

District Councillor's Update for Blockley Parish Council, February 2024

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

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1. Update on EV charging points in the District

Cabinet lead's response to a question about progress on EV installation:

"The first phase of planned EV installations included replacement of old EVCP units at Beeches car park, Cirencester and Old Market Way car park, Moreton in Marsh. These were completed in 2022. New units were also planned for Rissington Road car park, Bourton on the Water and Trinity Road, Cirencester. Each site will have 4 charging units giving the ability to charge 8 vehicles at one time. The below ground civil engineering works to install cabling for the EVCPs at Rissington Road was undertaken last year as part of the wider car park improvement works. The below ground cabling was installed at Trinity Road in December. For both these projects we are now waiting on a connection date from SSEN. Overall, we are disappointed in the delays due to the contractor, Connected Kerb.

We are also progressing grant applications to seek funding for additional car park sites to support our plans to provide a wider charging infrastructure across the Cotswolds and encourage electric vehicle ownership. The replacement units were installed as per quoted prices in 2022. The new units at Rissington Road and Trinity Road have actually reduced in cost since the original Cabinet report was considered as a new supplier was appointed who provided a better price.

Energy costs have an impact on the price charged to the customer, as the Council needs to pass on rising electricity costs. A model for the fee calculation was agreed by Cabinet which means the price to the customer can be changed to reflect changes in the costs of providing the service."

2. Second homes/holiday homes – possible future changes in the District.

Cabinet member for finance's response to a question about second homes in the Cotswolds: *"A project to review holiday homes which are registered for non-domestic rates and receive a domestic waste collection service has been commissioned as part of the Environmental Services Innovation Programme (ESIP). A discovery to assess the number of business premises and scale will start in April and is scheduled to be completed in June. Options will then be presented to Members for consideration.*

The Government reviewed the eligibility criteria for second homes that have been subject to Business Rates rather than Council Tax. From April 2023, second homeowners have to prove holiday lets are being rented out for a minimum of 70 days a year to access small business rates relief, where they meet the criteria. Holiday let owners will have to provide evidence such as the website or brochure used to advertise the property, letting details and receipts.

Properties will also have to be available to be rented out for 140 days a year to qualify for this relief.

As far as Council Tax is concerned, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act, passed into law in October 2023, would allow Councils to charge a council tax premium on second homes of up to an additional 100%, and also allows a premium to be charged on homes that remain empty after one year (rather than the current minimum two-year period).

The Council would need to provide 12 months notice of its intention to charge a premium on second homes. A report will come forward to Cabinet and Council in March 2024 outlining the administration's proposals on Council Tax premiums, although we are still waiting for detailed guidance from the Government on exactly which properties would be eligible. I understand that a number of the Gloucestershire Districts have indicated they intend to charge a premium on second homes from April 2025"

3. The **Local Plan** consultation is now in progress and there is an event for parish councillors on Thursday 22nd February from 6:00 to 8:00pm at Moreton Area Centre, High Street, Moreton-in-Marsh, GL56 0AZ and a **public drop in session on Wednesday 6th March from 10am until 8pm at the Redesdale Hall, High Street, Moreton-in-Marsh, GL56 0AX**
The consultation closes on Sunday 24th March.

4. Casework

I've been doing lots of pot hole reporting and some temporary works seem to be in progress on Lower Street (the clerk's update includes more on the longer term plans).

I've also been following up on planning enforcement issues, including responding to resident concerns in Draycott, working with Ebrington Parish Council on an enforcement notice that still hasn't been acted upon by a developer and a new issue towards Ditchford.

5. Coming up

I'm currently reviewing all the budget documentation in readiness for the Budget meeting next week.

The latest fund of Crowdfund Cotswold has been launched and there's an online workshop to find out more scheduled for 12 noon on 22/02/23. You can sign up here: [Crowdfund Cotswold Spring24- Project Creator Workshop Tickets, Thu 22 Feb 2024 at 12:00 | Eventbrite](#) and find out more about existing projects here:

<https://www.spacehive.com/movement/crowdfundcotswold>

I am happy to support any residents or community groups who would like help with a project or idea that needs funding.