

Gretton Parish Council
Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 8th May 2024
held at Gretton Village Hall.

Present: Cllr Hanson (Chairman), Cllr Butcher, Cllr Green and Cllr Oliver

In Attendance: Parish Clerk, Borough Cllr Madle, Borough Cllr Mason, plus 1 member of the public.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

2. Minutes of previous Annual Parish Meeting

The minutes were agreed and signed by the Chairman for Annual Parish Meeting held on 10th May 2023

3. Adjourn Meeting

The Chairman adjourned the Annual Meeting until Sunday 9th June 2024 at 11.30am, where it will resume at Gretton Village Hall, allowing a wider village attendance and participation.

See Appendices for the annual reports from Gretton Parish Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council and Gloucestershire County Council

The meeting closed at 7.05pm.

Appendix A - Gretton Parish Council

Report from the Chair - Apr 2023-2024

My second year (and second report) as Chair, so I now have no excuses! It's been another good year, although relatively quiet, but continuing various initiatives, some facilitated directly by the Council, others supported by the Council.

This report follows a similar format, addressing the team, finances and then the various Village themes that we work on throughout the year.

The Team

Following elections in May 23, we are lucky to be able to keep the same team:- Cllrs; Mark Oliver, Dick Green, and David Butcher, and me as Chair. But we do still have a vacancy. I would like to thank them for their continued support through-out the last year.

We have had to say goodbye to Jackie Shields who retires as our p/time clerk after 6-years of support and guiding us through necessary procedure. As Jackie moves on, we are fortunate to be able to welcome Cathie Bridges to take on this role. Cathie lives locally, and also clerks for Alderton PC.

Gretton is represented within Tewkesbury Borough Council by 3-members.

Following the May 23 elections these are:- Cllr Gemma Madle, Cllr Jim Mason, and Cllr David Gray (also a cabinet member of Glos County Council). We are grateful for their support and attendance at Gretton PC meetings.

Although outside the period of this report; I sadly have to record the death of John Hurley, on April 23rd. John was a member of this council for 8-years, for most of that time he was Chair. He was highly respected for his knowledgeable leadership, pursuing village issues with enthusiasm and integrity. He will be sadly missed by his friends on this Council, and by so many in the Village, which he actively supported.

Finances

Recognising difficult financial times, the '23-'24 Precept (total amount from TBC to GPC), was fixed at £11,100, the same as '22-'23. Ironically due to a decrease in the number of households, the actual amount per household increased 2.4% (+£1 / home / annum)

The Council closed the financial year with spend under-budget and we continue to maintain a reasonable reserve, for the future. Audited accounts are available upon request and on our website.

Improving the Village appearance

The 'greening-up' initiative, continues, with more planting, in particular daffodils on verges. More is planned for 24-25. Also, we now have new dual-use dog / litter bins, at more locations.

We had another well-supported litter pick in the spring and with help from Cotswold Wardens, we were pleased to get the Glos CC 'Rights-of-Way' team to improve the drainage and re-surface the footpath above Greenway Lane.

Highway safety

Speeding traffic remains a concern. We maintain two speed-activated active road signs (by the Oak and in Gretton Fields), and 'speed-watch' teams on the roadside (working with the Police), which record vehicle speeds with our 'radar gun'. Both appear to help to increase awareness and reduce speeding.

In addition, the Council has worked with the Glos CC highways, the Police and School to seek improvements in parking and traffic safety outside the School.

We now have improved School Safety Zone signage, but parking and congestion, remains an ongoing concern, particularly at School drop-off and pick-up times.

Following successful campaigning with Winchcombe Council, the Gretton-Winchcombe Road has finally been re-surfaced. Ironically we now wait for the first road-works to dig up parts of it!.

Building a Vibrant & Engaged community – Supporting the GVA

A viable, useful Village Hall and Field is important for the community and the Council has continued to support the GVA in its role at the heart of the community, as both custodian of the Hall and Field and driving the Village social agenda.

It is particularly pleasing to see the success of the many social events and the hall usage this year, inspired and driven by the GVA. On behalf of the Council, and I am sure the Village, I'd like to express our thanks to the GVA for the great work they do.

The two outstanding successful events this year were The Coronation and Apple Rock celebrations in the Hall & Field. In addition to these and other social events and classes in the hall etc, the GVA has continued to run the Gretton Hub. This is a growing success, and is open to everyone in the Village, and was particularly helpful as a 'Warm Space' over the winter.

The Council has been pleased to provide some financial support for this, and the Coronation and Apple Rock celebrations. It continues to re-pay the 'works loan' (from the original hall refurbishment) and contributes towards field maintenance. Finally, the Council will be supporting some of the cost of the play equipment improvements, using S106 monies from the Redwood Close development.

Building a Vibrant & Engaged community – Supporting community engagement.

Recognising that good communication is essential for improving community cohesion and engagement, the Council continues to improve its website and encourage the use of 'Gretton Village Notices' Facebook page for Council and other village notices, working with the GVA.

The GVA is also driving an initiative to establish a Village-wide e-mail distribution list.

We are increasing the frequency of newsletters and now make these available online.

Planning activities

The council continues to take a pro-active role in addressing all planning issues, communicating with impacted residents, and in particular engaging with TBC Planning, to ensure we and the village are informed about, and understand, the impact of the increased pressure to build homes. We have three significant developments in the village.

- I. The Royal Oak – shepherds huts
- II. Gotherington Rd, 6-houses by Centaur Developments
- III. Manor Farmhouse, 5-houses to the rear

The Royal Oak development is now nearing completion. The Centaur development in particular, has benefitted from a considerable amount of collaborative discussion, resulting in an improved housing mix and addressing local concern, which included flooding.

The Council continues to maintain a planning application database on its website.

Next year '24 – '25

For next year, in addition to our statutory obligations, our key initiatives remain fundamentally unchanged.

Continuing to improve communications and engagement across the community, supporting the GVA (in particular, its project to improve access and facilities), addressing traffic and parking concerns and improving the Gretton environment – keeping it rural, greener and safe.

To help ensure our activities are correctly focused we are currently just finalising a new Village survey.

Geoff Hanson

Chair.

Appendix B - Tewkesbury Borough Councillors Report 2023-24

This year your Borough Councillors have been hard at work both representing you at Council meetings and committees and responding to your concerns. You are lucky enough to have three of us to choose from and this is what we've been up to!

Early in the year we passed a motion at Council to declare a Climate and Ecological Emergency in the Borough, the outworking of this has been that TBC has appointed a Climate Change Reduction Programme Officer and Caring for the Environment has been made one of our three priorities in the new Council plan to be adopted at our May 2024 meeting. Environmental impacts or concerns are frequently raised at Planning Committee by Councillors, are central to the development of the Strategic Local Plan and Garden Town Charter and TBC's own offices have had an Air Source Heat Pump installed this winter.

We're also trying to improve the transparency of the Council & Councillor's activities and with that in mind webcasting of Council meetings was approved last year and set to be in place in July 2024. Locally we've tried to be relatively active on social media, sharing information about Council meetings and decisions and held our first drop-in surgery in Winchcombe on 27th April. Something we intend to repeat on a regular basis and hopefully in other areas of the Ward as well.

There have been some challenges in the area of Planning this last year when the Council's housing land supply figures were successfully challenged and the Council had to re-evaluate its figure, leaving us short of the required 5 years. However, although this has resulted in some difficult decisions all round in recent months, recent performance data and monitoring is showing improvement and we hope to see more significant improvements in the year ahead. We continue to work hard to advocate for our ward areas where we are able and recognise the impact recent planning decisions have had and where residents have suffered disproportionately in some areas. The consultation with residents and parish/town Councils on the new Strategic Local Plan will feed into its development and subsequent negotiations with Gloucester and Cheltenham Councils.

Key work has been going on within the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to improve the accountability and ongoing monitoring of the Council and its services, and the creation of a new Council Plan means that there is an opportunity to create more measurable and impactful KPIs.

Young people have been a key focus of the new Council's activities, a Youth Advisory Board is being set up for the Garden Communities Programme, finance for a new post of Youth Engagement Officer has been approved in the budget, proactive engagement with 16-18 year olds in local schools as part of the Council plan consultation and motions have been passed to promote fostering, increase the upper age limit for which Care leavers are entitled to Council Tax discount and more recently to refer to Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee the disparity in funding for Children's Hospices for further investigation.

On a more local level we've responded to concerns about planning issues, environmental health & noise, anti-social behaviour and highways/rights of way.

It's been a privilege to serve as your Ward Councillors this year and we look forward to another year representing you, thank you for giving us the opportunity.

Cllrs Gemma Madle, Jim Mason, David Gray

Appendix C - Gloucestershire County Council - Winchcombe and Woodmancote Division

This has been my third year in post on the County Council.

In addition to me responsibilities as a local division member, as a cabinet member responsible for Environment and Planning on the County Council I also oversee a number of the important areas for which the Council has responsibility.

In the Division

This has been a year of significant progress in the division, with a number of important local infrastructure projects delivered. Highlights include:

- Resurfacing of the Gretton Road
- Resurfacing of the Greet Road, from North Street to the Black Sheds junction
- Repairing of the collapsed Isbourne riverside embankment in Winchcombe, saving the footpath
- Securing a major grant to support the community purchase of the Winchcombe Methodist Hall
- Resurfacing at Teddington Hands roundabout

Whilst there has been big process on the the worst of the local roads, and more has been done on various others, 24/25 should see even further progress as the Council's commitment of significant funding, and the national government's diversion of funding from HS2 to local roads, will continue to pay dividends. The Broadway Road is a major target for improvement going forward.

It should be remembered that all major resurfacing inevitably comes with some level of short term disruption. However, construction disruption on local roads is more commonly caused by utility works, which are outside the direct control of the Highways Authority. Best efforts have been made to organise this necessary work such that there continues to be "through routes" open at all times and actual closures are limited to off-peak times, where possible.

Reflecting the focus on the issues of potholes, the Council has introduced an enhanced web based application that makes reporting them easier, hopefully speeding up the delivery of solutions. FixMyStreet can be accessed from the County Council website or by simply searching for "Gloucestershire fix my street" in any web browser.

In some instances temporary fills may be used pending more substantial schemes, such as full resurfacing. The same application can be used to report blocked or damaged road signs and flooding issues that affect the highways, such as blocked gullies.

The strong finances of the Council have allowed it to extend the "build back better" and "youth" councillor schemes, both of which provide small amounts of discretionary funding to local councillors, and I have used this funding to support a number of local causes, including sports and community events and WAM youth group.

County Council

At a County level the Council continues to be financially prudent in how it runs its activities and will run a small surplus for the year just ended, despite the significant increase in funding required by a number of the services that the County is responsible for, such as Children's and Adult Social Care.

The County ends the year in a secure financial position having avoided many of the mistakes made in other "more ambitious" councils across the country.

On the capital front Gloucestershire continues to attract national funding to support an ambitious program of investments, not least in my areas that fall within my portfolio. Highlights include:

- new road schemes, such as the changes on the A417 to address the "missing link", planned improvements to junction 10 on the M5, the upgrade of the new Arle Court "park and ride" facility, which will open shortly, and the development of proposals for a new junction 9 to relieve congestion at the existing junction and on the A46 and support Tewkesbury's ambitions for Garden Communities
- rapid progress on the implementation of the County's ambitious plans to construct a 26 mile segregated "cycle spine", together with additional local connections, with the stretch Bishops Cleeve to Cheltenham due to commence construction in 2024
- the refurbishment of the Wingmoor Farm Household Recycling Centre, improving amenity and enhancing operational effectiveness of the site
- the Javelin Park "energy from waste" plant has operated smoothly and generated a significant financial surplus for the County, as well as all but eliminating the use of landfill

- good progress on our plans to help address climate change, with rapid progress on our program to plant 1 million trees across the county and the first of 1,000 public e-charging points being installed

The Council approved a budget for 24/25 that included an uplift in the base council tax of 2.99% for next year, together with a nationally mandated additional 2% Adult Social care, for a year on year total increase of 4.99%. That rise is well below the rate at which both pensions and wages are rising, but is nonetheless an uncomfortable necessity given the growing demand for social care services in particular and the underlying pressures on costs, not least due to rising wages across all services. The national minimum wage, has for example, risen by 9.8% from 1 April 2024.

As noted last year, Gloucestershire is an ambitious county with exciting plans to improve our connectivity and address climate change. It should be recognised that much of the work done in these areas has actually been funded from grants won in competition with other authorities, not least thanks to our record on delivering schemes. The 26 mile cycle spine, the construction of which has progressed rapidly in the last 12 months, is, for example, almost wholly funded from Active Travel and other grant funding from central government, rather than out of the local council tax. Consequently, not building the cycle spine would not provide Gloucestershire with additional funding for other activities, but simply result in a cycle scheme being delivered elsewhere in the country.

It is a privilege to be your county councillor. I encourage parishes and residents to get in touch if they have any ideas or issues that they wish to discuss or which they believe I might be able to help with. My contact details are available on the GCC site.

David Gray