

## SOUTHROP PARISH COUNCIL

### MINUTES

#### THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 10<sup>th</sup> MAY 2024 IN THE VILLAGE HALL, SOUTHROP AT 6.30PM

**This is NOT a Council meeting; it is a meeting of the residents of Southrop Village. The format of the meeting provides the opportunity for local organisations to report directly to the people of Southrop. Residents will have the chance to ask questions, in an open forum. Refreshments will be available.**

**1. Apologies for absence.**

Apologies received from County Cllr Morris

**2. Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting May 2023**

The Minutes were approved by the Chairman of Southrop Parish Council.

**3. Report from the Chair – Southrop Parish Council**

Cllr Guest welcomed all those that have attending. He reminded everyone that this was not a parish council meeting but an informal meeting allowing village organisations to report directly to the village. A chance to ask questions after each report. Refreshments were also available.

**Parish Council report**

Cllr Guest reported as follows:

SPC meetings – 6

SPC finances:-

Opening balance at 1/4/2023 £22,400

Closing balance at 1/4/2024 £22,100

Significant items of expenditure in the year:-

- £600 new tannoy system -available to all village organisations who need it.
- £1,000 new hardwood bench, insurance claim.
- £1,500 silt removal 5 tons, accumulated over 32 years in an under road chamber near the Swan.
- £10k for Village Hall improvements. Many thanks, in particular, to Kathryn Potter/Gretchen Shoring for designing this and having it carried out so successfully.

This followed a similar £10k grant some 4-5 years ago which helped pay for work in refurbishing the main part of the Hall. It is

Important to say that the VH obtained significant grants from elsewhere to supplement SPC's grant.

SPC can report that they are very pleased with the outcome, as is much of the village, and are very grateful to all those involved.

Much of the grant awarded, was made just after our year end, so our balance at the end of April was just over £25k.

PRECEPT 2024-25 - This is up from £13,500 to £14,500, which equates to an Increase of £5/year (5.9%) for average Band D property (£85-90)

ROADS – We are in touch with Highways on many issues, some gradually getting resolved but this is slow progress. Halfpenny bridge cost well over £1m, which dented Glos. Highways finances!

There has been some minor improvements :-

- New school signs
- Minor road/footpath repairs
- Re- marking of dangerous South Farm crossroads

We are still pursuing three major items:-

- South Farm, further improvements to signage
- Tiltup corner

There is some good news in that the Lechlade road from Rosenfelds all the way to the 20mph sign just past Bradborough farm turning will be resurfaced.

FOOTPATHS: Grasscutting hopefully about to commence shortly. Although strictly speaking this is not something that should be covered by the Parish Council, It is something that we choose to do. If it was left to Glos. Highways, grasscutting would be done once or twice a year if at all. We do receive a small contribution from Glos. County Council.

PLANNING: The Parish Council looks at every planning application. Comments are submitted when agreed but these apply to some and not all applications. Objections are loaded onto the planning portal. This past year we have objections to only a few planning applications.

SPEEDING: This has been an issue in the village for some time. A new speed camera has been received, which was free of charge, as part of a new initiative from Glos. County Council and the Police. Subsequent cameras, should we decide to install these will be at a charge of circa £1000 each.

The new camera is mounted on a post just outside the Village Hall, a location agreed with Highways and the Police. This is a semi-automated system, with data being overseen by the Council and submitted to the police. So, no more standing around in all weathers, manually recording details of vehicles. The new system records images of vehicles (from the rear), with speeds and registration numbers. Thanks to Cllr P Brickley and Cllr Giles, who have coordinated the initiative so far. It is

early days but results so far is proving to be very interesting. The system is now live with a trigger speed of 25mph (which can be adjusted lower if required). To date there has been an average of 60 plus speeders per working day (daylight hours/one direction). There many repeat offenders, almost daily. Highest speed so far recorded 42mph. We believe that a remedy is to report persistent offenders to police who can then follow up with a letter, visit if letter ignored etc. Reporting the facts starts this month. Quenington who have been running with this new system for some time, have reported that 5% were complying with speed limit before the new cameras were installed, this has risen to 55% since the installation of the new speed cameras. We have already approached directly, one local firm whose delivery van was clocked at 34mph. We had an apology this morning from their Transport Manager saying driver has been reprimanded and that all their drivers serving this area have been warned. Will report further when we have more information.

ANNUAL LITTER PICK - This was held on the 23/24 March weekend with over 30 volunteers from the village. Wide area covered linking into other local litter picks such as Eastleach. Many thanks to all who participated.

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLAN - This is about to be reviewed. The main aim is to be able to identify how we might help respond to an emergency such as a major flood. The plan looks at:-

- List of villagers who've offered to lend equipment such as pumps etc
- List of contacts with various relevant authorities (Highways, E.A., Thames Water)

The Council has recently purchased Hydrosnakes (these are like artificial sandbags)

#### **4. Southrop Primary School Report**

Together we can fly

What if I fall?

Oh, but.....

What if you fly?



"Don't be afraid; just believe."

Mark 5 verse 36

In our Christian school we treat everyone with respect and compassion. Our faith and friendships give us strength to persevere to achieve our aspirations.

We started this academic year with some excitement and anticipation. We were pretty sure Ofsted would arrive, which they did on week 5 of the Autumn Term! It was a very rigorous and involved experience. The inspection highlighted the strong core values and beliefs, recognised how the children felt safe, happy, and confident and accepting of others, and that the children were learning and thriving. Ofsted also complimented our safeguarding processes. We were rated Good for Behaviour and Attitudes and for Personal Development. Ofsted rated our curriculum as Requires Improvement. We have been updating and improving our curriculum within the school since 2021, to reflect our experience of how our pupils learn, and with an understanding of new curriculum models, and have been monitoring the impact in each area prior to making changes in another. Our monitoring shows that the changes we have made have been very successful, and the changes for this academic year were already set out in our plan for 2023/4. However with the inspection falling at the start of the academic year, Ofsted felt we were did not have enough evidence of the progress the children were making in areas of recent change. A letter sent to parents explaining the outcome of the inspection in more detail and a very supportive letter from our PTA are available on the school website.

We are immensely proud of our staff, pupils and parents during a tricky journey and with commitment to the school by all plan to show outside agencies the good work that goes on inside our school. We are also working closely with GCC and the diocese as we ensure we leave no room for doubt as to the quality of our curriculum and school. We are not likely to be reinspected for at least 2 years.

We are of course concerned about the effect of our Ofsted rating, combined with the declining birth rate on the number of children we have on role at the school. We currently have 36 pupils. No families have left the school due to our Ofsted rating and we have recently gained 3 children. We engaged professional marketing assistance in July 2023 and are currently implementing a marketing strategy to raise our profile.

Another focus this academic year has been extending what we can offer our children in addition to the curriculum. The children regularly go on school trips; this year to date they have been to the opera, to Mary Arden's Farm and a wind farm, and we receive a variety of visitors into school, including recently Samantha Watson, a STEM ambassador. We have attended sports fixtures including cross country and offer alternative sports as well as swimming - this year archery and balanceability (learning to ride a bike). We attend the Cheltenham Literature Festival and the Burford Literature Festival. We had a group of children who represented us at the 'Look Who's Talking' Oracy competition and another pair of children through to the next round of a STEM competition. A range of music lessons are offered, and we have recently added Musical Mania drama sessions. This year we have extended our offer of after school clubs: choir, chess, French, sports, Kitchen Club (cookery) and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths). We have also introduced lunchtime book clubs to encourage children to read good quality books and share their thoughts and understanding with their friends over a hot chocolate and a custard cream.

Through collaboration with two other small schools, Bibury and North Cerney, we are able to offer children in Year 4 and above a residential trip each year. This year we are off to The Wilderness Centre in the Forest of Dean. This is a great opportunity for the children to make new friends they may go on to secondary school with and to enjoy the experience of being with a larger cohort of children. We supported a group of our juniors to partake in the Cotswold Dance Festival held in an evening at Cheltenham Town Hall. Our 7 children, filled the stage with their well-rehearsed routine, dressed as Tigers to an enthusiastic audience. Over 200 children participated from a range of schools and gymnastics clubs across the Cotswolds.

For the last five years Southrop has been led by Mrs McLellan and Miss Davies, however from September Mrs McLellan will start a phased retirement, relinquishing her Co-Head Teacher position, but continuing as a teacher in the Swan class 3 days a week. Miss Davies will take on additional office days as Head Teacher. In addition, Mrs Tipple, the part-time Cygnet teacher, has decided to take a break from teaching. At the moment we are recruiting for a new Cygnet teacher to be in the classroom 4 days a week. The school remains a key element of the communities of Southrop and Eastleach. We are proud to support the village hall and the Jubilee field and are always keen to develop links with the local community. We have been involved with the Madhatter Bookshop in Burford, visiting the shop and the Burford Literature Festival. We also make regular visits to Fairford Library. Each month we join together with members of the school community for worship in St Peter's Church and welcome members of the village community to join us. The Year 5&6s enjoyed taking part in the Gloucestershire Nature Quiz and we were grateful for the help that David Chapman and Kathy Newton gave them to prepare. Alec Atchison has kindly been coming into school each week to run Chess Club. Helping in the village shop is also a highlight for our children as they foster their money management skills; thank you for your patience.

Despite the challenges we have faced this is a thriving and successful school. There are a number of very good schools locally; please help us encourage people to consider Southrop first. We are also in need of new Governors. Our Governors have three core functions; ensuring clarity of vision, ethos and strategic direction; holding the school leaders to account and overseeing financial performance. It is vital we have governors who are not directly connected to the school. As a small school with a limited reach we rely heavily on those within our community to fulfil this vital function and currently need to fill vacancies. Please get in touch with myself or Judith Giles, Head of Governors if you are interested in finding out more.

Hopefully we've given you a flavour of the range of activities that are part of the current daily life of the school. Thank you for listening and your continued support.

Julia McLellan & Megan Davies & Judith Giles  
Co-Head Teachers & Chair of Governors  
May 2024

## 5. Report from Jubilee Close Committee and selection of new Committee.

### Progress

Boundary of JC with contiguous properties

The boundary with Apple Tree Cottage has been established and fenced. All boundaries contiguous with JC have now been formally established.

Use of the field *per se*:-

- Clanfield girls and boys football teams, and children from the School have used the field regularly.

New tree planting :- As far as possible, weeds and other overgrowth choking the trees surviving from the initial planting were cleared/cut back in April with replacements\* for dead or moribund specimens - provided courtesy of the Council) - planted around the periphery, and at the entrance to the ground. The purchase of a strimmer (which could be shared with the Church and Village Hall) to help keep unwanted vegetation down is being considered. \* (90 or so: Sweet Chestnut, Elm, Birch, Beech and Oak).

Tidying and clean-up of the Pavilion:- Residual items/debris that had either arrived anew, or remained since the previous clean-up were removed from/around the pavilion and taken to recycling. The guttering also had to be cleaned out. A considerable amount of other *ad hoc* work was undertaken during the year.

Finance & Insurance :- Its current resources enabled the Jubilee Close Committee to meet the charity's financial responsibilities throughout the year, including the previously precept-paid insurance. Our main financial outgoing continues to be the mowing (a new contract for the 2024-2025 season has been awarded), and there are regular monthly costs for cleaning, water and electricity (which latter required further servicing expenditure during the year). Clanfield fc pay us £100 per month, and the School contributes £900 annually. Some investment opportunities for JC funds sitting 'idle' were considered but no action was taken up to this time.

The Jubilee Close Committee:- The arrangement for the Jubilee Close Committee (designated the Committee of Management in the [1939] Conveyance) is for there to be three elected Members, re/appointed at the Annual Parish Meeting, with (nominally) one Member standing down each year; a Chairman; and one Trustee. Andy Howarth is the Treasurer, Secretary and *de facto* general factotum of the Committee. Current Members: Ray Kolzack and Ben Platts; Chairman: Jerry Hibbert. Three Members left during the year, *ergo*, one more needs to be elected.

Trustees:- Charity Commission.

Andy Howarth, Jerry Hibbert, and Leonard Brookes.

Land Registry

Graham Boydell and Leonard Brookes (LB).

**As per the rules new Trustees to be agreed by the Parish Council. These are Andy Howarth, Jerry Hibbert and Leonard Brookes. This was agreed by the Parish Council.**

Title:- An application, made *via* Alison Fielden & Co, Solicitors (AF&C), Cirencester, was to have been made to Land Registry in 2023 to upgrade the title of Jubilee Close from Possessory to Absolute, and, at the request of the Parish Council to have the charity *per se* designated as the sole Trustee. We expected such arrangements to have been formalised by now, but it transpires that our principal contact at AF&C had left the company in late 2023, having failed to send the Application to Land Registry before doing so. Having been advised that such an application could take weeks/months, even, to be addressed, we had not been unduly concerned at 'no news'. Unfortunately, no one else at AF&C had been instructed to continue with our case or advise us of the departure of their employee. Our application is now being progressed, however, and LB will ride herd on the new conveyancer at AF&C until the matter is concluded.

Future Activities:- Programmed but uncompleted work cited in the JCC 2023 Annual report – particularly, the drafting of a rolling 5-year plan for rejuvenating the playing field and pavilion - is to be undertaken.

JCC would like to thank everyone who participated in the field clearing, planting, and other general tidying-up work during the year.

L G Brookes

## **6. Fete 2023**

Please find below the annual report on behalf of the Southrop fete.

Despite a wet start to 2023 and our concerns about our exposure to overheads I'm pleased to report the weather came good. In fact, on the day, it was too hot and this impacted in several ways.

- A last-minute scramble to find enough working gazebos to provide shade for the stalls.
- Ensuring we had enough bottled water to keep everybody hydrated.
- A reduction in the number of people attending with dogs.
- At the last minute the flypast was brought forward to avoid the forecasted thunderstorms, and the ensuing activity to update all the social media pages to inform people who wanted to attend.
- Despite doubling the previous years quantities of beer, cider and Pimms we still sold out of everything by 3pm.

The Hurricane flypast and the Falcons parachute display team pushed the overall attendance numbers up and the revised admission prices helped contribute to another successful year.

Total sum raised circa £12,000.

Less costs of circa £4,000.

Distributed just under £2,000 to each of the 4 beneficiaries.

Looking forward to 2024, this year fete will be on Sat June 8<sup>th</sup> and as always, we welcome volunteers to man the stalls, help with the marquee, collect and set out the bales, chairs etc and the tidying away afterwards. It is also to be my last as I shall be standing down after this year's cycle.

Lastly and not specifically related to the fete but can I suggest the SPC / owner of the village marquee may want to undertake an audit of it. A number of the fabric panels probably need replacing and I'd suggest a review of the structural integrity of some of the cross sections which over time have become worn.

## **7. Report from St. Peters Church**

Maintenance: Since the APM last year we have finished the Garden of Remembrance (a place where ashes may be buried), we have cleared the gutters, had the sound system checked (and improved), had the church registers checked (and approved), the alternate lime trees pollarded (as we do every year), the bushes pruned back, the windows professionally cleaned (as we do every year), and had the quinquennial inspection - the results of which are not yet revealed to us, but we aren't expecting any horrors.

Maintenance in progress: During the King's Coronation one of the bell ropes snapped, which led to a full inspection. This revealed that the entire bell mechanism in the belfry had deteriorated to the point where the bells were dangerous to ring as they might fall. The mechanism will need to be brought down, rebuilt and put back up, and the bells re-furbished while we're doing it. The quote for the repair is £8257 (inc. VAT) which will take 8 weeks. I have yet to get a quote for the scaffolding, and we await clarification on whether it should be erected and taken down twice or can be left standing during the repairs.

A further project is the clearing of the graveyard at the south end which will be carried out by the churchwarden and volunteers. However, this will expose a mismatch between the existing old south wall and the new wall which unfortunately isn't in the style of any other wall in the graveyard. A new heating system is on hold - but will be required at some point soon.

The PCC: The PCC has been weakened by Margaret Davey's leaving the village. Margaret was a stalwart volunteer, regular congregant and sometime churchwarden. Our Treasurer, Charles Llewellyn, has also resigned and will end his duties when he leaves the village - he estimates pre-Christmas. We have not found a replacement and are actively looking.

Attendance: In the calendar year 2023 there were 70 services. High days and holidays are generally well attended, but at the default Sunday services otherwise, the congregation is in a slow decline: the average tends to go down by 1 or 2 each year and currently stands at about 10. But this includes the vicar (and sometimes a spouse), the organist (and sometimes a spouse), the churchwarden plus Margaret Davey and Martin Bacon, and the two readers. Services where no-one else turns up are on the increase. This must eventually lead to the questions of whether we can afford to have a service every Sunday, whether we should alternate



with another church (Eastleach for example), or just concentrate on high days and holidays.

Finances (at a glance):

Income from collections & regular giving: 13,310

Parochial fees: 1,803

Friends Fund & other donations 2,928

Investments & legacies: 5,617

Fund raising events: 4,816

A one-off donation: 2,000

Grant: 1,821

Total £32,295

Against total expenditure: £38,811 (including Parish share of £14,957 & G of R cost of £14,777)

The end result being that the Net Assets declined by £6,152 and now stand at £38,855.

*(The complete accounts are attached.)*

Although the Garden of Remembrance is now complete, this year we have the bells to repair, and the oil-fired heating is waiting in the wings for replacement in the not-too-distant future. So 'major expenses' have not disappeared. The good news is that the Southrop Shoot, which historically was a very good fund raiser but was lost over the Covid years, is due to happen again in 2024. Also encouraging is the growth of the Friends Fund, which is now attracting regular donations and one-off contributions to projects that involve the church as a historic building and asset to the village but are not necessarily directly religious.

The PCC would like to thank all those who have worked so hard over the year to keep the church open and functioning, and all those who have generously contributed to the cost of doing so. We would also like to thank Margaret Davey and Charles Llewellyn in particular for their unswerving dedication.

Jerry Hibbert – Church Warden

## **8. Southrop Village Hall -Annual Trustees Report**

**Introduction:** We are pleased to present the Annual Trustees Report for 2023/24 for Southrop Village Hall. This report provides an overview of the activities and achievements of the trustees and volunteers who have worked Tirelessly to maintain and improve the facilities and services of the village hall.

**Activities and Achievements:** During the past year, the village hall has undertaken a major project involving the conversion of the old committee room into a Community Hub. The work was funded, in part, by a generous donation from the Parish Council. A further grant from Cotswold District Council has been secured to replace nine old metal windows at the rear of the hall, this will greatly improve fuel efficiency and reduce our carbon footprint. The new hub is a bright warm space with comfortable seating and a bar/service area. It will also be offered for use as a flexible workspace on some days. It has already proved very popular and is a

major improvement to the hall. In addition, the hall has been used to host a variety of events and activities, including community meetings, social gatherings, children's parties, and fitness classes. A recent appeal for donations to the hall had a very positive response. The village shop and Post Office continue to provide a vital service to the local community.

**Challenges:** In addition to capital projects the trustees are aware of their responsibilities regarding the ongoing maintenance of the building and grounds. The playground is in particular need of attention, and the trustees are exploring various options to help fund this work.

**Health and Safety** The trustees continue to review all health and safety policies, procedures, risk assessments and records to ensure the continued safety of village hall users. An inspection of the fixed electrical system (required every five years) has been completed.

**Future Plans:** Looking ahead, the trustees are committed to continue to improve the facilities and services at the village hall, and to maintain its position as a valued community asset. This will involve ongoing maintenance and repair work, as well as initiatives to encourage greater community participation and engagement. The trustees invite and welcome ideas from the Southrop community on how they would like to see the hall develop.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, the past year has been a successful one for Southrop Village Hall. We would like to thank all the trustees, volunteers, and users of the hall for their continued support and commitment, and we look forward to building on this success in the future.

**Philip Roberts**

## 9. Other reports

### District Council Report

In May 2023 I was delighted to be elected as your District Councillor and have been proud to serve you for the last 12 months. Please find my annual report.

PLANNING:- As part of the Levelling Up Act, Planning Fees are to be increased to assist Councils with respect to providing the Planning Service. This is to be welcomed and will assist in reducing the overall cost of delivering the planning service (planning fees only account for approximately 50% of the total cost of running the service).

The Fees for householder development will rise by 25% and all other application types will rise by 35%. The fees will be reviewed yearly and will be increased in line with inflation. Government has also removed the 'free go' provision for planning applications and has introduced a tighter planning guarantee which means that any applications over 16 weeks old with no extension of time agreed will be liable to a refund. Agents and applicants are now encouraged to use the preapplication service, which will ensure they get the valued advice they need to navigate the

policies, but also the Council is compensated for the time and talent of officers for that advice.

Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and planning update. Planning Applications for new dwellings were being held up causing great problems for developers and builders. This was due to new legislation regarding Habitats Regulations, in particular at the Cotswold Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and North Meadow (and Clattinger Farm) Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is a government safeguard, but there has been much frustration as applications could not be approved with mitigation schemes which were almost impossible to procure. This deadlock was resolved by the Council and its partners to be able to raise money (effectively an extra levy) from developers building new houses and holiday accommodation, to mitigate the impacts.

David Morren, the Interim Development Officer, did good work improving the function of the Planning Department. Sadly he has now left, but he has put some good processes in place which I hope will form the foundation for further improvements. He has been replaced by Adrian Harding.

The enforcement team continues to suffer from staff losses and non-recruitment. Unresolved breaches are an issue in so many of my parishes, it is a frustrating situation, please keep nudging me about them! They should not be allowed to be 'greyed out'.

From February to April last year, we had the the Planning Inspectorate inquiry into the application for major development in the Cotswold National Landscape (formerly AONB) for a HGV truck stop. This application was refused at Planning Committee in 2022 and the PINS decision, hoped for in mid-July, was eventually published in November marking the end of a long and hard fought campaign. I was hugely relieved when it was DISMISSED.

ROADS:- A417 MISSING LINK. In January 2023 the Secretary of State approved the funding of the A417 Missing Link after years of planning and consultation.

There has been much frustration with road closures and long diversion routes, especially at night, however generally the worst incidents are caused by accidents on the A417, or minor road closures such as for ash tree die back work, and the subsequent rat running through our little villages, often causing log-jams on narrow lanes.

Roads are a County Council remit and should be reported to them. Frustrations about repair of potholes and road repairs remain a constant issue with all Parishes.

FLY TIPPING:- Fly tipping continues to be an issue. Fortunately, CCTV cameras are being installed and are now providing evidence resulting in many more prosecutions.

The £200,000 CDC Clean & Green programme has now run its course. Its effectiveness could not be monitored but thankfully we still have legendary ERS officer Kev Lea, who already does the work of two people. CDC has accepted the proposal from the Government to increase the upper limits for various fixed penalty notices (FPNs). This means that within Cotswold District:-

- The maximum fine for fly-tipping will increase from £400 to £1,000
- The maximum fine for litter or graffiti will increase from £150 to £500
- The maximum fine those who breach their household waste duty of care will increase from £400 to £600.

This is a step in the right direction, but why should taxpayers contribute at all? Culprits should pay the whole cost of collection.

PUBLICA:- Publica is a not-for-profit service delivery company incorporated in 2017, owned by four local councils (shareholders): Cheltenham Borough Council, Cotswold District Council, Forest of Dean District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.

Politically, all four council administrations have changed since 2019 and they have collaborated to propose to move 95% of what Publica are currently providing, in-house. Only a few back office functions such as IT shall remain with Publica. The rationale is that services will be more agile. The transition of services from Publica to Council will clearly have a material impact on the Council's resources and budget over the next two years. To fund the one-off costs of transition, it is recommended that £500,000 is set aside in the Corporate Priority: Publica Review reserve. Inevitably, there are likely to be workforce planning costs arising from the transfer of services. (from Feb 2024 Budget papers). See more about this below.

CDC LEISURE CENTRE:- The leisure centre continues to be a huge drain on Council resources. A new service provider was approved in 2023 to include three leisure centres and the Corinium Museum & Resource Centre.

SOLAR PANELS FITTED TO CDC OFFICES:- I am delighted that at long last photovoltaic solar panels are to be installed at the CDC Cirencester council offices. Former Councillor and Leader, Tony Berry has been driving this since I was first elected in 2019. The new solar panels will contribute to environmental sustainability, they are expected to reduce the Council's CO2 emissions by approximately 43 tonnes each year, which is equivalent to the emissions from driving the average petrol-powered car about 160,000 miles. The project is funded through the Cotswold Climate Investment, launched in 2022, which allowed residents and others to invest as little as £5 in local green initiatives.

COTSWOLD PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY HAS BEEN SPLIT. THIS HAS NOW BEEN SPLIT INTO NORTH AND SOUTH COTSWOLDS

North Cotswold will be joined by wards in Stroud and Tewkesbury including Minchinhampton and Painswick, also included are Chipping

Campden, Stow-on-the-Wold, Northleach. Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown has been adopted as the Conservative candidate for the new North Cotswolds constituency.

South Cotswold includes Cirencester, Lechlade and Fairford along with their surrounding villages and merging with northern parts of the Wiltshire constituency.

Coln Valley is in North Cotswolds

#### CDC FINANCES:-

##### BUDGET

CDC's Core Spending Power has once again increased this year by £639k or 5.4% from £11.8m to £12.4m. Core spending power measures the resources available to local authorities to fund service delivery and sets out the money that has been made available to local authorities through the local government finance settlement. It includes various revenue streams – including Council Tax, Government funding and grants and retained business rates.

Despite this increase in Core Spending Power, CDC faces external budget pressures that are impacting on its finances over the medium-term. There remains uncertainty around inflation and associated staff pay settlements, interest rates and energy costs.

A significant budget gap was noted in the budget outturn report last September which led the Leader of the Council having to raise concerns about the council going bankrupt if significant savings and cost increases were not achieved and a balanced budget delivered for 2024/25 financial year.

Cuts to visitor information centre funding, a reduction in the customer service phone answering times and the disbandment of the "Clean and Green" team are examples of the cuts delivered to attempt to deliver a balanced budget.

There has been significant increases in costs to residents from Council Tax and discretionary fees:-

- Council Tax by the maximum permissible level and will increase Cotswold District Council's Band D rate by £5 from £148.93 to £153.93.
- Garden Waste licence annual fee up £7 - £64 from 31 March 2024 (2023 - £47 to £57). An increase of 12% - bringing the tally over the last 5 years to 113% and collections halved.
- Car Parking Charges from 1 April 2024 - 15% increase in car park fees and Free Sunday parking scrapped.

The Chief Financial Officer stated in the budget papers that there is no immediate risk of Cotswold District Council having to consider issuing a section 114 notice, however the budget gap forecast over the medium-term must be closed to maintain financial sustainability.

Uncertainty around Local Government funding from the Government in the later years of the medium-term is a significant risk within the MTFS estimates. The implementation of Local Government Finance reform (formerly known as the Fair Funding Review and changes to the Retained Business Rates system) has already been delayed from the original implementation date of April 2020 until at least April 2025 if not later should a General Election take place in the latter half of 2024. The forecast impact on Shire District Councils is likely to be significant as resources are reallocated across Local Government recognising the Social Care cost and demand pressures.

#### FORECAST SPENDING – PUBLICA AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The decision to withdraw from Publica is a vast unknown. The estimated cost has already increased by 150% since November 2023 and the budget now includes a reserve for the Publica transition of £500k. This amounts to nearly 80% of the council's increase in Core Spending Power for this coming financial year. There are concerns that costs are likely to escalate further as costs for external consultants, HR and Legal advice etc. Furthermore, we await clarity regarding the impact of the Staff Pension scheme to the council following this transition.

There are potential benefits to returning service provision "in-house" such as staff recruitment and retention and operational agility, however, these benefits need to be weighed up against the financial costs of both the withdrawal process and the ongoing financial impact once the transition has been completed both of which are currently unknown.

Other than the £500k "green bond", CDC has historically been debt free. It is forecast that significant prudential borrowing of over £4m will be required in 2026/27 to deliver the planned capital programme.

COUNCIL SPENDING - CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24 TO 2026/27  
[https://meetings.cotswold.gov.uk/documents/s6823/2023-24 Budget and MTFS Report – Annex D.pdf](https://meetings.cotswold.gov.uk/documents/s6823/2023-24%20Budget%20and%20MTFS%20Report%20-%20Annex%20D.pdf)

Cllr David Fowles, Cotswold District Councillor  
Coln Valley Ward

#### **10. Open Session**

New County Cllrs resulting from boundary changes:  
North - Paul Hodgkinson  
South - James Gray – Conservative  
Roz Savage – Lib Dems.

District Council has 34 Councillors

Allocation of funds from Central Government

District Council - £15 million  
County Council - £600 million

£206k allocated to adult social care  
£181 million to children services  
£101 million to roads

District Council responsible for : Planning; Waste;Licensing;Social housing; Leisure Services

Meeting closed 8.15pm

Signed..... Chairman of Southrop Parish Council

.....2025

DRAFT