

Clerk's Report for

Monday 6th November to Friday 15th December 2023

(Points numbered according to the minutes of the last meeting, 1st November 2023.)

5. **Clerk contacted school** re Build Back Better funds.
8. **Minutes.** Clerk posted the previous minutes to the website and the noticeboards and circulated to distribution list.
9. Clerk sent lease info to VH trustees.
10. Clerk posted positive comments for 23/02562/FUL Ford Hill Farm barn refurbishment.

Other

Clerk contacted Mark MacKenzie Charrington re possible grant towards a further VAS. No response to date.

Clerk contacted GCC Highways re: blocked gullies and grips in Temple Guiting.

Clerk researched Neighbourhood Development Planning background.

Clerk contact WASP to confirm interest in their free water testing equipment.

Clerk researched .gov.uk domain name and email costs.

Information for the meeting on January 3rd 2024

Item 5 - Chairman's announcements – Roles and responsibilities. [This NALC document](#) describes how parish councils carry out business. It includes clear information about the roles of councillors and clerks and how they work together to achieve the council's aims.

Item 12 – Water testing.

Objective: The objectives of this testing are to establish the quality of the water of the River Windrush within the TGPC boundaries. This will provide information as to whether the river could support more biodiversity. Further work would need to be approved to establish how to deliver increased biodiversity.

Scope of work: Currently three sites have been proposed, all on land owned by councillors. WASP (Windrush Against Sewage Pollution) can make tests available at no cost. Training in taking and reading the results can also be provided.

Schedule: One set of tests should take place in winter and another in early summer to measure any changes.

Resources: Several councillors have expressed an interest. It may be useful to form a working party with a chair to organise activities.

Risks:

Safety: WASP will be able to advise on risks as they would supervise the testing.

Financial: There is no financial risk as no costs are envisaged at this stage.

Reputation: TGPC 's reputation for caring about the parish's biodiversity, in line with its policy which is in response to its statutory duty to consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. (2021 Environment Act, town and parish council roles clarified 17 May 2023).

Costs: No budget or funding has been allocated as no costs are currently envisaged.

Item 9 - Neighbourhood plan

There is a comprehensive website with examples and advice at [this location](#). There is a helpful 'roadmap' for writing a Neighbourhood Development Plan [here](#). The site also includes a map of 'champions' – people who have been through the process and are happy to help others. The nearest are in GL3, OX17 and 24.

The process starts with an 'Expression of Interest' which decides whether you qualify or not (TGPC does). Then there's an application form for a grant of up to £10,000, with guidance notes [here](#). The current grant programme ends in March 2024 and you have to have used all the money by then or give it back. But you are then free to apply for a further grant which would bring the total amount up to £10,000. SLLC has confirmed that that a further funding round is likely to be announced early in 2024 so there would in theory be funds for TGPC to continue the work.

There are also grants for individual technical sections of a Neighbourhood Plan of up to £8000 each.

The guide notes that involving someone with significant planning experience can be very helpful. Is there someone like that in the parish?

The [Cotswold District Council website](#) also has a lot of useful information including a list of all the neighbourhood plans currently approved and those in progress. There is also information about [green space designation](#), including this: *'As Local Green Space designation means that development is highly unlikely to be permitted on a site, there is a strong possibility that land owners and others will challenge the designation. To meet that challenge the designation must be based on solid evidence that the site meets the relevant criteria. This will be easier to demonstrate if the checklist in this toolkit is completed and the relevant evidence provided.'*

Item 10 - .gov.uk websites and email addresses

It is already a 'preferred' requirement on the auditor's checklist, that PCs own a .gov.uk domain and all councillors use the related .gov.uk email addresses for council work. This is likely to change to a requirement in the near future. Government has to approve the assignment of a .gov.uk domain. It has a standard charge of £100 + VAT for the first 2 years (£61 for subsequent 2 year renewals). Fasthosts charges a further £9 to register and hold the domain name. GoDaddy charges £109 per 2 years, then £61 per two years thereafter. Email hosting varies - £4.22 /£7.05/£14.14 +VAT per month per address depending on size of mailbox. Note: GoDaddy is not only a .gov.uk provider listed as 'green' i.e. using sustainable energy. Fasthosts, the local domain name and webservice provider, is not included in that list, nor does it provide .gov.uk addresses.

Item 11 – Model Biodiversity policy

RESPONSE TO THE BIODIVERSITY DUTY

30 October 2023

INTRODUCTION - STATUTORY DUTY

Under the 2021 Environment Act, public authorities (including town and parish councils) operating in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Government guidance published on 17 May 2023 clarifies that, as a public authority, town and parish councils must:

- consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree policies and specific objectives based on their consideration.
- act to deliver their policies and achieve their objectives.

Town and parish councils, unlike other authorities, are not obliged to publish a report on their actions, but the [Government guidance](#) requires all public authorities to complete their first consideration of what action to take for biodiversity by 1 January 2024. They must agree their policies and objectives as soon as possible after this and must reconsider the selected actions within five years of completing their previous consideration, or more frequently if they choose.

To comply with the guidance, town and parish councils could as a minimum:

- have biodiversity as an agenda item for a meeting before the end of 2023.
- note what action they are already taking to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- agree what further steps they should take to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Such steps may include:

- reviewing what biodiversity or nature recovery plans are already in place from other local authorities, e.g. potential for jointly-supported wildlife corridors.
- making contact with local voluntary groups working on nature conservation.
- carrying out a biodiversity audit of council landholdings and/or the whole council area, potentially involving residents in a “[BioBlitz](#)”
- gathering expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity, such as from [Caring for God's Acre](#) and the [Eco Church initiative](#) in respect of churchyards
- drafting an action plan that covers action that the council will take itself as well as support for the actions of other local bodies.

Whatever action is agreed, as a minimum local councils could ensure they address biodiversity concerns when commenting on planning applications.

All these steps may inform an agreed biodiversity policy for which a model example is attached. Guidance for town and parish councils on developing a [local nature action plan](#) has been published by South Gloucestershire Council, as well as a [field guide](#) for those with little or no ecological background.

The list of actions to include in the agreed policy is here. Please read through and decide which you would want the council to support or continue to support.

s by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021, **[insert council name]** (hereinafter referred to as the Council) which has any functions exercisable in relation to England

must from time to time consider what action the authority can properly take, consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective. This duty also means that town and parish councils can spend funds in conserving biodiversity.

DEFINITION

According to Defra (Biodiversity 2020), biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants – everything that is alive on our planet. Biodiversity is important for its own sake and has its own intrinsic value. A number of studies have shown this value also goes further. Biodiversity is the building block of our 'ecosystems' that in turn provide us with a wide range of goods and services that support our economic and social wellbeing. These include essentials such as food, fresh water and clean air, but also less obvious services such as protection from natural disasters, regulation of our climate, and purification of our water or pollination of our crops. Biodiversity also provides important cultural services, enriching our lives.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The object of this policy is to work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of the Council's area.

The Full Council and any committees of the Council will consider sustainability, environmental impact and biodiversity when making decisions and will develop and implement policies and strategies as required.

In particular, the Council will aim to improve the biodiversity of the area in the following ways:

- consider the potential impact on biodiversity represented by planning applications.
- manage its land and property using environmentally friendly practices that will promote biodiversity.
- support local businesses and council operations in the adoption of low impact / nature positive practices.
- encourage and support other organisations within the *parish / town* to manage their areas of responsibility with biodiversity in mind.
- support residents and local organisation activities to enhance and promote biodiversity.

ACTIONS

Planning applications

The Council will:

when commenting on planning applications, support site and building design that benefits biodiversity through the conservation and integration of existing habitats or provision of new habitats.

- support protection of sensitive habitats from development and will consider whether the development would mean the loss of important habitats for wildlife in respect of all applications.
- consider what each proposed development might make in terms of biodiversity net gain.
- include policies in support of biodiversity within the neighbourhood plan.

Land and property management

The Council will:

- carry out a biodiversity audit of its landholdings.
- consider the conservation and promotion of local biodiversity with regard to the management of its open spaces. This will include adopting beneficial practices with

regarding to cutting and removal of vegetation, application of chemicals and timing of maintenance work, paying attention to the Government's [regulations for plant protection products](#).

- take special care in the specification of grounds maintenance contracts to ensure that the work, whilst reaching acceptable standards, does not harm the natural environment.
- source sustainable materials when procuring supplies for the Council's use
- consider biodiversity issues and the implementation of changes when managing its buildings.

Local community

The Council will:

- raise public awareness of biodiversity issues, including through its website and newsletters.
- engage with local businesses and residents regarding biodiversity in the community and how members of the community can assist and make a difference.
- where feasible, involve the community in biodiversity projects on its land including for example tree planting, wildflower meadows, birdbox making.

Partners

The Council will work in partnership with other organisations to protect, promote and enhance biodiversity within the council area.

It will review any local nature recovery strategies, species conservation strategies, or protected site strategies in respect of local Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and consider how it may become more involved in implementing the strategies' recommendations.

MONITORING

This policy was adopted on **xx** (Minute reference **yy**) and will be reviewed in two years or sooner should legislation dictate / each year at the Annual Meeting. A summary of how the policy has been implemented will be published annually, with reference to the original biodiversity audit to show progress.

The draft model action plan can be found [here](#). Councillors should review these and decide which they would like the council to support or continue to support. The final document may be very different from the original.

Item 13 – Governance documents

Councillors should review the following documents and decide whether to accept them as they are or to propose changes for agreement by the Council:

- a. [Code of Conduct](#)
- b. [Complaints Policy](#)
- c. Model Publication Scheme
- d. Privacy notice

Councils are also now being encouraged to sign a 'pledge' of Civility and Respect'. If interested please read the [background materials](#) here and let the clerk know whether you would like to add this to the next agenda.

Item 14 – Savings and investment

The internal auditor for 2022 – 23 recommended that the council checks whether a better rate of interest can be achieved for the PC's deposit funds., while maintaining security and liquidity.

Lloyds, the bank where TGPC holds its current and savings accounts, is currently paying 1.35 % gross (1.31% AER) on the deposit account. The 'Easy Saver' account offers 1.4% on £1 – 25,000 and allows unlimited withdrawals. The benefit would be £3 (from £81 to £84) p.a. (based on a £6000 deposit).

Unity Trust Bank, an ethical bank which works with education, trade unions, charities, healthcare providers and hundreds of parish councils, is offering AER 2.77%, instant access, no minimum amount. There would be a CHAPS fee (£28) to transfer funds between the Lloyds current account and the UTB deposit account. If setting up a UTB current account the charges are £6 p.m. maintenance plus 0.50 or 0.60 per cash/cheque transaction. The benefit would be £85.20 p.a. (£166.20 - £81) based on a £6000 deposit, minus at least £72 in charges so very little benefit would result.

Charities Aid Foundation Bank (CAF Bank)

CAF Gold instant access account offers AER 2.52%. Other accounts require a minimum of £25,000 deposit. The account requires a current account and CAF Bank charges for the current account – £5 per month maintenance; plus 0.75p per £100 moved in or out. As above, the charges are likely to equal or exceed the benefit of switching to this account.

Co-operative bank is offering 2.65% AER , instant withdrawals, no minimum but must be linked to a Co-operative current account. There are no maintenance charges for a standard current account. Benefit would be £78 (£159 -£81) p.a.

CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund has a minimum deposit requirement of £25,000 so TGPC is not eligible.

Item 15 (b) Reconciliation

Temple Guiting Parish Council			
Bank Reconciliation			
Period 1 April 2023 to 12 December 2023			
Current account 02503759			
	Balance at 12 December 2023	7388.86	
Deposit account 07859616			
	Balance at 12 December 2023	5314.86	
Less outstanding cheques			0
Reconciled balance		12703.72	
Cashbook summary			
Opening balance 1 April 2023		16475.92	
Add receipts to date		13160.14	
Less payments to date			16932.34
Cashbook balance		12703.72	