
RUSPIDGE & SOUDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the MEETING held on Tuesday 10th March 2026.

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

Parish Councillors Present:

Cllrs. William Acland Chairman, Tony Matthews, Norman Snell, Paul Firth, Denis Bagwell-Johnson, Nicky Packer, Priya Shukla.

County Councillors Present:

Beki Hoyland, Ray Donaghue.

District Councillors Present:

Richard Burton.

Parish Council Clerk – Roland Dowding.

Apologies:

Cllr. Helen Medcraft, Bernie O’Neill, Andy Moore.

Standing Declarations of Interest

- a) Ruspidge Memorial Hall - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. Denis Bagwell-Johnston.
- b) St Whites School - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. William Acland.
- c) Soudley Village Hall - Insignificant personal interest by Cllr. Norman Snell.

Public Present: Shirley Barnard, Carol Ridler.

Shirley Barnard – Concerns around the proposed development at Sneyd Wood. How will this effect the existing infrastructure and the additional traffic that will result. The Council directed Shirely Barnard to the Forest of Dean District Council local plan consultation.

Carol Ridler – Concern regarding Yew Tree Brake cemetery being at capacity. Is it possible to extend the cemetery. Cllr. Tony Matthews noted the land is Crown Land. Cllr. Paul Firth noted that Cemeteries are managed by GCC. Parks & Cemeteries Dept. The Clerk. Mr. Roland Dowding will make some enquires with FoDDC.

- 3.1. **Apologies** received and recorded from absent members.
- 3.2. No declaration of prejudicial interest was declared by members present.
- 3.3. **Minutes** - The minutes of the council meeting held on the **10th of February, 2026** were **ACCEPTED** as a true record of the meeting and were duly signed by the Chairman.
- 3.4. **Matters Arising** - There were no matters arising from the minutes.
- 3.5. **District Councillor Reports**
Reports are attached as an Appendix to these minutes.
- 3.6. **County Councillor Reports**
Reports are attached as an Appendix to these minutes.

- 3.7. **Planning** – The completed schedule for **March** is attached as an Appendix to these Minutes.
- 3.8. Following a report by the Honorary Treasurer, Cllr. Norman Snell the council **APPROVED** the accounts presented for **March**, payment totalling **£10,670.73**. These figures are inclusive of confidential expenditure. A financial report is included for March in the appendix to these minutes.
- 3.9. Budget Transfers
- From Contingency Budget **£1,309.00** to Grass Cut Budget. Approved.
 - From Contingency Budget **£867.80** to Dog Waste Budget. Approved.
 - From Contingency Budget **£465.12** to IT/Web Budget. Approved.
 - From Contingency Budget **£86.90** to Defib Budget. Approved.
 - From Contingency Budget **£1.39** to St. Furniture Budget. Approved.
 - From Contingency Budget **£1,100.00** to Miscellaneous Budget. Approved.
 - From Contingency Budget **£69.79** to Play Areas Budget. Approved.
 - From Unallocated Reserve **£6,482.80** to Play Area Budget for teenage swing replacement as approved by Council **Ref. 7.11. July 2025**. Approved.
- 3.10. FoDDC Local Plan consultation/discussion requested by Cllr. Nicky Packer. Members approved Cllr. Packer's draft. To be submitted to the FoDDC Local Plan consultation.
- 3.11. **Policy Updates for Digital Compliance.** Member approval for adoption of the following documents and policies.
- Publication Scheme.
 - Data Protection Policy
 - IT Policy
 - Privacy Notices
- 3.12. **Receipt of the Annual Kompan Recreational Grounds & Play Area inspection reports** – The members present confirmed receipt of reports and noted **NO** outstanding maintenance of a yellow category and above due at present.
- 3.13. The members present confirmed they had watched the ICO training videos which set out the key principles of data protection.
- 3.14. **Liaison's Report for Soudley Village Hall** – Cllr. Norman Snell presented his report.
- Solar panel installation is now complete.
 - Amendments to the electrical infrastructure.
- 3.15. **Liaison's Report for Ruspidge Memorial Hall** – Cllr. Denis Bagwell-Johnston presented his report.
- Handrails being installed on the outside rear entrance.
 - Lighting to the lower hall has now been adjusted.
- 3.16. **Correspondence** - The council **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the following correspondence:
- clerk@ruspidgesoudley-pc.gov.uk Assertion 10 policy and ICO key principles of Data Protection Training Videos.
 - clerk@ruspidgesoudley-pc.gov.uk Consolidation of recently drafted policies for adoption

- 3.17. **Next Meeting** - the next meeting of the council will be held in the **Soudley Village Hall** at **7.00 p.m. Tuesday, 14th April 2026**. The agenda deadline is **Monday, 6th of April 2026**.
- 3.18. **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:.....Chairman.

Dated:.....

Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council

Planning Schedule March, 2026

Planning Reference

Site Address & Detail

Parish

Comment

No Notification from FODDC for this month

Decisions notified by the Planning Authority

Planning Reference

Site Address & Detail

Parish

Comment

District

Decision

Date

P1424/25/FUL

55 Ruspidge Road, Ruspidge, Cinderford, Gloucestershire.

Widening of existing dropped kerb entrance to allow improved access to driveway

No Obj

Granted Permission

02/02/2026

Roads

Please continue to use and promote the use of [FixMyStreet](#) to report issues on the roads.

I am now chair of the Forest of Dean Road Safety Group which brings together highways, fire, police, councillors from parish, town, district and county, Forestry England and others as required. The aim of this meeting is to highlight areas in the whole district that need attention and work done to improve safety. If there is something you would like to add to this agenda do let me know.

Closed Roads

- 23rd January - 6th March. Awre road from Blakeney. Remediation and upgrade of highway drains.
- 9th February to August 2026 Lydney to Whitecroft road is closed for structural maintenance. See below for new bus route for the no. 23
- 22nd March Forest of Dean Trails Half Marathon see separate attachment for details.
- 13th March New Road Blakeney to the Barracks for repairs to new surface after failed audit.
- 5th May -12th June. Corner Road, Pillowwell, for wall reconstruction
- 18th to 22nd May from A48 to Awre, Bullo end for drainage works.
- 22nd March 8am – 4pm Church Street, Littledean. Severn Trent.

New bus route for the no 23 while Whitecroft to Lydney Road is closed.

[23 Bus Route & Timetable: Coleford - Gloucester | Stagecoach](#)

I would be interested in feed back on this route, if it proves better than the original then we could lobby to keep the changes. The advantage is that it includes Parkend and does not miss out any settlement that was on the original route.

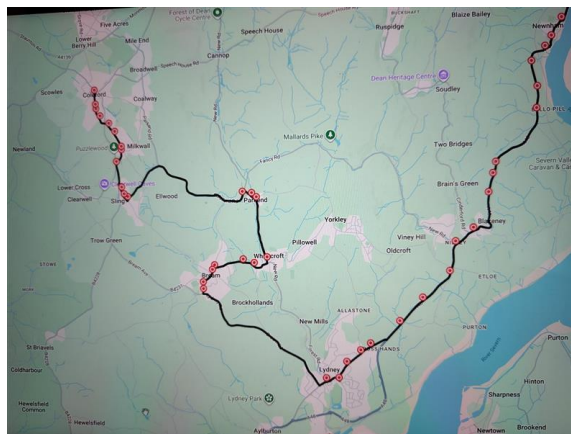
I chair the Forest Road Safety Group, we meet four times a year and have representatives from Parishes, District and County Councils as well as Police, Fire, Forestry and Highways. We have an ongoing agenda of problem areas and members can highlight issues. If ever you have a safety concern do please let me know so I can raise it here.

As you can see from the closure on 13th March there is auditing going on, on the work that contractors do and we need to ensure that any faults with their work are flagged early so that they are fixed at the expense of the contractor not the council so again if you see something please let me know.

Neighbourhood Grassroots Fund

So far I have funded, or ringfenced funds for the following, it is pretty much gone now and not very likely to get any more I'm afraid but if there is I will let you know.

- Allotments and home education group, Soudley Hall and a new defibrillator cabinet for the parish.



- Littledean play area
- Brodies Trust, a place for families with disabled children to meet and find support.
- Bream Garden society
- Canopy Creative Community Arts

I have tried to make sure that young people and nature are the focus of this community fund.

County News

[Council votes to approve £698.4 million budget](#)

Gloucestershire County Council has approved the £698.4 million budget for 2026/27.

[Gloucestershire's landmark Local Nature Recovery Strategy goes live with school celebration](#)

Gloucestershire County Council has published its first Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and interactive map. The plan – a statutory obligation from government – suggests measures to restore nature, boost biodiversity and create a healthier future for everyone who lives, works and plays in Gloucestershire. The Green group will push the administration to implement the promised improvements.

[Fostering Service celebrates debut novel of young person in care](#)

Gloucestershire County Council has celebrated the achievement of a young person in care as he published his debut novel at 17-years-old.

[Council celebrate a year of Youth Hubs for supporting young people across Gloucestershire](#)

Gloucestershire County Council is celebrating over a year of impact from its commissioned Youth Hubs, delivered in partnership with three not-for-profit organisations working across the county.

Government Consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Residents across Gloucestershire are encouraged to take part in the recently launched Government consultation on LGR, which opened on 5th February and will run for seven weeks.

LGR will result in the loss of Gloucestershire's existing county and district councils, which will be replaced by one or two new unitary authorities (UA). [County Greens have long opposed these changes](#), citing them as undemocratic and a waste of limited local resources. The Labour Government, however, has insisted they will go ahead. It is therefore vital that residents have their say on how services should be run in the future. The three proposed options for LGR which are being consulted on are:

- A single UA responsible for all services across Gloucestershire.
- Dividing the county into two UAs in an East (Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, Cotswold) West (Gloucester, Forest of Dean, Stroud) split.
- The 'Greater Gloucester' model consisting of one UA for a slightly expanded Gloucester City and a second for the rest of the county.

More information on the proposals can be found on the [Future Gloucestershire](#) website. To take part in the consultation, visit [local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire](#) website.

A final decision is expected in summer 2026. Elections to the new authority/authorities are planned for May 2027 with the new structure established no earlier than April 2028.

GCC Meetings

Full Council

As highlighted above, this month's meeting of Full Council saw members vote on the budget. While the Greens voted in support, they also made clear that they would push the Lib Dem administration to go further on prevention and commit sufficient resources to environmental issues.

CLLr Craig Horrocks (Rodborough) said: "This is not a bad budget. But it doesn't match the council's own stated ambition to invest in prevention. Our borrowing is well within safe limits, and we have room to do more. Using that space to invest in the future is a brave but sensible choice — and I don't think this budget takes it far enough."



Leader of the Green Group

CLLr CRAIG HORROCKS SPEAKING IN THE CHAMBER



CLLr BEKI HOYLAND INTRODUCING GREEN AMENDMENTS

CLLr Beki Hoyland (Blakeney and Bream) added: "The best way to tackle long-term problems is to invest early in our communities. Spending on prevention today means spending less on fixing things tomorrow".



The Greens managed to secure £390,000 worth of amendments to the budget, including:

- ✓ £110,000 to expand the Cam & Dursley Green Way cycleway
- ✓ £80,000 to improve access to Public Rights of Way
- ✓ £80,000 to sponsor care leavers through youth worker apprenticeships
- ✓ £100,000 to restore the Community Climate Grant
- ✓ £20,000 for air pollution monitors at high-risk schools

The Greens also seconded a Labour amendment to use £10,000 to help young people access work, training and education. Amendments from Reform UK and the Conservatives were rejected.

Reform UK’s proposals, which included scrapping funding for climate action, cutting the council’s nature budget and spending money on mass dredging were strongly condemned as unscientific by the Greens. In her speech, Cllr Chloe Turner (Minchinhampton) said: “Dredging is exactly the opposite of the ‘slow the flow’ approach that experts have shown to be the most cost-effective and nature-friendly way to manage floods, and which has been championed by county Greens in the past.”

“Reform’s proposal to cut our already stretched ecology team, at a time when nature is under more pressure than ever, is also genuinely alarming. We already face damage from the Labour Government’s attacks on nature — and Reform show exactly the same ignorance about how vital nature is to our economy, our health and our safety. This is a party that doesn't understand the science, doesn't grasp the economics and doesn't give a toss about the natural environment that so many in our county care about.”



CLLR LUFF SPEAKING IN THE CHAMBER

CLLR TURNER SPEAKING IN THE CHAMBER
Cllr Gary Luff (Bisley and Painswick) highlighted ecosystem degradation as a national security issue, drawing on the UK Government’s recent National Security Assessment: “The threat from the nature crises to our national security couldn't be clearer”, he said. “However, Reform UK is more interested in siding with billionaires, the fossil fuel industry and Putin rather than protecting British citizens.”

Other meetings

Also held this month were meetings of the Police and Crime Panel, the Economic Strategy and Corporate Scrutiny Committee and the Pensions Committees.

Full recordings of all County Council meetings can be found [here](#).

Greener Gloucestershire News

Just SUST festival

A brand-new celebration of pre-loved clothing, creative community and sustainable living for Stroud.

A vibrant day of workshops, sustainable textile browsing, clothing talks, demos and a film premiere. Plus, a community runway show of the preloved clothing and pay-as-you can food, music & dance! 🎉

- Saturday 28 February 2026
- 11:00 - 21:00
- Brimscombe Mill, Brimscombe Hill, Stroud, England, GL5 2SB.

For more information [visit the website](#).

Heat pump demonstrations - discover the future of home heating

Join for a 30-minute live demonstration showcasing how heat pumps work and why they're a key solution for low-carbon heating. Whether you're curious about switching from gas, exploring energy-efficient upgrades, or simply want to understand the technology better, this session is designed to inform and inspire.

Book onto a demonstration [here](#).

'Warm and Well' energy support

Need some simple steps to manage your energy bills or stay warmer at home without pushing up costs?

Gloucestershire residents can get free support through the Warm & Well service, run by energy charity [Severn Wye](#). They can help you better understand and manage your energy use and bills. You can get help with switching your energy tariff or supplier, advise on renewables and check if you are eligible for any grants or funding schemes.

Their advisers are on hand to answer all your questions and may be able to offer you a free home visit to provide in-depth advice specific to your property and needs.

 0800 500 3076

 energyadvice@severnwye.org.uk

[Website](#)

Bikeability sessions

The Think Travel team are offering Bikeability courses during upcoming school holidays. 

The courses are designed for children aged 9 to 14 and consist of 2 x 2-hour sessions, held at the same time on consecutive days. All instruction is provided by fully qualified, experienced instructors who are Enhanced DBS checked and First Aid trained. Courses are run in small groups with a 1:3 instructor-to-child ratio to ensure personalized attention and safety. The cost for the course is £10

European Market – I worked with GCC Trading Standards and the Police to get the reports in needed to get the sale of illegal tobacco stopped. The shop is currently closed. I will continue working with Trading Standards.

Speedwatch – I am helping coordinate a local speedwatch campaign. Last session could not go ahead due to people being unable to attend– would anyone be willing to do March & April? I have had requests for Station St and Belle Vue Rd. I will do one with someone if I can find another Councillor to do it with?

Petitions – along with Carol Marsh we are working on a petition to present to GCC for a crossing in Steam Mills – hopefully present it in March, I am also still working with the Cinderford High St Action Group and that will likely result in another petition about the speed cushions near the hospital.

Town Centre Regeneration –Jet washing of the pavements of the whole town centre has begun! I could not attend the Forest Deprivation Panel but Graham went and I am awaiting the notes. We have been asking about the Brownfield Regeneration Grants as a way of making it possible to develop the old industrial sites.

We are requesting “Heritage Slabs” for the town centre displaying important local history.

Work being prepared to resurface the pavement outside the shops and takeaways on the Heywood Rd/High St Junction. I have requested an update.

GCC Parking are still set on doing the yellow relining as soon as they can, the weather has made that not possible. I will keep chasing. They said its very close!

I have been going out with our fixmystreet volunteer and have also been out with a lady who wants to work with us and shown her how to do reports. I hope to put a lot of this online if and when I get the time. All reported.

All Councillors are welcome to join me – each road seems to generate 10-20 issues such as broken lampposts, blocked drains, potholes (obviously), graffiti, fly posting and giant trees. See pictures below!

The applications for new fund County Councillors we can access are coming close to being completed. The one for Brody’s Trust has been approved and is being processed. These include children’s park play furniture, walking groups, youth clubs, sensory projects and office IT equipment.

I attended my monthly meetings with Police on the 26th of March please pass on to me any issues you wish to bring up. I have asked how we are going to get crime stats under the new system as there are a lot of changes.

I have asked again about the rebooking for resurfacing on the Ruspidge/Soudley Rd and awaiting a reply.

Other constituent work includes highways - taxi spaces, TROs, potholes etc, flooding issues on Valley Rd and Albion Rd area, planning – issues of High St being blocked by business activities, and policing issues.

I have attended meetings for the Commoners Association/Biosphere, Road Safety (at Shire Hall), Budget, Housing Plan, meeting with constituents

Other work I have been doing at a GCC level is:

I have been doing (or have booked) training for my new role as Group Whip, Scrutiny Committee training, Street Works training and media training.

Some useful info from GCC below:


THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE BRIEF

- **Jo's Friday Message:** Chief Executive Jo Walker has released her latest weekly update, detailing organizational progress and internal priorities.


+1

- **Youth Justice Inspection:** The latest inspection report for the Youth Justice Service is slated for publication following a formal review of service standards.

+1

- **Achiever Awards:** Nominations are officially open for the Councillors' Award for Officers going Above and Beyond to recognize staff who deliver exceptional results.
-  [Nominate an Achiever](#)

Economy & Business Growth

- **New Business Board Launched:** The Gloucestershire Business Board (GBB) has been established to drive local economic growth and replace previous structures.
- **Strategic Growth:** The board focuses on private-sector engagement to boost high-growth industries across the county.
-  [GBB Strategic Goals](#)

Environment & Infrastructure

- **Nature Recovery Strategy:** The landmark Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is now live, focusing on biodiversity restoration with community and school involvement.

+1

- **Smart Flood Prevention:** A new gully monitoring pilot project uses real-time sensors to track drainage and proactively manage flood risks.

+1

- **Grassroots Neighborhood Fund:** The first project has been announced under the £1.1 million fund to support local community improvements.

+1


- **Highways Management:** The council is finalizing plans to steer Cheltenham Festival traffic into the "home straight" to minimize race-day disruption.

+1

-  [Flood Risk Dashboard](#)

Community & Welfare

- **Youth Hub Success:** We are celebrating over a year of the Gloucestershire Youth Hubs supporting employment and wellness for young people.
- **Fostering Achievement:** The Fostering Service is celebrating the creative debut of a novel written by a young person in care.

- **Fire Safety:** Specific fire safety guidance has been issued for hosts ahead of the Cheltenham Festival.
 -  [Community Success Stories](#)
-


Governance & Leadership

- **Jo's Friday Message:** Chief Executive Jo Walker outlines progress on key county initiatives, specifically focusing on the lead-up to the February 20th milestones.

+1

- **Youth Justice Inspection:** An inspection report regarding the Youth Justice Service is scheduled for publication.

+1

- **Achiever Awards:** Nominations are officially open for the Councillors' Award for Officers going Above and Beyond to recognize staff who demonstrate exceptional results.
 -  [Nominate an Achiever](#)
-

Economy & Business Growth

- **New Business Board Launched:** The Gloucestershire Business Board (GBB) has been established to replace previous structures and drive economic strategy.

+1

- **Driving Growth:** The board is tasked with enhancing private-sector engagement to boost high-growth industries across the county.

+1

-  [GBB Strategic Goals](#)
-

Environment & Infrastructure

- **Nature Recovery Strategy:** The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) is now live, featuring biodiversity restoration projects involving local schools.
- **Smart Flood Prevention:** A new gully monitoring pilot uses real-time sensors to track drainage levels and proactively manage flood risks.

+1

- **Grassroots Neighborhood Fund:** The first project has been announced under the £1.1 million fund designed for neighborhood-led improvements.


+1

- **Highways Management:** Plans are finalized to steer Cheltenham Festival traffic into the "home straight" to minimize congestion.

+1

-  [Flood Risk Dashboard](#)
-

Community & Welfare

- **Youth Hub Success:** Gloucestershire is celebrating over a year of Youth Hubs providing employment support and wellness services for young people.
- **Fostering Achievement:** The Fostering Service is highlighting the debut novel of a young person in care.
- **Fire Safety:** Dedicated fire safety guidance has been issued for hosts ahead of the Cheltenham Festival.
-  [Community Success Stories](#)

The government has opened its consultation on proposals for LGR in Gloucestershire, today, Thursday 5 February. This will be open for seven weeks. As you know, it follows the submission of three proposals to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government last November.

What will the consultation cover?

The consultation will ask for views on all three proposals submitted:

- One single county-wide unitary council
- Two unitary councils (east/west split)
- Two unitary councils (Greater Gloucester and Gloucestershire Unitary)

Respondents will be asked to what extent the proposals:

- Are based on sensible geographies and economic areas
- Will deliver the outcomes described in the proposals
- Are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity, and withstand financial shocks
- Will deliver high quality, sustainable public services
- Have been informed by local views and will meet local needs
- Will support devolution arrangements
- Will enable stronger community engagement and give the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment

Additionally, there will be a question in relation to the Greater Gloucester and Gloucestershire unitary proposal, asking to what extent consultees agree or disagree that it sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change.

Consultees will also be able to leave free text to explain or expand on the answers they provide or leave general comments.

How will people be able to take part and get more information?

The consultation will be via an online survey. Additionally, we are arranging for hard copies to be made available in all council-owned user centres (i.e libraries, area centres, offices etc).

MHCLG has made provision for consultation responses to be made by post and email. Details are on the consultation page, linked below.

A link to the consultation is here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-gloucestershire>

Details on all three proposals are available at: [Future Gloucestershire : Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation in Gloucestershire](#)

You are encouraged to share the information and links with your own networks and contacts.

Who will be consulted?

In notifying councils that the consultation will start on Thursday, MHCLG confirmed the list of stakeholders that it will be consulting directly. We have added those organisations or contacts that MHCLG will not consult with directly to a local list, to ensure we leave no stone unturned in reaching out to every corner of your communities over the coming seven weeks.

Although this is a government consultation, we are activating a thorough communications and engagement plan to ensure we reach as many stakeholders and residents as possible and encourage them to share their views. To achieve this, we will be engaging town and parish councils, community organisations and partners across the county, sharing materials that they can use to promote the consultation, while leveraging our own online and offline channels.

What happens after the consultation closes?

As a recap, feedback from the consultation will help the government assess which option best meets its criteria for effective local government.

A decision is expected in summer 2026, with elections for the new unitary authority or authorities planned for May 2027. Any new structure will come into effect no earlier than April 2028.

Launching on Wednesday 22 October 2025 – the Grassroots Neighbourhood Fund will deliver funding to community initiatives that will have a positive impact on health and wellbeing and our local communities. This includes projects that:

- Promote and encourage health and wellbeing for all.
- Promote access to nature and/or the environment.
- Promote healthy lifestyles.
- Improve digital inclusion.
- Encourage safer neighbourhoods and community cohesion.
- Enable people to build social connections and contribute to reducing social isolation and loneliness.
- Have a focus on individuals or groups who may be at higher risk of experiencing inequalities because of their life circumstances.

The grant scheme will run for 18 months, and each Councillor will have up to £20,000 to support projects in their electoral division.

District Councillor Report – Richard Burton – March 2026

Draft Local Plan Consultation drop in sessions completed

The Draft Local Plan has been approved to go out to consultation by the Council, and there will be local public events, with the final one on the 4th March.

The consultation for the Revised Draft Local Plan runs from 04 February 2026 until 18 March 2026.

To take part online, residents can visit the following website: <https://www.fdean.gov.uk/reviseddraftlocalplan>

Comments can also be emailed to localplans@fdean.gov.uk or in writing to the Forest of Dean District Council at the address below. If writing, or emailing, please use the heading 'Local Plan Consultation Response'.

Budget for 2026-27 approved by Councillors

Following a recent public consultation, Forest of Dean District Council has approved its budget for the coming financial year, providing a clear and stable foundation for the continued delivery of high-quality local services and sustained investment in communities across the district.

As part of the agreed budget, and in alignment with the priorities outlined in the Council Plan, the Council has allocated funding to support resilient communities, advance its climate commitments, and deliver ambitious projects that will provide lasting value for residents and businesses.

The Forest of Dean District Council portion of this year's Council Tax bill will rise by 2.99%, equivalent to £6.34 for Band D properties.

To find out more about what the District Council delivered in 2025 and what is planned for 2026/27, visit: <https://www.fdean.gov.uk/budget/>

Council launches bold new charter to safeguard rivers and waterways

Forest of Dean District Council has taken a significant step toward safeguarding its natural environment, with councillors overwhelmingly supporting a new charter designed to protect and restore local rivers and waterways.

The motion, passed at Full Council on 28 January 2026, commits the authority to recognising the vital role that healthy water systems play in community wellbeing, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

The newly adopted charter sets out a clear vision: that the rivers Wye, Leadon & Severn, along with their tributaries in the district, should be treated as a living system with fundamental rights. These include: the right to be free from pollution, to sustain rich biodiversity and thriving wildlife, to regenerate to a health state, to flow freely without unnecessary blockages, & to be supported by robust, healthy catchments.

Council seeks proposals for potential housing and employment sites

Forest of Dean District Council is calling on landowners, developers, and other interested parties to put forward sites for potential housing or employment as part of this year's Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).

All sites received are assessed using a consistent methodology that considers site constraints such as physical, environmental and policy/legal matters. Decisions on whether land should be allocated for housing or employment will be made through the Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan processes that comply with policies in the Local Plan following public consultation and examination.

People looking to put forward any potential housing or employment sites can do so by completing either the online form, via email, or by post.

Forms are required to be submitted by 31 March 2026.