

Cotswold District Council works closely with Gloucestershire County Council over many local issues & this has been particularly true during the current pandemic.

Grants. CDC was charged with distributing government grants to small businesses in the area including the hospitality sector. Most of the businesses who qualified, including the hospitality sector have received grants & further money was made available to support very small businesses who don't pay business rates with discretionary grants.

GCC has given money to CDC to distribute to small local charities to support their work during the pandemic, & CDC also had money available which would normally have been used to support community activities. Many of the charities which have benefited aim to support isolated & shielded people during the pandemic & to promote mental health. I have been part of the group which decides whether charity applications meet the necessary criteria & it is good that organisations across the district have been supported, for example the Cotswold Friends who have been doing amazing work in North Cotswolds.

Town Centre reopening plans. After a few weeks of uncertainty, we have now been given details of plans for the safe reopening of Stow Town Centre - a bit after the event! I am sure this is a topic which will have already been covered by Heather in her report & I shall be interested in your opinions.

Provision of cycle routes. The pandemic has seen even more people taking to bikes & interest in the provision of safe cycle routes across the district has grown. CDC & GCC are both enthusiastic for the project & I know that discussion over a potential route is already advanced at GCC

Planning. The latest application for Fayrefields has been allowed, but this has been a success for Stow Town Council who objected for an earlier application to transform the permitted stable block into residential accommodation. The new building will house leisure facilities & a garage but will be a similar footprint & dimension to the permitted stable block development, & a condition will be attached that no further application for stables will be considered.

Emergency health services. I am a member of the County Council's health overview & scrutiny committee. At the last meeting, the response to the Covid pandemic was discussed & in particular, the way in which service provision across the two large hospitals & the smaller community hospitals has been managed by Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

At the moment, all major emergencies are being taken to Gloucester A&E as this department is large enough to separate patients who are suspected of having Covid from other patients. Patients needing intensive care for Covid are treated in Gloucester's ITU. For reasons of staffing & patient safety, emergency surgery is also all at Gloucester at the moment.

Concern was expressed that the pandemic is being used as an excuse to downgrade services & in particular A&E at Cheltenham on a permanent basis. This is not the case - the Fit for the Future consultation process which looks at the

provision of emergency health care across the county was paused during the pandemic, but further discussions will take place after analysis of the consultation results.

District Council meetings Weds 15th & Weds 29th July. Council meetings are now being held virtually via Webex & this is working well. It also allows members of the public to observe meetings via a Facebook link.

Topics from July 15th meeting include:

- ▢ Declaration of an ecological emergency, in response to the decline in species, habitats & “natural capital” over recent years. This goes hand in hand with the declaration of a climate emergency & aims to ensure that the maintaining & enhancing the natural environment is at the heart of all CDC decisions & is fundamental to the local plan.
- ▢ Response to Covid. Two ideas were discussed, firstly to provide a lasting memorial to victims of the pandemic, & to honour the work of front line staff, & secondly to recognise the outstanding contributions made by individuals & groups at an award ceremony. Both these suggestions will be taken forwards by a cross party working group.
- ▢ Parking charges. A small increase in parking charges was agreed at the Council’s budget meeting in February. Parking charges were suspended during the lockdown, & the increase has been delayed until September. In some car parks, there will be twenty minute free parking zones & most of the car parks will remain free after three. Off street parking provision across the whole of the district will be reviewed & in addition, all car parks will be made cashless, with a pay on exit facility. This is to prevent vandalism of ticket machines such as we have experienced in the Mangersbury Rd Car park
- ▢ Embedded management schemes. Many large new housing developments now have these schemes which require residents to pay an ongoing fee for management of shared open spaces & sometimes other communal structures. These are often poorly managed, open spaces & leisure facilities are open to the general public & CDC would like to get rid of these schemes which benefit developers but disadvantage residents.

Yesterday, the council resolved to make a grant to the SLM group which runs three leisure centres on behalf of CDC as well as the Corinium Museum. The leisure centres are Cirencester, Bourton on the Water & Chipping Campden. The dry side (gyms, sports halls etc) will open almost immediately, & the swimming pools will open in mid August for lane swimming & classes. All users must pre book.

Before our meeting yesterday, we were introduced to two new officers who have started work for CDC in the last few months. Chris Crookall Fallon has responsibility for pursuing the Council’s climate change agenda. CDC will be looking at ways of reducing its own carbon use & also incorporating a “green agenda” covering environmental & climate issues in the local plan. He will also be engaging with with Town & Parish Councils to discuss issues which are better addressed at more local levels & a series of webinars is planned. He will work

closely with Rachel Cocoon who is the cabinet member with responsibility for the climate emergency agenda.

Paul James is the new lead for economic development & he will work with Tony Dale, Cabinet member for economy & skills to encourage economic development in the District. I am sure that both Paul & Tony would be happy to meet with the Town council & other interested parties in Stow to look at ways of finding new economic / business opportunities.

Ward District Cllr Dilys Neill  
30<sup>th</sup> July 2020