

## District Councillor's Update for Blockley Parish Council, March 2025

Residents can contact me, Clare Turner, at [Clare.Turner@cotswold.gov.uk](mailto:Clare.Turner@cotswold.gov.uk)

### Privacy Statement

As a Councillor I may need to collect personal data to process constituents' requests for assistance or respond to their enquiries. As a Councillor I will only collect the personal data from constituents that is needed to provide them with relevant information, services or support. I will not give information about you to anyone else or use information about you for any other purpose, unless the law allows me to. Further privacy information see our Councillor Privacy Notice <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/support/privacy-and-data/service-privacy-notice/councillors-privacy-notice/>

1. **Joe Harris has resigned** as leader of Cotswold District Council, with effect from May. He will continue to represent his ward in Cirencester and the Liberal Democrat group will undertake a selection process to choose his successor. <https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news/cotswold-district-council-leader-to-stand-down-after-six-years-in-role>
2. There will be a **Homes and Interiors festival** on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2025. <https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news/cotswold-homes-and-interiors-festival-returns-to-cirencester>
3. The **Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT)** is already showing some success with the first communications campaign identifying pension-age residents entitled to, but not claiming, Pension Credit. The campaign has delivered:
  - £68,545 in annual Pension Credit
  - £15,079 in backdated payments
  - £4,400 in Winter Fuel PaymentsThe lifetime benefit to this group of people is estimated to exceed £400,000 and further success has also been seen since the publication of this good news story: <https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news/cotswold-district-council-helps-vulnerable-residents-secure-over-gbp-88-000-of-unclaimed-benefits>
4. The **Overview and Scrutiny** committee review the performance of the Council on a quarterly basis and I raised concerns about the Key Performance Indicator's (KPI) used to judge the performance of our waste collection service at the last meeting. New KPI's are being explored and it has been confirmed that repeated missed bins (3 reports from a resident) will automatically be escalated for investigation. While useful, this does not fulfil what is needed in my view and I will continue to pursue this matter, if additional KPI's (that accurately reflect the user experience) are not forthcoming.
5. The first meeting of the **Moreton Working Group**, designed to input in development issues for Moreton-in-Marsh, has been deferred again (due to the County Elections) and via Overview and Scrutiny I requested that the meeting be brought forward rather than delaying it, but to no avail. The provisional date circulated for the first meeting of the working group is 10<sup>th</sup> June 2025.
6. In the full council meeting of 19/03/25, we were presented with a motion relating to **Inheritance Tax reform and its impact on the farming community**. A second motion was promptly moved to refer the issue to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and while I am pleased the impact on farmers in our area will be explored in detail through this route, it was disappointing to miss an opportunity to express our concerns and show our support for farmers, immediately. My views are as follows:

*"Right now, many farming families in our District and beyond are facing uncertainty, fear, and frustration over the proposed changes.*

*Most people would agree that tax loopholes shouldn't allow the wealthiest to use farmland as a financial shelter, driving up land prices and locking out young and new farmers. But we must recognize the vital role that family farms play in producing our food, supporting our rural economy, and caring for*

our natural environment. Any changes to inheritance tax must strike the right balance—preventing exploitation while protecting those who genuinely work the land.

*Through food production and land management, we depend on the farming community to deliver a whole range of positive outcomes for our health and well-being, and for the environment. The introduction of the inheritance tax reform has undermined constructive conversations between the government and farmers on critical issues such as food production, job generation, climate change, and biodiversity protection. We need to invest in the future of farming, not undermine it and should strive for a tax system that is fair, transparent, and supports the long-term sustainability of British agriculture.”*

The official CDC press release can be found here: <https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news/council-seeking-to-force-inheritance-tax-rethink-by-building-robust-case-for-local-farmers>

7. We also recognised **Unsung Heroes** at the full council meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025. I was pleased to nominate the Chipping Campden Repair Cafe volunteers for an unsung heroes award this month (see below) and delighted that Michael Smedley was able to collect the award in person at our full Council meeting this evening.

<https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/.../honouring-marches-unsung...>

You can nominate your unsung hero here: <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/unsungheroes>

Here's my nomination:

*"I am nominating Michael for his sterling work at St James' Church Repair Cafe in Chipping Campden. Michael leads a very successful repair cafe which is a welcoming place to call in for a cuppa and connect with the community, saves countless items from heading to landfill by repairing or renewing them, saves the community of users money and extends the life of much loved items that residents do not wish to part with.*

*The social and environmental benefits of the cafe are significant and the services offered are highly valued by many local residents. Because the volunteers involved donate their time and skills, they offer residents an avenue for repair/renewing items that would often be financially prohibitive otherwise. This enables people to preserve and restore items of personal significance/emotional value and has a positive impact on the environment by reducing the need to buy new items (with an associated carbon footprint).*

*The repair process is often collaborative, so that users of the repair cafe can learn how to repair and maintain items themselves or understand how and where to obtain replacement parts.*

*All the volunteers involved in the cafe deserve to be recognised. There are a team (including children) who welcome attendees and serve them with tea and homemade cakes, repairers who diligently and patiently try all possible avenues to extend the life of items as well as those undertaking work behind the scenes to keep the cafe running. Michael publishes regular updates on the work of the cafe in local media and promotes the repair cafe through a number of different channels. Every town and village should have access to a repair cafe."*

8. A second round of repatriation of staff from **Publica** to CDC has been agreed and will be completed in July. The services concerned are
- Property and Estates
  - Waste and Recycling
  - Leisure Contract Management
  - Project management
  - Linkline/Careline

Some councillors raised concern about the costs associated with this. The full report and other paperwork relating to the meeting can be found here:

<https://meetings.cotswold.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1154&MId=2316>

9. **Holiday and Food Activities (HAF)** bookings go live on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2025 and can be viewed here: <https://gloucestershirehaf.com/cotswold-district-haf/>

To sign up to the Children's Activity Booking system (CABs) visit:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/haf/>

Family support is also available through CDC's Community Connectors, Bloodhound Education, as part of the Spring Holiday Activity and Food Programme 2025. They are on hand to help with booking activities and signposting families to other agencies where a need has been identified.

To get in touch with Bloodhound Education, please email [accounts@bloodhoundeducation.com](mailto:accounts@bloodhoundeducation.com) or phone 0208 150 3767 (Monday to Friday, 9:30am - 2:30pm).

For support with transport to activities, please check out The Robin bookable bus service: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/transport/the-robin/>

10. Applications for funding through the Government's **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)** for the 2025/26 financial year are open until 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025. This is open to businesses, community groups and other organisations. I've shared it with a number of local groups and forwarded it to Northwick Business Park but please feel free to share widely as the deadline is looming.

The council is seeking projects that can boost the local economy, enhance community well-being, or create new opportunities in the Cotswolds, with a deadline of 28<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

The innovative and impactful projects should align with one or more of the following investment priorities:

- **Communities and Place:** Enhancing public spaces, cultural offerings, and community facilities.
- **Support for Local Business:** Helping businesses grow, innovate, and become more sustainable.
- **People and Skills:** Boosting employability, skills development, and access to job opportunities.

11. I've been undertaking lots of new **casework** since the last Blockley Parish Council meeting, supporting residents with waste, planning, highways, housing and other issues.
12. I attended the "**Thrive and Drive**" event in Cirencester and was impressed with the support available for residents able to pay for energy efficient measures, via Furbnow and MakeMyHouseGreen. More information here: <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/>

The CDC website has also been updated with improved **guidance for residents around retrofit** on traditional and listed buildings: <https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/planning-and-building/historic-buildings-and-conservation-areas/retrofit-and-energy-efficiency/>