

Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council

MINUTES of the MEETING **held on the Tuesday 12th April, 2022**

(These minutes remain in draft form until approved at the next meeting of the Council)

Parish Councillors Present:

Cllrs. Tony Matthews. Chairman,
Jo Smith, Helen Medcraft,
Bernadette Wood, Norman Snell,
William Acland, Mark Ogden,
Gwyn Roberts, Carole Roberts.

County Councillors Present:

Cllr. Graham Morgan.

District Councillors Present:

No District Councillors Present.

The Clerk – Roland Dowding.

Public Present:

No Public Present.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Beki Hoyland, Nicky Packer
Bernie O'Neill.

Standing Declarations of Interest

- (a) Ruspidge Memorial Hall - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. Matthews.
- (b) Soudley Village Hall - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. Ogden.
- (c) Soudley Village Hall - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. Woods.

RUSPIDGE WELFARE TRUST

Members were mindful that these items were considered and determined as trustees to the RWT.

4.1. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4.1. **APOLOGIES** received and recorded from absent members.

4.2. No declaration of personal or prejudicial interest declared.

4.3. **MINUTES** - the minutes of the council meeting held on the **8th of March, 2022** were **ACCEPTED** as a true record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

4.4. **MATTERS ARISING** - there were no matters arising from the minutes.

4.5. **DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORTS**

Report attached as an Appendix to these Minutes.

4.6. **COUNTY COUNCILLOR REPORTS**

Reports attached as an Appendix to these Minutes.

4.7. **PLANNING** – completed schedule is attached as an Appendix to these Minutes.
It was noted by the Parish Council that the ecology survey being conducted on Forest Lodge, St Whites Rd is taking rather a long time to complete.
The Parish Council expressed their gratitude to Cllr. Bernie O'Neill and Mr Seve Hardcastle for their action and support in upholding the public's concerns regarding the Forest Lodge application.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

- 4.8. Following report by the Treasurer the council **APPROVED** the accounts presented for payment totalling **£5,310.85**, this figure being inclusive of confidential expenditure.
- 4.9. **WEIGHT LIMIT SIGN** – At this time it is unknown who owns and has responsibility for the bridge adjoining Lower Soudley Rd to Soudley Village Hall. However, the Parish Council feel it prudent to investigate having a structural survey undertaken on the bridge. It was agreed to obtain a quote for the Parish Council to consider authorising said structural survey.
- 4.10. **CORRESPONDENCE** The council **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the following correspondence: The Parish Councillors accepted all relevant correspondence has been forwarded via email to all members.
- 4.11. **Next Meeting** - the next meeting of the council is to be held in the **Ruspidge Memorial Hall** at 7.00pm **Tuesday, 10th May, 2022**. The agenda deadline is **Tuesday, 3rd May, 2022**.
- 4.12. **Exclusion of the Press and the Public** - the council **RESOLVED** that for any remaining business of a confidential nature the press and the public should be excluded from the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 10.xi (2020).

The meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.

Signed: Chair. Dated:

APPENDIX

Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council

Planning Schedule for the February, 2022 meeting.

Planning Reference
Site Address & Detail

Parish
Comment

No Planning Applications Submitted This Month.

Decisions notified by the Planning Authority

Planning Reference
Site Address & Detail

Parish
Comment

District
Decision

Date

P0145/22/TPO

13 Abbots View Ruspidge Cinderford Gloucestershire
GL14 3EG

Beech tree T3 of DFTPO51 remove to ground level due to the onset of decay in the lower trunk, significant lifting bark, a decay column in the centre of the canopy and some weak fork on major timber. The root system also extends under the road limiting the trees ability to extract nutrient and oxygen over 50% of its root area. Replanting is to be with a Fagus sylvatica 'Purpurea' in order to maintain an interesting tree scape.

No Objection Consent

15/03/2022

P0081/22/FUL

47 Coomb Drive Ruspidge Cinderford Gloucestershire
GL14 3ED

Conversion of existing garage into habitable accommodation.
Alterations to existing driveway, including widening entrance.

No Objection Consent

11/03/2022

P2073/21/FUL

Former St Whites Primary School Land At Buckshaft Road
St Whites Road Cinderford GL14 3DH

Erection of seven dwellings together with parking spaces
shared access & associated works (redevelopment of previously developed land).

See note ** Consent

18/03/2022

Objection **

In light of recent complaint from a resident of Sneyd Wood Road about parents taking their children by car and parking anywhere, it is felt that this development on Buckshaft Road will either worsen the problem, or develop similar complaints from owners of the proposed development, due to the lack of a suitable drop off point on Buckshaft Road.

This is the only concern because of the proximity of the new school.

District Councillor's Report.

Cllr. Nicky Packer

Monthly report & review of the year April 21 – April 22.

The past year has been extremely challenging for many of the officers that Publica provides to the District Council. As well as continued disruption due to Covid, as experienced by organisations everywhere, there were significant increases in workload in some areas of work. Some officers have worked very long hours under great stress for most of the time.

'Homes for Ukraine'

This is a scheme to match 'sponsors' (individuals or groups approved to provide accommodation) with 'guests' (people who have fled Ukraine).

When the scheme was first announced, local councils had not yet received any guidance from Government, which led to frustration and criticism from sponsors seeking guidance from the council. However, the Government has finally provided the necessary details and the District Council should have most of the processes and support schemes in place from w/c 11th April.

The process is a partnership between District councils and County, with relevant local charities and is as follows: the County Council make an initial phone call to the sponsor to explain the process, obtain details of those 16+ in the property (to arrange DBS checks to be undertaken), arrange a welcome (welfare/safeguarding) visit, provide a printed welcome pack and administer the £200 emergency payment to the guest. The District Council is responsible for carrying out a property inspection. The County Council are to undertake monthly follow up calls with the sponsor and feed concerns/issues back to Districts.

A sum of £10,500 will be given to the local partnership per person entering the county. The payments will be made to the County Council once a number of safeguarding and accommodation checks have been completed. It is currently unclear what funding will come to the districts.

The Government has passed on information on the first 33 properties across the Forest of Dean for the partnership to support.

Local charity Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) will be looking to set up forums for sponsors to attend where they can get support and work with each other.

The FoDDC website has information plus links to County and Government information webpages, see: [Ukraine support - Forest of Dean District Council](#)

Highway Development Management

At the end of last month, members received a presentation on 'The Role of Highway Development Management (HDM)'. Let me know if you would like the slides.

Basically, we were told that capacity issues must be 'severe' and well evidenced before they are considered to be a limiting factor. Also, safety involves reviewing historic accident trends and reviewing professional opinions, for example the view of a qualified road safety auditor.

Levelling Up Fund & Five Acres

Earlier this year the Forest of Dean LUF bid for £20m was successful, with Forest of Dean Futures (Hartpury University) receiving £10m, Destination Five Acres receiving £9m and Cinderford Town Centre Regeneration receiving £880,000.

£40,000 will be used to support the delivery of the Forest of Dean's Active Travel Strategy, which is seeking to advance cycle route projects. For the Five Acres scheme see: <https://fdean.gov.uk/media/tdwjst11/five-acres.pdf> The Five Acres site was bought from Homes England for £1. Demolition of unwanted buildings is underway

New Local Plan

During the past year I have reported regularly on the progress, or rather lack of it, on the new Local Plan.

The number of new housing sites to be allocated in the new Local Plan is set by the Government and the proposed Local Plan will be sent back by the Inspector if the Government target number of sites isn't achieved.

Last autumn, Forest of Dean District Council invited residents, groups and businesses to take part in new engagement forums to discuss the direction of the Local Plan. Both a community forum meeting and a development sector forum meeting took place in October 2021. I had understood that there would be a series of meetings, but it transpired to be just one informal meeting of each group.

The 'preferred option' (agreed by Full Council in October 2020) is for a new settlement to be identified to take just under a third of the housing sites that are required by the Government to be provided in the new Local Plan. Although a location for the new settlement was never discussed at Council, the residents and the Parish Council of Churcham were convinced that Churcham had been chosen and campaigned against it.

Following this, a new 'Dispersal' strategic option was proposed to replace the 'New Settlement' option as the preferred option. Whereas the process in the past has been for towns and large villages to take most of the housing sites, the dispersal option would see all settlements of all sizes providing a growth of 20% wherever possible, (i.e. taking into account physical and policy constraints). Those settlements with good facilities and access may be expected to provide slightly more than 20%, because many settlements will only be able to provide few or no housing sites, due to constraints.

The 'new settlement' strategy remains in place as the preferred option unless a different option is agreed by Full Council, which would then require a public consultation. Other proposals have recently been made, so I don't think that is likely to happen soon. I cannot say at present whether it will be decided to change the strategy to the 'Dispersal' strategy, to another strategy or to keep the 'New Settlement' strategy in place. If it is decided to keep the 'New Settlement' strategy then we should be assessing potential sites for a new settlement to take just under a third of the new housing sites, plus supporting services and infrastructure.

Cinderford Norther Quarter Scrutiny Inquiry

In early summer last year, the CNQ Scrutiny Task Group was discontinued in favour of the Strategic Oversight and Scrutiny Committee itself taking over the inquiry, with a similar remit to review the policies in CNQ Area Action Plan to see if they are still appropriate.

The first phase of the Spine Road has been built to give access to the college. The planned route for the rest of the road was to have passed through the Northern United pit site, but Homes England sold this to a private buyer in August 2021. Therefore, completing the Spine Road on that route is very unlikely. Another route may be possible, although it would involve further survey, ground investigation and design expenses and the agreement of the Forestry Commission, if it is to cross their land.

The options for the CNQ (apart from the existing scheme in the AAP) put forward so far are: an ecology research and education centre, perhaps incorporating a local history element; and facilitating self-build 'tiny houses' combined with off grid low impact development principles (instead of the 'normal' houses that already have outline planning permission on the site).

There were 'evidence gathering' sessions on 2nd, 5th and 10th November, 31st January and 21st February.

The webcast recording system failed for 2 of the 5 meetings. The recordings available are

A small part of the 2nd November meeting:

<https://aisapps.sonicfoundry.com/Audite!Scheduler/Player/Index/?id=50931038-4e39-480e-9344-18073fadf8a6&presID=15711565485b47e38fcb0777db7514e1d>

10th November meeting:

<https://aisapps.sonicfoundry.com/Audite!Scheduler/Player/Index/?id=5ed0dc4f-cd1c-42e7-b504-55afae7ea9ea&presID=14bb8478bd854902b4e10e260a2172ac1d>

January meeting:

<https://aisapps.sonicfoundry.com/AuditeIScheduler/Player/Index/?id=170ee1b4-fc04-41c1-997b-81871d90d88e&presID=f23c750352904137945286490ea1b95c1d>

February meeting:

<https://aisapps.sonicfoundry.com/AuditeIScheduler/Player/Index/?id=97b6d6b5-b60d-4d79-9bb6-39c6061f94c9&presID=301ee93495a749feb2deed0e34d5a90e1d>

The committee will meet at the end of April to discuss the report to be drawn up.

Designation of the Forest of Dean

FoDDC submitted evidence to the Glover Review and took part in a site visit to locations in January 2019. The Review findings were published in September 2019 and the government's full response in January 2022. This is now the subject of a consultation open until April 9th, 2022.

Despite Glover supporting the Forest of Dean District as a new designation, the government response is silent on the subject.

The project to designate the Forest of Dean as a Biosphere Reserve has stalled due to current lack of funding for compiling supporting evidence and engagement.

Biodiversity

The Council are working towards managing council owned land for greater ecological benefit. Three areas of council owned land around Lydney were chosen as trials last year for new mowing regimes, with just a spring and autumn cut on part of the sites. The trials were a great success in the resulting display of wildflowers and increase in biodiversity, however some residents complained about one of the sites, which is in the middle of a residential area, regarding the untidy appearance of having long grass. Dog fouling became more focused on the path, due to the long grass, which made the path very unpleasant in summer. The mowing regime for that site will be changed this year to a spring and late summer cut (instead of autumn), with more of the site cut regularly than last year. It is hoped to trial 6 further areas in 2023, depending on resources being available.

Climate Emergency

The photovoltaic panel installation on the Council offices roof is now complete and will obviously save the council money as well as saving carbon. The grant funding has also covered changing the water heating in the building to localised electric heaters (providing water on demand at the point of use rather than storing hot water for use) and changing most of the lights in the building to LEDs.

The Council's Strategy and 2022-2025 Action Plan in response to the Climate Emergency was approved by Cabinet in November last year. Because the main intention of this plan isn't so much to gain support from the general public but rather to establish credibility to attract funding, the report is rather long and technical. However, the high quality of the comments received in the consultation show that engagement with the community over climate action could lead to very beneficial local action.

The Forest of Dean Climate Action partnership is working towards the district reach its goal of becoming net-zero carbon by 2030. It is open to any organisation - including parish and town councils, schools and colleges, utility companies, charities, housing providers, developers, public sector, community groups and businesses.

To become a partner visit: www.forestofdeanclimateaction.org.uk/partner-signup

For more information call the sustainability team at the Forest of Dean District Council on 01594 810000 or email climate.action@fdean.gov.uk

Publica Performance

The 'Performance Panel', which is a subcommittee of the Strategic Oversight & Scrutiny Committee, reviews the Publica Quarterly Performance reports and the Business Plan.

The planning and enforcement service has been seriously under resourced. Publica is changing planning into a service 'shared' between the councils that Publica serves. This means that, although staff are assigned to a particular council, they can help at other councils if they have staff shortages or if they have expertise that is needed (for example for an unusual application that someone has experience of something similar).

The recently appointed Senior Enforcement officer left after a short time. I believe that someone has now been appointed to this post.

A Member/Officer meeting took place on Friday 1st October 2021 to update members about issues around the Development Management Service:

1. A planning "Data Dashboard" is being developed to show timescales, caseloads, validation performance etc. Once ready, the intention is to circulate this to all Members monthly; including a narrative to summarise the overall picture.
2. Two new permanent planning officers have been appointed in the Forest of Dean.
3. New procedures are in place to keep applicants better informed on how their application is progressing.
4. There is now a separate Validation Team. More information will be given on the website to help applicants to make sure that their application is valid.
5. The planning enforcement process is being reviewed to make the enforcement role more effective. Up to 50% of Enforcement Officer time is spent answering enquiries about the progress of cases so it is proposed to provide some self-serve capability to the case register – although this will be basic information as many cases involve sensitive issues. A 'cleansing exercise' will be undertaken to clear the caseload of obsolete cases.
6. Heritage, Design and Ecology are being brought together to form a Shared Service. More information on ecology requirements will be put on the website to hopefully lead to fewer responses asking for more information needed.
7. Town and Parish Council training will be refreshed on a regular basis and Publica will be introducing a new training programme.
8. An independent assessment of the development management service provided to FoDDC will be undertaken. This will either be with the Planning Advisory Service or the Planning Officers Society.

All recent appointments are now career-graded, (meaning that an officer's grade will change to reflect increased experience and training, over time, rather than being fixed), which should allow career advancement within Publica and reduce the number of officers leaving. Processes in Land Charges are to be improved. The switch in focus to digital is expected to reduce call volumes in Customer Services.

The designation of recycling improperly left at recycling centres has been changed so that if the recycling container is full and people leave recycling material next to it then it is no longer classed as fly tipping and people are no longer prosecuted.

Wild boar update

Kevin Stannard of Forestry England gave an update to Strategic Oversight and Scrutiny Committee on 2nd September.

The survey by thermal imaging shows the number of boar dropped to 937 from a 2019 peak of 1,635 animals. The survey was only of those on Forestry England land. Culling will continue until the target of 400 is reached. The reduction is likely to be partly due to dispersal of boar into neighbouring farmland. The Forest has experienced more visitors than ever before and it is thought that this has disturbed the boar. It is not known how many boar have migrated to adjoining areas.

There is no evidence of African Swine Fever. Wildlife Rangers are qualified to test carcasses. There were several boar found dead within a short space of time that was of concern but testing showed that they died from natural poisoning from eating too many acorns.

The number of road traffic accidents involving boar has reduced from 81 the previous year to 71 last year. These are boar casualties that the Rangers have been called out to.

Boar are constantly on the move and so Rangers don't focus on resident reported 'hot spots' because the boar will have moved on.

The carcasses are tested for TB. The rate is about one in 70 or 80 are infected with TB. This level of infection has been fairly constant during all the time that culling has taken place. There appear to be pockets of TB in the Forest but the reasons aren't known.

Forestry England have national contracts for the sale of wild boar meat but can sell up to 10% locally. They have investigated working with local businesses to allow them to set up a processing unit, which would add value to the product. However, the lack of predictability of supply has proved this to be an unviable project so far. Sometimes the Rangers will shoot several boar but other times none at all. Their success is affected by various conditions that vary.

Boar poaching was a serious problem before the pandemic and is likely to return. There are two distinct types of poaching: poaching with guns or hunting with dogs as sport. Hunters often leave the carcass of the hunted animal where it dies in the Forest.

There was a coordination group for private landowners who suffer from wild boar incursion, but it was under an umbrella organisation that is now defunct. The Forestry Rangers liaise with farmers of adjoining land.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

Members were given a presentation on S106 Agreements, CIL and affordable housing. FoDDC have not previously adopted CIL because of concerns about delivering affordable housing, which isn't covered by CIL and is dependent on money being left over after the requirements laid out in the CIL have been met. Because house prices are lower in the Forest of Dean than in, for example, Cotswolds district, viability is more challenging in the Forest of Dean.

The Government have said that they will be reviewing the planning system. They haven't said whether CIL legislation is part of that review. FoDDC would want clarity on whether CIL will be scrapped or not before deciding to spend money to change to the CIL system.

Animals

Forest of Dean District Council's Street Wardens have been awarded a Gold Footprint RSPCA PawPrints award for their work with stray dogs for the 8th time. There is a great partnership between the Animal Welfare Team, Sling Kennels and Forest of Dean Dog Rescue.

An Animal Welfare Charter, which outlines the council's powers and responsibilities and contains advice for residents, has been agreed. The Charter will be published on the council website soon. The District Council's responsibilities are for the welfare of domestic animals, including horses, but do not include wildlife or livestock. The County Council is responsible for livestock welfare.

'First Homes' guidance note

The First Homes category is a new Government initiative and now forms part of the affordable housing percentage demanded of a new development.

The purchase price of the property must be discounted by a minimum of 30% against the market value. FoDDC could decide to set it higher if it can demonstrate a need for this – this will be considered as part of the work on the emerging Local Plan.

The discounted price at first sale must not exceed £250,000 – this threshold can be lower outside of London.

Secured through a legal agreement, the discount is retained for every future sale.

First Homes are only available to first time buyers.

Household income must be no more than £80k. Any purchaser of a First Home should have a mortgage or a home purchase plan.

It must be the buyer's main residence.

For the first 3 months of the marketing of a property for sale, the buyer must live, work or have closely related family in the district to comply.

The policy came into effect from June 2021, but doesn't apply where planning approval is in place before December 2021, or where there have been significant pre-application discussions before 28 March 2022.

The percentage of affordable homes is currently set at 40% of the total number of houses in a development. The situation before June this year was that shared ownership homes formed 30% of that 40% with the other 70% of the 40% to be affordable rented accommodation delivered by a registered provider. Now the affordable rented accommodation is still the same, but First Homes are

now taken out of the shared ownership percentage. First Homes must be a minimum of 25% but can rise to 30%, meaning that there might be no shared ownership homes provided.

For example, a development of 100 houses should provide 40% affordable homes (40 houses) with the remaining 70% as sales at market value. 70% of the affordable homes must be provided via a registered provider as affordable rented accommodation (28 homes for rent). The remaining 30% of the affordable homes could be all First Homes (12 houses) or could be 25% First Homes (10 houses) and 5% shared ownership (2 houses).

Introduced some time ago, shared ownership has not proved to be a popular means for people to 'get onto the housing ladder'.

Newly introduced are First Homes exception sites, which must:

- Comprise of First Homes
- Be adjacent to existing settlements and proportionate in size and not compromise protections afforded by National Park, AONB, rural area designations.
- A small proportion of market housing can be allowed at the local authorities' discretion, for example, where it is essential to deliver First Homes without grant funding.
- A small proportion of other forms of affordable housing may be allowed where there is significant identified local need.

Flooding

GCC is the Local Lead Flood Authority, but although the lead authority, GCC are not first responders, so emergency services should be contacted in a flood emergency. However, flooding incidents should be reported to GCC to help shape policy: [Flooding and drainage - Gloucestershire County Council](#)

GCC have information on their website [Flood Guide - Gloucestershire County Council](#) and there is also a page about flooding on the FoDDC website: <https://fdean.gov.uk/environment/flooding/>

There is also a FoDDC handout: 'Flooding – A quick guide for councillors.'

Remote Forest

The Council is creating a directory for town and village-based businesses. Any businesses that want to sign up can fill in a form on this page: <https://www.fdean.gov.uk/RFDsignup/>

Growth Hub

Growth Hub Network Offering workspace, free business support and events, opened on 8 October at Vantage Point Business Village in Mitcheldean. See <https://www.thegrowthhub.biz/forestofdean>

Budget

Forest of Dean District Council achieved a balanced budget again this year, which means that it shouldn't need to dip into its much-depleted reserve fund. It has previously been necessary to withdraw from the reserve because the Government has reduced financial support for local councils in recent years.

Although the District Council is responsible for collecting Council Tax, it only receives 10% of the total council tax bill residents pay, which is split between the district council, county council, police, and fire service. Residents can see the exact split in their council tax bill.

Despite making savings, the council needed to increase income to balance the budget and raised council tax by £5 per annum, which equates to 10p a week for a band D property. The situation is likely to be more challenging next year with Council costs rising but the council still being restricted by Government to a £5 per annum increase (or try to obtain the mandate of increasing further by means of a costly referendum).

Provision of affordable homes

There were a good number of affordable homes provided in 2021, with 86 affordable rental properties and 63 shared ownership homes.

Parking Enforcement

Parking Enforcement had previously been contracted out in a joint agreement with Cotswold District Council. Because Cotswold District Council have opted to bring enforcement back in-house, the existing contract terminated in March. Parking enforcement will now also be managed in house in Forest of Dean District.

Cllr Nicky Packer 6th April 2022

Cllr. Bernie O'Neill

Steve Hardcastle has emailed the County Council (Colin Chick, Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure) relating to a number of concerns regarding Buckshaft Road/St White's area which are on going and very unsatisfactory. I have followed this up with my own email asking for any response to Steve's queries being sent to me as well. I look forward to the response.

I have asked for an update regarding Forest Lodge and I have received the following reply...

'Thank you for your e-mail. Currently I am awaiting on some additional information from the applicant in terms of ecology. Our ecology team will then need to review the information and undertake a Habitats Regulation Assessment. With ecology information it can often take some time to. Due to this, it is quite difficult to provide a timeframe for when it would be presented to Planning Committee, the earliest would be June.'

The site visit for Ward member (Me) and Parish Councillors will be arranged prior to the actual Planning Committee Meeting, and this is likely to be June or even more likely, July. I have just spoken to the Officer who has explained that they are still awaiting an Ecological report and this can be very seasonal.

Enquiry into Norther Quarter. The final meeting of this enquiry is 25th April. Let us hope that the results will enable us to move forward with something for the benefit of the Residents of the District, and no more prevaricating. The residents are waiting!

Tesco to take over the Co-op in Cinderford.

The New Hospital has commenced.

Progress on the 5 Acres site is well ahead of schedule.

Council Meeting Thursday

Council AGM May 19th

County Councillor's Reports

Cllr. Graham Morgan

On local issues I have been dealing with all day parking issues on Edgehills Road Cinderford near its junction with Heywood Road, and have requested though County Highways an extension of the double yellow lines in that area.

I have also been in contact with the Highways Manager with regard the VAS signs in St Whites Road that are part of the St Whites School Safety Zone, these signs are still not working, Highways have asked the Street Lighting Team to investigate to see what is going on with these signs.

I have also been contacted by residents of Sneyd Wood Road with regard of traffic speeds at School start & finish times, we have been trying to get a speed survey on that road, the problem so far has been one of securing funding to get this carried out, in the mean time we have asked for 20mph is plenty signs for Sneyd Wood Road, and also an increased Police presence.

I have also made a request to the Highways for the reinstatement of White lines in Cinderford High Street, the question was raised at the Forest of Dean Road Safety Committee by District Councillor Lynn Sterry.

Lastly on the Stockholm Declaration which called for a default 20mph speed limit all areas across Britain where pedestrians come into contact with traffic, on this no primary legislation was passed at Westminster but has been left to be introduced by local authorities across the Country.

The County Council in the June of 2021 passed Motion 876, which stated Gloucestershire County Council resolves to formally adopt Resolution 11. In practice this means that the 20mph, except in main roads where speed limits, if higher must be both safe and appropriate.

The introduction of speed limits across the County is still at present required to go through the TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) system, Motion 876 was by a majority vote in the June of 2021 required to be sent to and discussed by The Environment Scrutiny Committee, and we eagerly await their report due next month May 2022.

Cllr. Beki Hoyland

Roads

<https://www.gigaclear.com/fastershire>

Gigaclear are working to install fiber on the roads around the whole of the Forest in a rolling program. The links above and below give a good level of detail of where and when.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/roads/roadworks/>

the above link takes you to the place where all road works are shown in map form. Make sure you put in the time you are interested in eg one day or three months. The small land-slip on the road between Blakeney and Soudley has a date of 27th April on it to be fixed. New Road, Blakeney: landslide booked to August 2022

The Severn Way Footpath

I have been working with the Foot path officer, he has been making sure that the Severn Way on our side of the river is accessible and ready for the summer. There are new styles, steps and even a new bridge. It is a beautiful path along the river that can be done in stages and will be a great attraction to visitors and residents alike.

Forest Climate Group meets again 7pm tomorrow evening (13/04/2022) on zoom. A representative from Soudley and or Ruspidge will hopefully be attending after making contact at the last Parish council meeting but if there is a councillor willing to take part in the process too that would be excellent.

Bus Services Unfortunately Gloucestershire was not successful in its bid to get funding to improve the bus service but I am keeping track of the funding that will be supplying an on-call minibus that will compliment the existing service. This has been delayed but is in process and I will be promoting it once it comes on line so that it is well used and is a successful trial that continues to be funded.

Children and Families. Ofsted visited GCC in February. Gloucestershire Children's Service has been lifted out of failing to Requires Improvement. This is as predicted by the head of Children's service which is an indication that They know themselves and although Requires Improvement is better, heading in the right direction there is still work to be done. There are specific areas that need attention; one is turnover of social workers, which is part of a national picture. GCC has a high number of agency social workers. Stability in the workforce is likely to be helped by the Ofsted report. Another area that is under pressure is the number of foster families available, currently Gloucestershire is using 104% of its capacity. Can you help by advertising the need for foster families on your website and social media? Here is the link to the information:

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

Westbury-on-Severn Care Home consultation There is a six week consultation on the future of several care homes around the county one of which is in Westbury on Severn.

<https://haveyoursaygloucestershire.uk.engagementhq.com/consultation-survey-on-the-proposed-decommissioning-and-closure-of-four-adult-social-care-homes-within-the-gloucestershire-care-partnership>

I have had a meeting with the cabinet member for adult social care and been reassured that this is a necessary process and that all of the people affected will be looked after. If you have any concerns do contact me.

GCC Council Meetings.

A motion **supporting Ukraine and welcoming refugees** was passed on 23rd March. Here is a link to government information: <https://homesforukraine.campaign.gov.uk/>

Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) information: <https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/your-community/ukrainian-support/>

GCC will be working closely with GARAS <https://www.garas.org.uk/latest/> to support refugees from all countries including but not exclusively the Ukraine.

There are already several households that have welcomed families from the Ukraine and several more awaiting visas. The households that have been able to make space for families will themselves need support from the rest of the community to make people fleeing from war welcome and find all the services and support they need. There is a facebook page to help connect families hoping to support Ukrainians to the Forest of Dean if anyone has any capacity to offer a hand: FoD hosts of Ukrainians support group, or e mail: HUBB on helpingukrainebuildback@gmail.com to offer your help.