

Gretton Parish Council

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 22nd May 2025 held at Gretton Village Hall.

Present: Cllr Hanson (Chairman) and Cllr Oliver

In Attendance: Parish Clerk, County Cllr Agg, plus 10 members of the public and Tewkesbury Borough Council Community and Place Development Officer - East Area

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Green, Cllr Butcher and Borough Cllr Madle

2. Report of the Chairman of Gretton Parish Council and summary of the Parish Council accounts for the year ending 31st March 2025

Chair's Report on Parish Council Activities – See Appendix A. Copies of the slides are available on the parish council website

Notice of Vacancy for a Parish Councillor.

3. Report from the Gloucestershire County Council

Recently appointed County Councillor Cheryl Agg introduced herself. She explained that Gloucestershire is looking to either move toward a unitary authority model, or split into two authorities, with a decision expected by the end of November.

Cllr Agg outlined her areas of interest, which include education, the environment, rural issues, and public rights of way (PROW). She expressed a desire to encourage greater community engagement and highlighted links with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and Cleeve Hill.

The annual County Report for 2024-25, prepared by Cllr David Gray, is available in Appendix B.

4. Report from Tewkesbury Borough Council

Borough Councillor Report for 2024–25 prepared by Cllr Gray, Cllr Mason & Cllr Madle is available in Appendix C.

5. Reports from Gretton Village organisations and community groups

- **Gretton Village Association:** The GVA provided an update on recent and ongoing projects, as well as upcoming events:
 - Delivered Projects:
 - Planting of 8 fruit trees – funded by the Greener Gloucestershire Community Climate Change Fund.
 - Funded and in Progress:
 - Solar installation on the Village Hall – funded by Gretton Solar Farm Ltd via Greenfields Trust.
 - Sports Storage Facility – funded through S106.
 - Hard standing/activity space – funded through S106 and Parish Council.
 - Planned Projects:
 - Energy efficient heaters – funding to be confirmed.
 - Perimeter path around playing field – under consideration, funding options being explored.

Continued support and engagement with local voluntary groups and stakeholders.

The Council noted and thanked the GVA for its continued work in supporting the community.

- **The Tower Trust:** Provided an update, discussion took place around improving signage to the Tower and the potential to explore additional income sources such as a donation box and getting involved in Winchcombe walking festival.

- **Police:** Although a representative was unable to attend, a report was submitted and can be found in Appendix D.

6. Any other business

- **School Parking:** A suggestion was made to explore ways to reduce congestion during school pick-up times. It was agreed this would require collaboration with the school.
- **25 Years On – Rogation Walk:** Proposal to walk the parish boundary to mark 25 years, with a focus on preserving local history and heritage for future generations. Suggested incorporating the cul-de-sac walk in the future.
- **Request to view the Presentation Slides:** slides will be uploaded to the parish council website.
- **TBC Consultation:** It was noted that Tewkesbury Borough Council is available to consult on energy efficiency initiatives.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm.

Appendix A - Gretton Parish Council Report from the Chair - Apr '24 - '25

My 3rd report as Chair (although 10 years with the Council). It has been another good year, the Council has continued to conduct its routine village-business obligations, enabling various initiatives, some facilitated directly by the Council, others supported by the Council.

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

The Team

We are lucky to be able to keep the same team: - Cllrs Mark Oliver, Dick Green, David Butcher, our Clerk Cathie Bridges and me as Chair.

I would like to thank them for their continued support through-out the last year, particularly Cathie, who has quickly 'got up to speed' and ably guided us through the year. But we do still have a vacancy for a Cllr, which is proving a challenge to fill.

Gretton is represented within Tewkesbury Borough Council by 3-members, these are:- Cllr Gemma Madle, Cllr Jim Mason, and Cllr David Gray (who has also been a cabinet member on Glos County Council). We are grateful for their support and attendance at Gretton PC meetings.

A good working relationship with both Borough and County councils is important to ensure that Gretton's concerns are listened to, whether in matters of Highways, Policing, or of course Planning.

Finances

An important role of the Council is to collect that proportion of Council Tax available to village parish councils – the *Precept*. This money is then available to support the cost of Village initiatives, social activities (through the GVA), the Newsletter and our maintenance obligations.

The precept in 24-25 rose in-line with Tewkesbury Borough Council Tax, and was £11,752

Full, audited accounts are available upon request and on the website. But are also summarised in round-numbers below.

Non-discretionary spend	
Clerk's salary (p/time)	£4,500
Memberships; Insurances	
Hall hire, Audit costs	
Village Hall loan repayment	£2,300
Grass-cutting	£500
Discretionary spend	
Newsletters / comms	£1,200
GVA support - Summer Fayre	£500
Gretton Hub	£300
Apple Rock	£500
Other (C/Wardens, Tower Trust)	£270
Defib (maintenance & training)	£300
Bus shelter repairs	£330
'Greening' (daffodils & war memorial)	£100
Transfer to reserves for 25/26 spend	£950

Additional financial notes.

1. The Council currently has a reserve of £23,950 (as at 31 Mar 25). Following a financial review, it was decided to reduce this by releasing £11,000 to be made available to the GVA to support Playing Field improvements. It is expected that this will be spent in 25/26 f/year.
2. The Council also supported the GVA's new playing field equipment, by managing the receipt and spend of £19,704 of S106 monies (received from TBC, from the Redwood Close development)
3. The Council closed the financial year with spend under-budget and we continue to maintain a reasonable reserve, for the future.

Improving the Village appearance

'Greening-up' initiatives continue, with more planting, in particular daffodils on verges. We are also grateful for those who maintain and plant the war memorial. More is planned for 25-26

Litter. We had a well-supported litter pick in the Spring, and we have purchased some additional litter-pick equipment, so that residents can borrow at any time – our thanks to those that do this.

Wardens. We continue to be grateful to Cotswold Wardens, for their work maintaining local paths and stiles. This year GPC donated £100 to Cotswolds Wardens.

Bus shelter. We contracted a local builder and completed essential maintenance on the roof and guttering.

Tower Trust. GPC was approached by the Tower Trust Charity, for support. The Tower is an important village asset and whilst the Trust functions well, there are concerns about future funding. GPC has now committed to support them with help towards their annual insurance costs.

Highway safety

Speeding traffic remains a concern. We maintain two speed-activated active road signs (by the Oak and in Gretton Fields). We also have successful 'Speed-watch' teams, who - working with the Police, provide a visible deterrent, reducing speeding and reporting offenders to the police. Thanks to everyone who has helped with this.

Parking and traffic safety outside the School, particularly at drop-off and pick-up times remains a concern. The Council continues to work with the Glos CC Highways, the Police and School to seek improvements.

The Council continues to liaise with Highways and our local road-gritting contractor, to ensure we have salt supplies both for the contractor, and in road-side bins. Details are on the website

Thanks also to everyone who has responded to the Council's requests to cut-back hedges to improve visibility and road-safety

Building a Vibrant & Engaged community – Supporting the GVA

A viable, useful Village Hall & 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 & Field and driving the Village social agenda.

It is great to see 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 all of the Village, we'd like to express our thanks to the GVA for the great work they do.

The two outstanding successful events this year were the Summer Fayre and Apple Rock celebrations in the Hall & Field. The fayre was also the grand opening of the new play equipment, which has been a tremendous success, following a huge effort by the GVA to raise funds and manage the installation.

In addition to these events, other social activities and classes in the hall etc, the GVA has continued to run the Gretton Hub. This remains very popular 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 financial support for this, the Summer Fayre and Apple Rock. It continues to re-pay the 'works loan' (from the original hall refurbishment) and contributes towards field maintenance.

Building a Vibrant & Engaged community – Community engagement

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.

Newsletters: The Council has published 4-newsletters this year, (June, Sept, Dec and Mar) all of which have been well-received and are also available on-line.

Village Survey. GPC tries to run a questionnaire every four years, to ensure that residents get their say, and the Council and other village organisations are informed about what's important, to guide their future plans and inform their interactions with public bodies, on issues such as fund-raising, planning and highways. Results were discussed initially at our last Annual Parish Meeting in May 24, in June's newsletter and are available on-line. Thank you for all of those who helped make it happen and for those that responded. We are also planning a housing need survey next year.

Planning activities

The council continues to take a pro-active role in addressing all planning issues, communicating with impacted residents, and engaging with TBC Planning. (i) Ensuring that we and the village are informed about, and understand, the impact of the increased pressure to build homes; (ii) Providing a voice to influence; representing concerns or encouraging improvements to plans.

The Council continues to maintain a planning application database on its website. This lists all the many planning applications that we are asked to comment on by TBC; from trees to conservatories plus the more significant developments, e.g.

- The Royal Oak – shepherds huts. Now complete.
- Gotherington Rd, 6-houses by Centaur Developments. Nearing completion
- Manor Farmhouse, 5-houses to the rear. Not yet started.
- Gretton Fields, 5-houses. Recently refused by TBC.

With increased pressure on housing, from Government and TBC, it is likely we will see an increase in planning activity.

Next year '25 - '26

For next year, our key themes remain fundamentally unchanged, basically ensuring that Gretton remains a great place to live. Continuing to improve communications and engagement across the community;

supporting the GVA (in particular, its hall & field improvement projects), addressing traffic and parking concerns and improving the Gretton environment – keeping it rural, greener, and safe.

On next year's agenda, in addition to our key themes and our statutory obligations: -

- Support the next stage of Village Hall facility improvements (field access & parking)
- Consider some refurbishment of the War memorial
- Major tree maintenance to the hornbeam on the village green
- A second defibrillator – somewhere near the church
- Continue financial support of Village events
- Continue speed & parking initiatives, especially 'Speed watch' team & 'speed-signs'.
- Getting the 30mph zone moved on the Gotherington Rd approach
- A village 'Housing Needs Survey', with GRCC (Glos Rural Communities Council)
- New gateway on Alderton approach

We will be holding our Annual Parish Meeting on Thursday 22nd May. This is in addition to the normal 2-monthly Parish Council meetings – these follow a defined format, but the APM is informal and an opportunity for all residents to see what the council does and have a say in telling the Council what it should be doing in the next few years.

Geoff Hanson, May '25

Appendix B – County Council Report 2024-25

Councillor David Gray – Winchcombe and Woodmancote Division, April 2025

The elections will go ahead because Gloucestershire was not selected by the Westminster government as one of the counties that will participate in the so-called "first tranche" of local government reform. Given that we were not selected, there is now considerable doubt as to when local government reform will impact Gloucestershire, although the Westminster government has committed to eliminating all two-tier local government structures, so the most likely date is within the next 3 years. The fact that there are county council elections on 1 May means that it is difficult to write a report without it sounding like an election leaflet, especially in view of the local government reform. And the recent blow up in the world economy triggered by the Trump administrations reckless activities, make the outlook exceptionally difficult to predict.

Finances

All councils, borough, county and unitary or combined are already under increasing financial strain. This is the result of a number of factors, including:

- High inflation, which, although having fallen substantially from the peak driven by the war in Ukraine pushing energy prices higher, at 2.8% and rising, remains well above the target 2%
- Exceptionally high domestic energy prices, which impact many council activities, including road resurfacing costs, which are energy intensive
- The increasing aging of the population which is driving up care costs that county
- councils pay for
- The increasing cost of employment, with wages rising at more than double the rate of inflation and substantial increases in employer (and councils are employers, both directly and indirectly, through purchased services) national insurance and minimum wages – these will surge from 1 April 2025

Faced by this economic backdrop, many local councils have either had to raid reserves, cut services or request permission to increase council taxes above the 4.99% standard rate of increase (2.99% inflationary and 2% social care levy). Somerset County Council have, for example, done both, increasing council tax by 7.5%, and Cheltenham have been forced to start selling assets, including car parks.

Not least because of the profits generated by selling the energy generated from the Javelin Park waste incinerator, Gloucestershire County Council still has strong finances and has been able to publish a balanced budget for 25/26. It is forecast to generate a small surplus in 24/25.

The sound basis of Gloucestershire's finances are a blessing given the likely strain that the rapid onset of a world economic crisis that the Trump administration's tariff actions may well trigger. The possible implications of that crisis for local government are very difficult to predict, but like a ship heading into a storm, the fact that we are in good order, with sensible, healthy reserves, reserves built up (often in the face of criticism) to shelter us from just such inevitable periods of turbulence, will at least cushion some of the impact of the severe buffeting that lies ahead; other less financially prudent councils may join the list of those already facing immediate crisis and having to take painful decisions around which services to cut even whilst levying eye watering increase in council taxes.

Roads and infrastructure

The strength of the County's finances has allowed it to continue to invest in its infrastructure, opening an additional Special Educational needs school and planning for both more such schools and care homes, to meet increasing demand.

Roads remain the biggest financial investment of the council.

In the last year some 100,000 potholes have been fixed. This rate of completion is helped by the public using the enhanced web-based application FixMyStreet that has made reporting them easier and started to speed up the delivery of solutions.

However, fixing potholes is often not the most cost-effective form of road management over the longer term, with full resurfacing representing a better investment. This has been the focus in Gloucestershire. More than 100 miles of roads have been resurfaced in Gloucestershire over the last year, an exceptional rate of progress. The recent resurfacing of a significant stretch of the Broadway Road was a recent highlight, even if the gas company did rather cool the enthusiasm by then closing the road to instal a new mains under a stretch of it, following repeated gas leaks. The final stretch pf resurfacing on the Broadway Road, between Toddington and Winchcombe, is now confirmed to be completed within the next few months. Nevertheless, despite these record levels of activity, considerable work remains to be done on the roads going forward, especially as regards local roads as past investment has tended to be focussed on the major roads that have the highest volumes of traffic.

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, as the gas works illustrated, which are outside the direct control of the Highways Authority. Best efforts are 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.

It has been a privilege to be your county councillor for the last four years.

Whoever is elected on 1 May, I encourage parishes and residents to get in touch with their county councillor if they have any ideas or issues that they wish to discuss or which they believe the county council might be able to help with.

David Gray

Appendix C – Borough Council Report 2024-25

This year has had some twists and turns, and stops and starts, some unexpected and some just coming a bit sooner than expected. Despite this, during the year we've tried to do our best to represent our communities as well as we can throughout.

We started the year by adopting the new Council Plan, setting out our shared vision for the Council's direction for the next 6 years. The priorities we chose to focus on are Economy, Climate and Ecological Emergency, Managing Growth, Flood Resilience, Housing & Homelessness, Young People, Place, Health & Wellbeing. Each

priority has a number of set objectives and the plan is being brought back to Council for a progress update and review in June this year.

Shortly after our first full Council meeting of the municipal year we re-entered a period of purdah as the General Election date was set. This put a pause to any political activity of Council but in September we came together to approve a name change for the Council and a revised Governance Structure for the Garden Communities Programme following a recent review.

We were then impacted by a cyber incident and Tewkesbury Borough took all systems offline while they tried to identify the source of the issue and ensure no data breach had taken place. A lessons learned report from the response to the incident will be brought to Council later in 2025 but it was confirmed that there was no data breach and systems were brought back online as soon as it was safe to do so.

At our October meeting we approved changes to the Scheme of Delegation for Planning to help Officers target their time and Committee time to the applications that require it the most. Tewkesbury's Planning Department have been shortlisted for the Award of Local Authority Planning Team of the Year in recognition of the improvements they have made in the last 12 months.

In December we approved new policies for Hedgerow Management and Tree and Woodland Management, adopted new Contract and Procurement rules to meet new legislation from February 2025 and to improve the transparency of procurement decisions. We also entered into a new agreement with Cheltenham Borough Council to jointly own a tank to store Hydro-Treated Vegetable Oil fuel for our waste vehicle fleet. Since using HVO the carbon emissions of these vehicles have reduced by 80%.

We also began webcasting our meetings, full Council and Committees, and feedback so far has been positive with members of the public taking advantage of being able to watch meetings at times convenient to them, as well as logging in to stream live.

Our new Mayor and Deputy Mayor will be appointed at our May 14th meeting, we approved the appointments of Cllr Kashan Pervaiz as Mayor and Cllr George Porter as Deputy Mayor in January.

Due to the Government's White Paper in December regarding Local Government Reorganisation and their intention to replace two-tier areas of local government with unitary authorities we decided not to pursue the planned Council name change. Further information about the process of LGR can be found here <https://teiwkesbury.gov.uk/devolution-and-local-government-reorganisation/>. In a nutshell, along with other district councils in Gloucestershire and the County Council, Tewkesbury BC has submitted interim proposals to the Government. Following feedback at the end of April in November we will all be required to submit full proposals. There is no unified agreement currently between districts and county as to which structure is best, Tewkesbury's position is that one unitary council is preferred, however the exact form and number of the proposals submitted in November will largely depend on who is elected to the County Council this May and the position that County then decide to take. The expectation is that whatever unitary structure that results, a shadow authority will be elected/created in 2027 and the districts/county councils will complete transfer of power/services and cease to exist in April 2028.

Due to the LGR process we are reconsidering the number and scope of the objectives within the Council Plan. The Plan was originally intended to run until 2030, however given that TBC will not exist beyond 2028 we are focusing on what we are able to deliver within this new timeframe and what can be set in motion and transferred easily to a new authority. These decisions will be made at the June Council meeting.

Development of the new Strategic Local Plan continues and a submission should be made by December 2026 following informal and formal consultation over the next year with stakeholders.

We have managed to remain financially stable despite a significant loss of funding this year from central Government. However, we will need to be prudent in the upcoming years as funding is likely to decrease further and we want to manage any transition into a new authority responsibly.

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

It's been a privilege to serve again as your Ward Councillors this year and we look forward to another year representing you, thank you for giving us the opportunity. You can get in touch with any of us via the email addresses below.

Cllrs Gemma Madle, Jim Mason, David Gray
councillor.madle@tewkesbury.gov.uk
councillor.mason@tewkesbury.gov.uk
councillor.gray@tewkesbury.gov.uk

Appendix D – Police Update, May 2025

There have been 22 reported incidents since the start of the year.

We have had four Burglaries reported and a theft of Motor vehicle in that period. These were obviously the crimes that have caused the most concern in the area. We are aware there has been a slight increase in the rural communities around burglaries and theft of motor vehicles. We are actively trying to identify those involved and where we have lines of enquiry this has been passed to our Neighbourhood Support Team to progress. I manage this team as well, so I keep an eye on all the investigations.

Where demand allows, we will proactively try and patrol these areas especially in the evening when most of these crimes occur. Our teams which included traffic and dogs have been briefed.

Crime Prevention advice has been forwarded to the parish council to make available on the parish council website.

I would also encourage people to report everything. No matter how small. It builds a picture and what we don't know, we don't know. We also have our community alerts messaging system that residents can sign up for. This is where we put out messages of what is going on in their area. So, people are aware.

We have our community engagement vehicle assigned to us next month so I will make sure that we get that out to your community. This way people can chat to the team, relay any concerns, and possibly sign up for the community alerts. The date and time will be confirmed.

Grant White
Inspector 1653
Tewkesbury Neighbourhood Policing Team