

County Councillors' report for Stow Town Council March 2026.

I post helpful information, including road closures for infrastructure repair etc., on Nextdoor and local Facebook groups. Please could you mention this in your Parish News and Village Website. ***Underlined text is linked.***

Cllr Daryl Corps, Moreton Stow and the Rissingtons County Councillor.

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DEVOLUTION AND MAYORAL PROPOSALS

There are growing indications that the Labour Government is moving towards larger regional devolution, including the potential creation of a “Mercia”-style mayoral authority covering multiple counties across the Midlands.

Although no formal or informal proposals have been confirmed at this stage. Such a model would probably shift key powers, particularly on transport, housing and growth, away from county level to a much larger regional body.

There has also been some suggestion that areas like Gloucestershire could look towards existing arrangements such as the West of England Combined Authority. However, this would be a poor fit. Gloucestershire has no strong geographic or economic alignment with Bristol or Somerset, and our transport patterns, rural economy and community identity are very different.

This raises real concerns for rural areas like the North Cotswolds. Large strategic authorities risk prioritising urban centres, with smaller towns and villages losing influence over decisions that directly affect them. Any future model must reflect the needs of rural communities, protect local representation.

I will continue to monitor developments closely and ensure I update you on any mention of developments.

Full Council Budget Meeting update

At the meeting in Feb, I voted to retain Highways Local budgets for County Councillors, sadly the administration and Greens all voted against retaining it and it has now been removed from us and placed into a centralised fund in Gloucester. We also voted to provide additional funding for pavements, to stop proposed reductions affecting Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service, to increase funding for flood prevention and

drainage, to scrap the 26% rise in parking permit fees, and to oppose charging carers to park while attending patients. In addition, we proposed increased funding for Made in Gloucestershire to support local farmers and voted against applying the maximum council tax increase.

During the debate, I made clear that the Local Highways Fund is not a luxury and not a political slush pot. It is one of the most practical, visible and effective tools available to local members to respond quickly to real community need. It fixes broken stretches of footway that leave elderly residents fearful of walking. It can help towards funds for dropped kerbs in busy areas that give disabled residents independence and dignity and even contributes towards parking space provision. It repairs sections of carriageway that would otherwise sit on a list for years. It addresses the small but important works that make everyday life safer. These are not grand capital schemes; they are everyday interventions that improve quality of life. Residents elect us to represent them and to act. This fund allows us to act quickly, locally and accountably. Removing it takes away one of the few direct levers councillors have to deliver practical solutions and instead centralises decision-making within an already stretched system. At a time when residents are anxious about Local Government Reorganisation and the potential move toward a large Unitary authority, this move risks reinforcing concerns about power being drawn away from local communities and concentrated at the centre. Local government works best when it is genuinely local, and if we are serious about responsiveness and visible improvements in our divisions, we should be strengthening such funds, not dismantling them.

Unfortunately, none of these amendments was supported by the administration or the Green Group.

NEW SEND SCHOOL FOR GLOUCESTERSHIRE

I was pleased to support and vote in favour of plans for a new 200-place special school for Gloucestershire, in Cheltenham that has been in the planning stage since the last Conservative administration set its goal of creating dedicated SEND Schools in the County.

This is a really important step forward for Gloucestershire, creating more specialist school places for children with complex needs and helping families access the right support closer to home.

During the meeting, I shared a personal perspective. Two of my nieces have complex learning needs, yet both attend mainstream schools. One of them, quite clearly, would benefit from a place in a SEND school, but like so many others, she is stuck in an ever-growing holding pattern on a waiting list where she lives, outside Gloucestershire, I must add.

My sister, like countless parents of children with complex needs, has had to fight tooth and nail to secure the support her daughter deserves.

This new school in Gloucestershire represents a huge step forward for some of the most vulnerable children in our county. It will not only provide the right educational environment, but also much-needed support for families, giving these children the opportunity for the education and childhood they deserve.

That is why I supported this application and the officers' recommendation without hesitation, and I'm glad to see the last Conservative administration's legacy will live on for years, benefiting the County's Children.

More details here:

<https://gloucesternewscentre.co.uk/approval-for-brilliant-plans-for-new-200-pupil-special-school/?amp=1>

HIGHWAYS

Firstly, full resurfacing of the A424 Burford Road has been confirmed. The works will run from the bottom of Stow Hill up towards the Wyck Beacon turning. This scheme will commence on 17th March and will take place over six nights, between 8pm and 7am. No night work will take place at weekends.

A429 resurfacing I am delighted to see we finally have a safer section of the Fosseyway from Broadwell down towards Longborough.

The resurfacing work started last night on the A429 in Moreton. Following my teams call with all key stakeholders the work was given the green light after concerns from the emergency services regarding access was resolved.

SAFER ROADS AND COMMUNITY 20MPH PROGRAMME

Gloucestershire County Council approved a new Safer Roads and Community 20MPH programme at its Cabinet meeting on 18 March, which sets out how 20mph limits may be introduced in areas where there is clear community support. The council has secured £2.8 million in funding, with the first schemes expected from 2026/27.

However, it is extremely disappointing that not a single parish council in the North Cotswolds have been included in any of the phases of the programme over the next few years, with the initial rollout appearing to focus largely on urban areas. This was the administration's key election promise across the whole of Gloucestershire.

This is despite strong local support in several villages here, including one parish that has submitted a petition with hundreds of signatures, and another, nearby Adelstrop, where the speed limit through the village remains 60mph. Yes 60mph!

I believe rural communities in the North Cotswolds have been ignored in this first stage, and I will be raising this at the next Full Council meeting and asking why. Why have we all missed out, why have they chosen some areas over others? What are their metrics for this decision? Why do they keep talking about 'engagement with local communities' and Local communities found out about this in a Press Release!