, paid for from a levy on packaging producers.

This money, which is not guaranteed for the following year, means that the proposed budget will allow the Council to put over £600,000 into its revenue reserves. These funds will help it deal with a projected loss in Government grant for 2026/27 of £3 million - a massive fall of over a fifth of the Council's net revenue budget.

The Cabinet also agreed to freeze half-hour and one-hour charges in its car parks for 2026/27 to support people managing the rising cost of living, with the longer duration charges going up by 2.8%. The charge for a garden waste collection licence will go up to £69 from April reflecting the increased cost of running the service, not least from the increase in employers' national insurance contributions from April which will cost the Council overall over £250,000. Discount of 50% available for those on Council Tax Support or other benefits.'

- Local Government reorganisation.** Following my update in January (when there was uncertainty as to whether the County Council elections would proceed and whether Gloucestershire would be fast-tracked to create a unitary authority) it has now been confirmed that elections will go ahead and Gloucestershire has not been included in the first tranche of areas to form unitary authorities. The transition from the County and District two-tier structure of governance to a unitary will still take place and the government timetable is to achieve this by 2028.
- Another successful **fly-tipping prosecution** took place at the start of February. Under the household waste duty of care, all residents are legally required to ensure that waste is disposed of responsibly. This includes verifying that any individual or business collecting waste has the proper authorisation, such as a waste carrier licence from the Environment Agency. Failure to comply can result in fines or prosecution. Cotswold District Council initially issued a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) to a Gloucester resident, giving him the opportunity to discharge liability for the offence. However, when the FPN remained unpaid, the Council had a duty to take the case to prosecution. Local authorities must follow up on unpaid FPNs to

maintain the credibility of the penalty system and ensure compliance with environmental laws. <https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news/illegal-dumping-leads-to-successful-duty-of-care-prosecution-for-cotswold-district-council>

4. A working group meeting relating to **development in Moreton** has been scheduled for 31/03/25. The group is made up of representatives from the Town Council, Community Groups, Businesses etc and CDC councillors. I am no longer part of the agreed working group, along with other neighbouring district councillors, and instead the member responsible for planning and the leader of the council will sit on the working group. I attended a recent invitation only community event which followed up on a session hosted by CDC in October. Some elements of the event were more useful than others and one positive was the message that some of the issues/suggestions raised by attendees could be formulated into recommendations for CDC, via the Working Group.
5. Connected to the development pressure in Moreton, are the **proposed Housing Targets** that have been put forward by Government. While the legislation is still to be formalised, the mandatory target given to CDC is 1,036 homes a year. So previously, sites for 3,500 homes were sought up to 2041 (District-wide) and that has increased to 15,000 homes by 2046 (District-wide). This is likely to put huge pressure on all settlements to take additional development. There are local concerns that if Moreton is asked to take around 40% of these new homes (as had been previously suggested in relation to the smaller Housing Target figures), that would equate to 6,000+ new homes for Moreton.

Another proposed national policy change that is planned is “**presumption in favour of development around railway stations**” as part of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill. This could potentially impact Moreton and surrounding areas. These and other national policy changes have impacted the Local Plan timetable and further public consultation is needed.

6. I've been undertaking lots of **casework** on behalf of residents and have had some notable successes including increased frequency of bin collection (dog waste and on street) and highways agreeing to address an issue that left Paxford residents vulnerable to risk of flood. Other issues are progressing more slowly than I would like. For example I am still waiting for Highways to confirm a date that the culvert linked to flooding on B4479 will be investigated with a camera. When the County Council approved their budget recently, an amendment was passed allocating a pot of money to Natural Flood Management and I will follow up to see if that's available to all areas or earmarked for specific projects.
7. Support for residents with **Solar** Panels is ongoing find out more here: (<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/CotswoldHomeSolar>) and there is home energy efficiency support available via **Furbnow** (<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/furbnow>) for residents with a budget to make home improvements. There is also a free “**Thrive and Drive**” event in March for those interested in EVs and making energy efficiency improvements to their home: <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/drive-thrive-event/>.
8. Don't forget Crowdfund Cotswolds is a possible source of funding for local projects <https://www.spacehive.com/movement/crowdfundcotswold/supporters>

The fund is designed to support community activity that makes our district special and is set up to support community groups that:

- Improve the mental and physical health and wellbeing of your local community
- Projects that directly address climate change
- Enhance lives through events and activities
- Support young people's ideas and ambitions
- Help to tackle the barriers and challenges many of us experience in life, such as poverty, ill health, distance from services, social isolation/loneliness
- Cultivate Food equity- projects that support building a fair food system for everyone
- Protect and enhance our natural and built environment
- Invest in and maintain the facilities we rely on for these activities to take place.

Create your project on Spacehive and pitch to this fund and you could get a pledge of up to £10,000 (max 40% of target) towards your crowdfunding campaign.