

**MINUTES OF BROOKTHORPE-WITH-WHADDON
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD AT BROOKTHORPE VILLAGE HALL ON
TUESDAY 6 MAY 2025 AT 7.00PM**

Present: Cllr Paul Gaze (Chair)
Cllr Eric Hibbert
Cllr Rhodri Stokes-Rhys
Cllr Kirk Walton

In attendance: Tina Balgobin (Clerk) Reporting
Cllr Demelza Turner-Wilkes (District Councillor)
Cllr John Patient (County Councillor)
2 Members of the Public

1. APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received and accepted from County Councillor Susan Williams and Cllr John Hendry.

2. TO RECEIVE THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORT:

County Councillor Susan Williams tendered her apologies and sent the following report:

“This past year has seen many changes in positions of senior members and officers. In July 2024, after 14 years, Cllr Mark Hawthorne announced that he would be standing down as Leader of the Council and Cllr Stephen Davies took over the role in Sept 2024 also in February this year Jo Walker was announced as the new CEO for GCC. Replacing Pete Bungard who has now retired from his role as CEO . Pete had been chief executive since 2007. Jo is joining Gloucestershire County Council from North Somerset Council where she was Chief executive, a role she held for the past six years. Jo started her career at Gloucestershire County Council as a graduate trainee and worked her way up to become Director of Highways, Transport and Waste and then Director of Finance and Corporate Services, before leaving to become Chief Executive at North Somerset Council.

Budget set for 25/26: *Members of the council approved a really positive budget for the new financial year. The council reported that it was in a good financial position and was able to continue supporting all existing services as well as making significant investments across the county. Due to some strong financial management over recent years, I am able to say that Gloucestershire county council remain financially stable and that the spending plans for next year include a net increase of £32.7 million compared to last year. This means that GCC can continue to be ambitious in their plans for the years ahead, which include significant investment in our priority areas. The spending plans set out in the budget documents demonstrates that as a financially stable council, whilst not being immune to the pressures faced by other councils, GCC can take a more positive approach to tackling them. The spending plans for 2025/26 saw spending rise by more than £48.2 million on 2024/25 levels, to over £665 million. The budget included significant investment into the council's priority areas of Highways, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), Adult Services, Infrastructure, and the Environment. An ongoing £10 million towards delivering on the council's £100 million four-year commitment to go on improving Gloucestershire roads, with a greater focus in 2025/26 on tackling rural roads. A total £22.2 million towards increasing capacity and improving school buildings and facilities of schools across the county, including £12.8 million towards a new 200 place special school. Young people with SEND and their families will be supported with an extra £2.1 million. £7.5 million towards the future construction of three new adult care homes is being set aside in 2025/26, with further investment planned in future years. Household Waste Recycling Centres in the county will see improvements with a £1.3 million injection. The budget will raise £20.3 million to help fund services through a council tax increase of 2.99 per cent. It would also see £7.9 million raised specifically to support work with the most vulnerable adults in the county through a further 2 per cent increase in the adult social care precept. There were*

a number of amendments to the budget proposed, with those listed below being agreed and therefore adopted as part of the council's spending plans for 2025/26.

There were also approved one-off budget amendments that were also agreed:

- £100,000 to support the expansion of the successful waterscapes natural flood management project, through a grant to Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust (Green)
- £60,000 as funding to the eight Community Libraries (£7,500 per library) towards repair, maintenance and energy efficiency upgrades in their buildings e.g. LED lighting
- £50,000 to increase the council's budgeted contribution to the Greener Gloucestershire Climate Action Fund,
- £50,000 to set up one or two Libraries of Things within Gloucestershire, following the successful example of Charlton Kings Library
- £50,000 to extend the term of the popular free bus pass initiative for veterans
- £60,000 to engage a part-time coordinator to manage the master composter volunteers and promote community composting initiatives.
- £50,000 to support a feasibility study considering the implementation of community car clubs in the county, following the successful rollout across Oxfordshire
- £500,000 towards a flood alleviation fund
- £430,000 towards targeted youth services

GCC have a renewed focus on transformation and improvement right across the council and plans in place that will mean it will be able to continue this approach in future years. When setting the level of funding provided to councils, the central Government assumes that councils will apply an increase to council tax and to the adult care precept. Therefore, next year GCC are proposing to increase council tax by 2.99%, raising £16.5 million to help fund vital services and will apply a 2% increase to the adult precept to raise £7.8 million specifically to support work with the most vulnerable adults in the county. This will see the GCC proportion of council tax bills increase by £6.65 per month for a band D property. The County element of your Council Tax has increased by 5.99%. This is not an accident it is the result of hard work and attention to detail.

Gloucestershire county council Highways: Over the past year, GCC Highways have purchased new equipment and put in place new systems, particularly "Fix my Street" which automate the reporting of potholes but also allows members of the public to track the progress of any resolution. Highways also introduced "Find and fix" gangs as well as introducing the common-sense policy of not only fixing the serious safety defect pothole but also those in close proximity that will need fixing shortly, known as "Pothole plus." This has resulted in 90,000 potholes being fixed which is 10,000 more than last year, and twice the year before. GCC have also resurfaced over 100 miles of roads which is the correct long-term solution to potholes and is part of our £100m additional investment in Highways. The major improvements are progressing well along the 419, particularly around the Air Balloon section and towards Cirencester. In the Painswick division Cranham main road was resurfaced which has made a considerable difference, Portway is also planned to be resurfaced in June. The speed in the Pitchcombe area has been reduced to 40mph. This has taken the community 20yrs to achieve and I am pleased that I was able to facilitate this during my period as their county councillor. The road will become 40mph on 7th May. The cameras will note those driving over the speed limit and report to police. Pitchcombe also had a wall replaced at a cost of £32,000. This was to reinforce the road above the wall, rebuild the wall and replant the hedge above.

A Greener Gloucestershire: On Climate Change the County published an update to its plan and continuing an ambitious tree planting program having already planted 500,000 trees. GCC have installed Solar Panels on Shire Hall, the Coroners Court and 6 schools with another 6 announced. Arle Court Transport Hub has now been completed, and the council have secured £8m for Bus Improvements including Zero Emission Buses. This improves the infrastructure and expand the Robin, dial a ride service.

Children's services: Children's Services have had an Inspection of GCC Care Leavers Program which was very positive and is evidence of their continued improvement.

Adult Social Care: Adult Social care had a CQC inspection, which is a new approach to inspection, and was found to be "Requires Improvement." However there have been progress since the Inspection last September. £57m has been announced for 3 new Care Homes that will focus on rehabilitation as well as accommodation for the elderly. This along with the focus on Tech Enabled Care will assist people to stay in their own homes which most people prefer.

Unitary Councils: The Government has asked all 2 Tier Councils to become a Unitary, and then to look to join a Combined Mayoral Authority with neighbouring Councils to oversee infrastructure development. In the letter to the Minister Gloucestershire outlined three options:

- A single Gloucestershire along the lines of the existing County Boundary (co-terminus with the Police and NHS,)

- A split into two Unitaries, East and West, which has a management overhead of £9m additional cost with no additional services.
- There has also been a suggestion of Greater Gloucester with a Doughnut around it, but it is difficult to see this option progressing.

These options will be submitted in more detail in November to the Minister who will then make the decision. On completion of this process there will then be the opportunity to create a Combined Mayoral Authority, which could be Worcestershire / Herefordshire, Oxfordshire / Swindon or join the existing West of England Combined Authority. The results of the local elections on the 1st May will have an impact on this. I would like to thank the clerks to council and councillors for their support over the past 4 years. It has been an honour to serve my community as county councillor. I have also been fortunate to have represented my county at national level and promoted our county at National level”

The Chair congratulated and welcomed John Patient to his new role of County Councillor.

Cllr Kirk Walton arrived at the meeting at this point:

3. TO RECEIVE THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT:

District Councillor Demelza Turner-Wilkes gave the following report:

“The last SDC Full Council Meeting was held on the 10th April 2025. The minutes are currently not available online but will be available via the link below.

<https://stroud.moderngov.co.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=143&Year=0>

Unitary is still progressing as part of tier 2. The elections for the first phase of County Councillors was held on May 1st 2025. SDC has generated some information online and this can be found using the below link,

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/local-government-reorganisation-and-devolution/>

On the 12th February an announcement was made by Stroud District Council to confirm the latest correspondence from the Inspector regarding the Local Plan. A link to the inspector’s letter can be found here.

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/qsbb4fjl/id-018-stroud-dlp-letter-from-inspectors-07-february2025.pdf>

There has since been a letter (dated 9th April) in response from the inspectors and this can be found here,

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/ri1jzwyx/id-019-stroud-dlp-letter-from-inspectors-09-april-2025.pdf>

The process can be found using this link.

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/planning-and-building-control/planning-strategy/stroud-district-local-plan-review/local-plan-examination/>

This page also shows the updates from the process. Small household batteries and vapes will be collected as part of Stroud District Council’s waste collection service from Tuesday 6 May. All details can be found using this link

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/news/were-now-collecting-batteries-and-vapes-weekly-heres-what-to-do/>

6. TO RECEIVE THE PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN REPORT:

Cllr Paul Gaze read out the following report on behalf of the Parish Council Chairman:

“Firstly - A thank you to Anne Szabo, our clerk of 21 years who retired from the position in November last year. A huge thank you to the parish council members, Eric, Paul and Rhodri for their regular attendance at the monthly meetings, on the first Tuesday of the month, and a warm welcome to Kirk, who was adopted onto the council last month.

Thank you particularly to the following for their past and continued support – Our New Clerk – Tina Balgobin, Who we appointed in November, is doing a sterling job and who has an excellent knowledge of local Council matters.

County Councillor – Sue Williams who is in regular contact with the parish council through her monthly reports, but who we would like to see at our monthly meetings more regularly.

District Councillor - Demelza Turner-Wilkes who has been a breath of fresh air, her commitment to local matters is unquestionable and her actions on our behalf have been exceptional.

Local Police - For their support in dealing with a number of incidents, for conducting speed monitoring in the village, which we trust will continue and particularly PCSO Nicola Wood who has been very active, particularly with regard to EBR25.

Nigel Bone – For the continued distribution of information to parishioners, and his involvement and reports on the condition of St Swithuns church.

Paul Gaze - For representing the council with regards to the village hall, all his support as Vice Chairman, and all that he unselfishly contributes to the village.

Martin Coles - For his outstanding work and commitment lobbying SDC, GCC, planners and Developers regarding Whaddon Fields. Without his hard work and hours and hours preparing emails on behalf of the Parish Council we would not have been able to cope with the continued onslaught of changing information.

Village Warden – Who I would like to see at a meeting at some point.

The last year has been a challenging year for the Parish Council. With some meetings having to move due to councillors work or personal commitments. I am hopeful now with the appointment of Kirk, that will no longer be required. We still have one vacancy and ask anyone who has a couple of hours a month to spare and is interested in this wonderful parish to make themselves known to Tina or myself.

Financial Situation: I am not going into details of the finances here as this will be dealt with by Tina when she gives her report later. But would like to point out that the Precept for 2025/2026 has been set at £16,540, an increase of only 3% from last year, and still lower than the £18,300 set the year before.

Planning: We have dealt with some 14 planning applications last year. SDC as with the year before continue continued to be supportive and appear to be taking our views into consideration when dealing with planning applications. We do however continue to have major issues when it comes to SDC enforcement actions, some of which are taking longer than a year to be reported back to us and remain unresolved. One success story is the re opening of the bridal path EBR25 at Naas Lane, which has taken several years to get action and was finally cleared at the end of last year. Thank you to all who were involved in the multi agency meetings to get this resolved. However reports earlier this month indicate that fly tipping at the end of this means that it is once again blocked.

Last year we were having increasing issues with construction traffic coming up from J12 of the M5 through Haresfield and Brookthorpe to access the new housing development at Matson. After discussions with the site and lobbying different departments, additional signage regarding the 7.5 tonne weight limit zone has been erected, and the number of incidents is currently greatly reduced. While on the subject of Upton Lane, this has, after many years of complaints, now been re surfaced, I hope that the residents and users of this road appreciate this and there has been a reduction in car damage from pot-holes in this area. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for Haresfield Lane which is becoming more and more damaged. Only last week I had to replace a spring which had broken after hitting one of these. I am hopeful that repair work is imminent as they have now sprayed white paint round the majority of these – which I trust indicates that repairs are planned. We through the efforts of Martin Coles, have been in regular communication with both SDC and GCC, and the planning authorities regarding the possible major housing development at Whaddon Fields. Planning for the 3000 homes has now been submitted. We understood that this would not be until the Stroud local plan was revised, re submitted and passed by the examiners. Unfortunately the resubmission was again rejected. In this state of flux we here and our neighbouring councils are at great risk of multiple small applications being submitted and house building creeping along lanes out of Gloucester. As recently as March we had a presentation from a Planning consultant who was considering an application for 250 houses on Naas Lane. Their modelling and plans for the railway bridge came under scrutiny, but until the actual plans go in we cannot officially comment.

We are not the only council with serious concerns regarding house development, particularly without any infrastructure to support it. Only last month Rhodri and I attended a meeting with councillors from Hunts Grove, Hardwick, and Quedgeley. It has been suggested though not yet voted on by the individual councils, that these meetings become formalised, to share information, lobby our MP's together and possibly share the costs of any future actions, and publications to highlight our joint concerns and frustrations.

At the next council meeting there will be a proposal to join this 'Gloucester Fringe Infrastructure Group' which I hope will be accepted.

Burglaries: Theft continues to be an issue affecting houses, out buildings, farms, and businesses, although police continue to report that our area has a low volume of incidents when looking at national statistics.

We will continue to advise the public of issues raised by local police alerts via email, and maintain a close working relationship with the Police.

In full time employment and with a growing family, my time on council activities is sometimes restricted, but I will continue to do my best to serve the community with the support of my fellow councillors."

Cllr Paul Gaze seconded the Chairman's thank you to the new clerk Tina who has stepped in and taken everything in hand.

Cllr Paul Gaze asked if the neighbourhood warden could attend some meetings. District Councillor Demelza Turner-Wilkes advised she would speak with Matt and invite him along.

It was agreed that Cllr Eric Hibbert would be the internal auditor for 2025/26.

7. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE VILLAGE HALL:

Cllr Paul Gaze advised of the following on behalf of the Village Hall Committee:

The secretary to the committee is stepping down and Lynda, Jill and Annie need more volunteers on the committee. A program of events is in place until the end of the year. The VE 80 anniversary celebrations took place on Sunday, the turnout could have been better but a few people attended. The heating has been updated and building works have been done. The windows and frames will be refurbished thanks to money received from grants the committee have secured.

Cllr Rhodri Stokes-Rhys arrived at the meeting at this point:

8. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM ST SWITHUNS CHURCH

Mr Nigel Bone gave a verbal update on the above which included the expenditure in the region of £1.3mn needed to restore the Church which has been identified as number 1 priority to be restored in the South-West. A carol service is being held for the first time since Covid.

9. TO RECEIVE A REPORT ON THE PROPOSED WHADDON FIELDS DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL PLAN:

Mr Martin Coles gave the following report:

"Taylor Wimpey planning application has been placed on hold by their agents pending the approval of the Stroud Local Plan. (We assume the same will apply with Wain Estates' site in Naas Lane.) The Plan itself is now held in abeyance pending the Planning Inspectors reply to the District Council's letter of the 3rd March demanding that the Public Examination be resumed. No reply had been sent as at the 22nd of April.

The main objections from the Inspectors are that there is no commitment, or funding, to complete the upgrades of Js 12 and 14 by 2041 and that the public transport proposals for Sharpness are not viable. In an attempt to resolve the impasse, the matter was raised to the PM by our MP, Geoffrey Clinton-Brown, resulting in the Housing Minister Matthew Pennycook arranging a meeting with Stroud MP Simon Opher. It is not yet known when that meeting will take place or how the government might intervene, whether by providing the funding or approving a Plan the Inspectors find unsound. Both unlikely.

Black Box Planning have recently said that no action has been taken by them or TW in the last year in response to the objections to the planning application, in particular regarding the St. Barnabas junction. Presumably, TW will respond to those objections before the planning application is finally determined. Even if the strategic road network concerns are satisfied the local road network issues still have to be resolved. The County is still waiting to hear from TW on their request for more information before making a final decision on support or otherwise. Importantly, in asking for the planning application to be deferred, Gloucester City have asked that the St. Barnabas issue be examined in the inspection of the Local Plan. That would be the best outcome for the Parish Council but not as yet taken up by the Inspectors. If they don't, then SDC may be left to rule on the St. Barnabas alterations relying on County Highways final decision.

English Heritage have however said that TW's transport agents TPA are in fact responding to their objections over the transport hub and it is hoped that TW will agree to instruct a Local Visibility Impact Assessment, hopefully leading to the hub being re-sited.

In the meantime Highways England have placed Holding Declarations on the strategic planning applications affecting the M5, including Whaddon.

Finally, one major issue has not been discussed. The Draft Local Plan does not accommodate the new

government housing targets. Currently, the Council is required to revise that Plan once approved to increase the housing completions from 12,000 to 16,000 units. So, even if the Draft Plan is approved another should follow almost immediately. How this can be done with the current infrastructure issues is a matter of speculation.”

10. TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS FROM PARISHIONERS:

Mr Nigel Bone asked for an agenda item to discuss merging Brookthorpe with Whaddon Parish Council and Harescombe Parish Council. The clerk advised that it would be added to the June Agenda for further consideration.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS
THE MEETING CLOSED AT 7.49pm**

Signed: Dated: