

County Councillor Report for Stow Town Council May 2026

As ever, I continue to share updates on road closures, local issues, positive stuff, parish matters and the occasional skirmish with bureaucracy across Nextdoor and local Facebook groups, so please do feel free to include these in your Parish News or on the parish website. Heaven knows, in modern local government, information often travels more slowly than traffic on the Fosseway through Stow on a Friday afternoon.

Cllr Daryl Corps

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County Council Update

Firstly can I say thank you to the Town Council and all the volunteers for organising the brilliant 850th Medieval afternoon this weekend just gone. What a great turnout it was. I personally had a great time, and I hope you all stayed hydrated. Like many I'm now looking forward to the Stow Motor Show.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

One of the biggest issues currently moving through Gloucestershire local government is of course the proposed reorganisation of councils across the county.

The Government is considering plans which would abolish Gloucestershire County Council and the six district councils, replacing them with either one large county-wide authority or two new unitary councils.

This is not a small administrative adjustment. It will fundamentally reshape how local services are delivered and how rural communities such as Stow-on-the-Wold are represented.

My concern throughout has been ensuring the North Cotswolds does not simply become a small rural corner inside a very large bureaucracy centred elsewhere.

Residents already often struggle to work out which authority is responsible for what. By the time someone has worked out whether an issue belongs to the district council, county council, water company, National Highways or planning authority, the pothole has usually developed its own parish council.

Whatever structure eventually emerges, it is vital rural communities retain a strong local voice and are not simply managed remotely from larger urban centres.

20MPH PROGRAMME AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Gloucestershire County Council continues progressing its “Safer Roads and Community 20s” programme following Cabinet approval earlier this year and the announcement of almost £2.8 million in funding.

On paper, it sounds positive.

In reality, many rural communities are increasingly frustrated like us.

Hundreds of Gloucestershire communities expressed interest in 20mph schemes, including Stow, Oddington, Swell and Adlestrop, yet only a relatively small number appear likely to progress in the near future. Disappointingly, none in the North Cotswolds appear clearly included within the early phases despite significant local support in a number of villages.

Over 400 communities expressed an interest, only 40 are going to be progressed, and I’m told that’s it for this decade.

Many parish councils and residents did exactly what they were asked to do.

They consulted.

They engaged.

They demonstrated support.

Yet many now feel they have effectively been left in a waiting room while attention focuses elsewhere. I will continue to challenge this.

COMMUNITY SPEED WATCH

At the same time, support for Community Speed Watch activity is now being withdrawn.

This has caused understandable frustration across many rural communities.

Community Speed Watch was not expensive.

It was not glamorous.

But it worked.

Volunteers across Gloucestershire gave thousands of hours of their own time helping tackle speeding concerns in local communities and thousands of warning letters were issued to drivers.

That is local people stepping forward to help make their villages safer.

What frustrates many residents is the contradiction.

Large promises.

Large announcements.

Large social media campaigns around future 20mph ambitions.

Then the quiet removal of something that was already operating successfully in communities today.

It risks giving the impression that announcements are being prioritised over practical delivery.

HIGHWAYS

ODDINGTON ROAD DEVELOPMENT AND HIGHWAYS CONCERNS

I have also been contacted by Stow-on-the-Wold Community Land Trust regarding the social rent housing development on the eastern side of Stow, off Oddington Road.

The concern raised with me is around the highway works required for the development, particularly the access arrangements on what residents describe as a fast blind bend. I understand the scheme requires the road to be straightened and widened to allow a right turn lane for traffic coming from the Chipping Norton direction.

The Community Land Trust is understandably concerned that if the necessary highway works are not resolved, this may affect the occupation of the homes currently being built and could also have implications for the CLT's own proposed development.

I remember the original planning application from my time on the Cotswold District Council Planning Committee, although I do not have direct knowledge of the current highways position.

I have therefore written to Gloucestershire Highways asking to be directed to the correct officer and requesting a clear update on the current position, including any outstanding approvals, land ownership issues or constraints.

Once I receive a response, I will update the Community Land Trust and share any relevant information with Stow Town Council.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

It is also important to recognise positive progress where it occurs.

Gloucestershire's Children's Services continue to improve significantly following a very difficult period historically. Recent inspections have reflected major improvements in leadership and performance.

This work rarely attracts headlines or political fanfare, but few responsibilities matter more than protecting vulnerable children and improving outcomes for young people across the county.

LOCAL ISSUES

Alongside wider county matters, I continue working on a range of local issues affecting Stow-on-the-Wold and surrounding communities including drainage concerns, road safety matters, speeding issues, planning pressures and infrastructure concerns linked to development across the North Cotswolds.

FIRE AND RESCUE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

As a member of Gloucestershire County Council's Fire and Rescue Scrutiny Committee representing the North Cotswolds, I continue to scrutinise the performance, resilience and future direction of Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS).

A significant amount of the Committee's recent work has focused on ensuring the service is modernising appropriately whilst continuing to maintain strong emergency cover across rural communities.

One major issue currently facing the service is Local Government Reorganisation and the potential abolition of Gloucestershire County Council itself. The Committee has been receiving updates on how different unitary council models may affect Fire and Rescue governance and operations moving forward. One of my priorities is ensuring that rural areas such as the North Cotswolds continue to receive appropriate emergency cover and are not overlooked within larger future structures.

The Committee has also been closely monitoring the continued improvement programme within GFRS following previous inspection concerns around culture and organisational performance. Encouragingly, the service has made substantial progress and officers report increasing staff confidence and improving performance measures.

Another major area of work has been scrutiny of the new Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue training facility planned for Coombe Hill, alongside upgrades to satellite sites across the county, including Chipping Campden. Importantly for the North Cotswolds, officers confirmed that improvements at Chipping Campden are focused on improving facilities for on-call firefighters to help maintain operational competencies locally.

The Committee has also looked closely at response times and staffing pressures within the service. Gloucestershire's average response time currently sits slightly above the national target at just over ten minutes, and officers have acknowledged the challenge of balancing resources across a large rural county.

Members also recently pushed for further work exploring the introduction of a Fire Cadet programme in Gloucestershire, recognising the potential benefits for young people, leadership development and community engagement. I strongly support this kind of practical early intervention work, particularly in rural communities where opportunities for structured youth engagement can sometimes be limited.

The Committee has additionally reviewed emerging risks including lithium battery fires linked to e-bikes and scooters, increasing financial fraud targeting vulnerable residents, and the growing pressures facing Trading Standards and the Coroner's Service. Both services are experiencing rising workloads alongside tighter financial pressures and increasing legal complexity.

As always, I will continue ensuring that the North Cotswolds has a strong voice around county-wide emergency planning, resilience and public safety discussions.

As always, residents are welcome to contact me directly where I may be able to assist or help escalate matters internally.