

## **BOURTON VALE WARD**

### **Ward Member Report to Temple Guiting Parish Council**

May 2021 TO APRIL 2022

Reviewing last years Annual Report there was, of course, focus on the Pandemic – well – not much has changed! A constant theme has, however, been the continuing community spirit and support of our village structures.

The Parish Councillors and, not least, the Parish Clerks are to be hugely commended on the time and energy they spend keeping the show on the road and representing residents at a local level.

A shining example is the work of the Quarries Working Group, spearheaded by Temple Guiting Parish Council. Through the Group's unstinting efforts there is now significant progress in making sure that not only Gloucestershire County Council, responsible for the minerals planning and policy but Cotswold District Council and most recently Tewkesbury Borough Council have been included in an effort to provide an overarching review of all the activities at the local quarries cluster leading hopefully to a Cumulative Environmental Impact Assessment. This will widen the consideration of quarries' activities to the impact of the use of the unsuitable local roads by increasing numbers of large trucks and the effects of noise, air pollution and the impact generally on the aims and aspirations of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

#### **The Budget**

The recently adopted 2022/2023 Budget records a net budget requirement for CDC of £12,595,218.

The Conservative Group of District Councillors did not vote in favour concerned over the lack of detail and clarity over proposed borrowing planned by the Administration (see below).

The effect to residents in increased costs includes:

- Council Tax increases of 2% (£5 for a band D property)
- Green Bin licence increased to £47 each bin.
- Car Park charges further increased by 5% above last years 30% rise. (see further comment below)

- Free after 3 parking concession scrapped.

### **Planned spending**

- Borrowing £75 million of capital investment to invest, as approved in September 2020. Investment is profiled as £35 million in 2022/23, £20 million in 2023/24 and £20 million in 2024/25.
- £350,000 to fund the Investment Strategy to include:
  1. specialist skills and expert advice on investment strategy;
  2. training to build skills and knowledge fit for the new working environment created by Covid-19.
  3. enabling the production of new truly green energy supplies in the district.
  4. deliver additional social housing.
- £400,000 for investment in feasibility studies and other work to support the provision of social housing built to carbon zero.
- Over £900,000 has been spent on consultations so far, another £629,000 planned.

### **Parking.**

Following on from the previous year's increase in parking charges (+30%), this year brought the news that the option to pay cash at Cotswolds car parks was to be removed (in stages through this coming year) and payment could only be made through an 'app' on a smart phone or by card. Given that some 9,000 adults in the Cotswolds don't have a smart phone and 72% of all payments in 2019 were cash, this will not be popular with many residents.

## **Administration.**

Over recent months there have been major changes in the senior management at the Council, with Nigel Adams (Head of Paid Service with 28 year's service) and Bhavna Patel (Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal Services) have both left (at a cost of £330,000) to be replaced with a new Chief Executive – Robert Weaver and an interim Monitoring Officer. The Deputy Leader and Chief Financial Officer, Jenny Poole, has recently tendered her resignation and will be leaving the Council in July. A replacement is being sought.

An additional 8 people have been recruited to fill various positions to deliver manifesto promises.

In addition, there have been a number of other changes made to the Council's Constitution.

- The Community Grant scheme has been replaced by 'Spacehive', a crowd funding platform (costing £30,000 p.a.).
- Removal of the Ward Member's ability to automatically refer planning applications to the Planning Committee where considered appropriate. (This particular decision is causing a considerable amount of annoyance to effected Parishes and is the subject of ongoing discussion.)
- A new additional crest for the Council, designed for use on social media and new road signage including the crest and the parish's name. These being part of a £200,000 'Civic Pride' scheme.
- A new fly-tipping reporting tool has made this a much easier process and there has been a substantial increase in the numbers being reported.

## **Wider issues**

At a national level there are two matters that are undergoing consultation and will be debated over the coming months that will impact on the District.

### **1. The Boundary Commission**

The Boundary Commission is charged with maintaining electoral equality between local government boundaries. The current proposal is to create two constituencies: Cirencester and North Wiltshire with 72,965 electors – CDC are

proposing this be called South Cotswolds; and, The Cotswolds with 73,242 electors – CDC are proposing this be renamed North Cotswolds.

The consultation process will continue for some months.

## **2. National Park v Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.**

The Government has initiated a national consultation to consider the allocation of National Parks and whether current AONBs should become National Parks. There are many issues to be considered but as one of the most extensive AONBs covering virtually all of the Cotswold District Council area this will become a much-debated matter.