

District Councillor's Update for Blockley Parish Council Meeting, 20 November 2025

Residents can contact me, Clare Turner, at Clare.Turner@cotswold.gov.uk

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1. **Freedom Leisure (FL)** attended our Overview & Scrutiny meeting this week which gave me the opportunity to raise issues of concern about the Chipping Campden Leisure Centre.

Pool cover (to reduce energy needed to keep the pool at the correct temperature). Freedom Leisure (FL) prepared a business case for the school to invest in the Pool cover and have shared this with the school. The period of time to recover the cost of installing, through energy savings, is around a year so it makes sense for the school to proceed. The Chief Financial Officer advised me that Cotswold District are working with Freedom Leisure and the school to figure out a way to make it happen; they met in September to discuss it and are due a follow up meeting. I reiterated that I would be happy to support fundraising to get it in place and I have subsequently written to the head teacher and business manager to offer my support, to speed this along, if possible.

Maintenance. We discussed the issue of getting maintenance issues resolved in a timely manner at Campden too. Cotswold District officers/school/FL meet monthly, so conversations are taking place but as the school are responsible for the buildings etc, things do not always get resolved as quickly as CDC/FL might like; understandably the Leisure Centre is just one small part of running the school. Another councillor suggested the idea of creating a stakeholder's board which includes leisure centre users, so users can have more of a voice when it comes to the management of the centre. I will update residents/BPC if anything comes of this suggestion.

Staffing. I also asked about staffing and explained the frustration when Sunday morning swims or swim lessons get cancelled without advising regular users. FL were sympathetic but advised that staffing had been improved through a number of initiatives. Free lifeguarding training had been offered to students and this had successfully recruited additional lifeguards. FL also mentioned a programme of staff training so there is more flexibility with staff able to cover different roles as needed. There is also some shared working between Bourton on the Water and Campden, to increase flexibility when it comes to staffing options and FL have implemented better staff contracting arrangements (fewer casual staff). FL's customer complaints data shows an improvement over the 18+ months since they were awarded the contract.

Cleanliness. Several councillors raised this issue although many of them were referring to Cirencester. FL have increased their overall dedicated cleaning staff hours and, where applicable, lifeguards/gym staff are being used to supplement the cleaning regimes. Leisure centre users are encouraged to raise concerns (either via feedback cards available at reception or online) if they have any feedback (positive or negative).

Additional staff member at CDC. We were also advised that the Council are recruiting a new support officer who will provide the team with additional capacity to make site visits and

review issues that have been raised. I will be following this up to make sure they reach us in the North Cotswolds!

2. Planning – Local Plan

CDC are hosting the following events for residents to find out more about the Local Plan:

- Mickleton: King George's Hall, Friday 28 November, 2pm – 7pm
- Moreton: St David's Centre, Friday 5 December, 2pm- 7pm
- Fairford: Community Centre, Thursday 11 December, 2pm – 7pm
- Cirencester: Corinium Museum, Thursday 18 December, 2pm – 7pm

I am also running a session in Ebrington on Friday 21st that is being hosted by Ebrington Residents Association and am happy to do similar events for BPC villages.

The Regulation 18 Consultation for the updated Local Plan is live now and open until 2nd January 2026. The key issue being consulted on is the strategy the District Council should adopt to meet Government imposed housing targets. The documentation outlines the possible impact for different settlements in the District and includes a reference to Blockley being able to deliver 130 additional homes, if the preferred strategic approach (Option 5) is adopted in the Plan. This number is based on land that has already been put forward by landowners or developers for potential development; further assessment is needed to confirm which sites are suitable and deliverable. In the coming weeks and months, some sites may be discounted. The consultation will include another call for sites (an opportunity for developers/landowners to express interest in their land being developed) so additional sites could come forward in the Parish.

A second consultation (Regulation 19) will take place next year, followed by submission of the final plan to the Secretary of State in December 2026 for independent examination. Prior to that second consultation, the council will develop an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, which will assess what infrastructure is required to deliver the final development option.

How many new dwellings across the district are the government asking for?

Based on current estimations, the following housing targets will apply for the updated local plan:

- a. 18,650 additional new homes are needed for the new local plan period (calculated using the government's 'standard methodology').
 - b. There are already 6,150 homes in the pipeline that can contribute towards delivering this 18,650 housing target. These are:
 - planning permissions that have not yet been built;
 - remaining site allocations from the current Local Plan; and
 - future windfalls (an estimation of sites that will not specifically be identified in the Local Plan).
- Additional sites capable of delivering 12,500 homes are needed to fully deliver the housing target (i.e. $18,650 - 6,150 = 12,500$ homes).

How will the additional sites be delivered?

The preferred approach to delivering the additional sites is Scenario 5: Allocate sites in Principal Settlements, Non-Principal Settlements and Village Clusters. Support Rural Exception Sites in Rural Settlements. Create new settlement(s) and/or strategic extensions to existing settlement(s). The total housing land supply of the Local Plan period from Scenario 5 is estimated to be approximately 14,660 homes. This is 79% government target of 18,650 homes.

Conversations are also ongoing with neighbouring authorities. Our neighbours typically have less constraints (eg a smaller % of National Landscape) so may be able to help deliver some of the target. Scenarios 6 and 7 go against National Planning Policy Framework, so would not be accepted: they are not viable but included

for the sake of completeness and to make the point to Government that this is the only way the targets could be achieved in full.

It should be noted that delivering the 14,660 homes requires building at densities greater than would usually be expected of rural areas.

How have the estimates of what can be delivered through additional sites been reached?

The estimates in the consultation documents for additional sites are based on land that has already been put forward by landowners or developers for potential development and further assessment is needed to confirm which sites are **developable and deliverable**. In the coming weeks and months, some sites may be discounted. The consultation will include another call for sites (an opportunity for developers/landowners to express interest in their land being developed) so additional sites could come forward in the Parish.

What does this mean for specific towns and villages?

The documentation outlines the possible impact, in terms of numbers of additional dwellings, for different principal and non-principal settlements in the District e.g. it includes a reference to Blockley being able to deliver 130 additional homes (current size = 616 dwellings), if the preferred strategic approach (Option 5) is adopted in the Plan. It also sets out the impact for the district in terms of strategic (larger) developments, both in the plan period and beyond the plan period (i.e. beyond 2043).

Infrastructure first and other constraints

Part of the process the Council is working through is identifying what infrastructure is needed to make specific development viable. This includes schools, roads, sewerage etc and where the required infrastructure cannot be funded through the developer or other sources, the site will be considered undeliverable. Where local knowledge identifies other factors that mean that land cannot be developed eg regular flooding, the sites will be considered undevelopable.

Challenging the target

I was pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the letter that has now been sent to Steve Reed MP, the new Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, expressing the concerns of all councillors, on the potential impact of these new housing targets. The Council will continue to challenge the government target and you can read the full letter here: [Council invites new Secretary of State for meeting on huge housing target challenge, as scale of potential development is revealed | Cotswold District Council News](#)

The District Council must demonstrate that all possibilities have been considered: all sites that are developable and deliverable will go into the Local Plan but there is a clear expectation that the Plan will fall short of the targets and the body of evidence created as part of the Local Plan Process will be used to argue that the targets are simply not achievable.

And finally

While the content of the consultation (and potentially the Local Plan) is alarming, the skills and knowledge of the team working on the Plan are to be commended and officers have patiently and comprehensively responded to the questions that councillors have raised. A lot of work has already taken place and more will continue too.

3. Casework

I've supported a number of residents reporting highways issues, which fall under the County's responsibilities. Residents can use the online [reporting tool](#) to report issues. Anything that still doesn't quite fit in the system can be raised with our County Councillor tom.bradley@gloucestershire.gov.uk and it's been helpful to keep Tom in the loop and ask him to follow up on some of the matters raised by residents.

As the vegetation dies back, fly-tipping has become visible at a couple of locations and this along with missed bins, overflowing litter bins and more can be reported to the District Council here:

<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/report-it/>

I've also been supporting residents with issues relating to housing, planning and waste collection.

4. Local Government Reorganisation

CDC have a web page dedicated to sharing updates on Local Government reorganisation:

<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/news-items/devolution-update/>

All 7 councils in Gloucestershire will consider the options for creation of a unitary authority and November, sending their feedback to the government by 28th November 2025. Cotswold District have their meeting last so will have some idea of what other councillors have agreed by the time it's debated at CDC. The options papers will be in the public domain for the first time on 23rd October, when they will be published for County Council's Cabinet. There are 3 proposals being put forward; a single unitary for the whole of Gloucestershire, two unitaries made up of an east/west split or a Greater Gloucester/the rest of Gloucestershire split. The evidence suggests the most viable option is a single unitary but that the exercise is unlikely to achieve the type of cost savings that were initially used as a justification for the creation of a Unitary authority in place of the two-tier county/district system we currently have in Gloucestershire. Government have advised they are still working to the timetable of the new Unitary being created in 2028, though there are concerns around how this will be achieved, given the enormous amount of work needed in the interim.

Full Council will debate the options at next week's meeting.

5. Unsung heroes

The next round of unsung heroes will be celebrated at the 26th November Council meeting and all nominees to date have been invited to attend a celebration in December. Nominations are open on a rolling basis so please submit for your suggestions for the next round!

Recognise young unsung heroes (aged 25 and under).

<https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news/young-heroes-to-shine-as-new-award-announced>

Let me know if you would like someone to be recognised or you can make nominations directly here:

https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/unsungheroes?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAR33dsieqlEw2t1HpWm3mLIAlB80c4sQXexsP5pBiyijmAURFQXP_WfL4_aem_KLA24dRGwviOH6dlrXEo_g

6. Cost of Living Support

As temperatures drop and the cost of keeping homes warm rises, I thought it would be useful to remind BPC of the CDC guidance on sources of support: <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/news-items/help-if-you-re-struggling-with-living-costs/> I attended an event hosted by Chipping Campden Support Hub which recently acquired charitable status. Their website, although focused on Chipping Campden, also has some useful information <https://campden-support.com/>. The event tried to address the question of how we get support to the people that need it; awareness of what's available is an issue but we also need to overcome the barrier of people not recognising that the available support is for them.

7. Community Grant funding opportunities of note (not CDC)

Severn Trent Community Fund: Core Funding will be open for applications from **Saturday 1st November to Sunday 30th November 2025 (closing at 11:59pm)**.

Eligible not-for-profit organisations can apply for a restricted grant of £5,000–£20,000 to support their core costs for one year.

This core funding is for groups that offer essential services to local residents, especially those supporting the most vulnerable – helping to improve wider community wellbeing. They aim to help groups who urgently need financial support to continue existing delivery.

To be eligible, organisations must:

- Be a not-for-profit with a governing document;
- Have a bank account in the organisation's name with dual authorisation;
- Be based within the Severn Trent region (including registered address) – [check the [map](#) or [postcode](#)];
- Deliver vital services that improve community wellbeing, especially for vulnerable groups;
- Have been operating for at least 3 full years;
- Have a gross annual income of **£250,000 or less** (averaged over the past 3 years);
- Be struggling financially to maintain current activities;
- Have **less than 12 months** of unrestricted reserves;
- Not have significant or unmanageable debt.

The types of organisations they're able to support will likely be emergency relief services (e.g. foodbanks), health and medical support, housing and homelessness support, support for vulnerable populations and organisations that give employment and income assistance.

We anticipate high demand, so while we'd love to support everyone, unfortunately we won't be able to fund every application.

Full eligibility criteria and details on how to apply can be found at stwater.co.uk/corefunding

8. In case you are not yet aware, there's a new free **travel bursary for young people**. It is a new initiative funded by the Household Support Fund and organised through Young Gloucestershire.
<https://www.youngglos.org.uk/free-travel-for-young-people/>

The bursary is for young people who are:

- In care or leaving care
- Rurally Isolated
- Not in/ or at risk of not being in education or employment
- Seeking to engage in appointments or youth provision.

Young people will be able to apply for a travel bursary of one of the following options:

- 10 RETURN TRIPS
- A WEEK BUS PASS
- A MONTH'S BUS PASS