

Report for Swells Parish Council Tuesday September 15th 2020

District Councillor Dilys Neill

The District Council has had to make substantial & rapid changes to the way it works during the Covid pandemic; it is a moving target as Government guidelines change. Most staff have been able to work from home, but many have been redeployed to deal with changing demands on the council's services. So for example, the number of telephone enquiries has increased, many residents have been directed to the community help hub & other sources of support. The District has been responsible for dealing with business rate relief & administering business grants & also discretionary grants to charities. In the North Cotswolds for example, Cotswold Friends have been given grants to support their newsletter project. The Council is also working on a recovery plan focusing on four key themes: communities, the economy, the environment & sustainable Council services.

There is a lot of common ground between District & the County Councils

Climate Change.

I enclose a pictorial representation of climate change in England since 1884. The District Council under the guidance of our Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Rachel Coxcoon, & Climate Change Officer, Chris Crookall-Fallon has produced a comprehensive Climate emergency strategy which will be debated at our Full Council meeting on 23rd September. There are some actions over which the Council has direct control such as "greening" their own buildings, vehicle fleet & operations. The Council also has indirect control via procurement, for example sustainable energy. The local plan is being reviewed with the aim of being "green to the core." However, all the above actions will only produce a small reduction in the District's carbon emissions, & equally important is work to engage with local businesses, communities & Town & Parish Councils to educate, support & encourage actions to reduce harmful emissions.

Emergency Active Travel & reordering of Town Centres.

After an initial flurry of activity to look at ways of making social distancing easier in our Town Centres, very little has happened in Stow. Schemes in larger towns such as Cirencester & Cheltenham which involve altering traffic flow to allow more room for pedestrians have been successful. However, the comprehensive plans for Stow which included closing Digbeth St. & Church St were rejected by Stow Town Council after pressure from local businesses. I understood that we would be getting some temporary parking changes to allow for wider walkways & space for pubs & cafes to serve customers outdoors but this has not happened, & now the main summer tourist season is drawing to a close, the moment may have passed. All we have in Stow are

signs directing pedestrian movement which are largely ignored. This is disappointing & a missed opportunity, although I understand that there is funding for further measures to be put in place. The District Council did also supply packs with advice & stickers for shops & businesses which have been well received & also have provided extensive advice & webinars to hospitality businesses. All of us I am sure want to avoid a local lockdown.

Cabinet.

CDC Cabinet has a regular monthly meeting which is streamed for members of the public. The Cabinet has been holding informal meetings at least once a fortnight & sometimes weekly during the lockdown.

Waste & recycling

As you know, Ubico now have a fleet of new vehicles & we should have all received new containers for our rubbish with extensive instructions about what to put in each one. Unfortunately, the introduction of the new system coincided exactly with the start of lockdown & there were teething problems. I hope that waste collections are back to normal for most people now. Ubico empty over 150,000 waste containers in the district each week, the volume of waste both residual & recyclable has gone up during lockdown, this is especially true for food waste. Some of the older Ubico vehicles, particularly the street cleaning fleet need replacing & a budget has been set aside for this. New vehicles produce less emissions, but at the moment, only a few of the smaller vehicles are electric. The vehicles will soon be equipped with in cab technology which should make collections more efficient, for example, missed collections which are reported to the office can be fed back to the crews while they are still in the area.

Sustainable transport

District Councillors & officers are keen to work with the County to produce sustainable transport solutions including public transport & cycling. It is very encouraging to see the amount of public interest, particularly in cycling & Nigel & I have been bombarded with suggestions for potential routes.

Health, wellbeing & leisure

SLM is the company which is contracted to run the three large leisure centres in Cotswold District, Cirencester, Bourton on the Water & Chipping Campden, as well as the Corinium Museum. The District Council approved a grant at their meeting at the end of July to enable SLM to reopen all these facilities with appropriate restrictions in place. Jenny Forde, the Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing, along with officers from the council has been working closely with community groups during the pandemic to make sure that vulnerable people are supported. A survey has been undertaken to find out how residents keep active & the Council are also drawing up a list of sport &

leisure facilities both public & private along with clubs & activities throughout the district.

Structure of the District Council, priorities & next Full Council meeting

There have been some major changes in the way in which CDC operates & in some of the personnel. Nigel Adams, our head of paid services retired in July & this post will be replaced with a CEO. There were 48 applicants for this position & interviews will be taking place shortly, We have a new monitoring officer, Patrick Arran & new officers appointed to deal with climate change & ecological issues as well as an officer who will work with businesses to help grow & support the economy on the district.

The administration has declared five priorities:

- Respond to the challenges presented by the climate change emergency
- Deliver good quality social rented homes
- Present a local plan which is green to the core (about to undergo a partial update)
- Ensure that all services delivered by the council are delivered to the highest standard.
- Help residents, businesses & communities to access the support they need to ensure a high level of health & well being.

There is now a comprehensive action plan to back up these priorities which will be debated at the full council meeting. We will be also looking at a revised budget, as the council has had a significant loss of income during the pandemic, & performance reports. A vast amount of information is available to the public on the District Council's website, & you can attend most of the full council & committee meetings (virtually at the moment.) For example, there is a planning committee every 2nd Wednesday in the month & the next Full Council meeting is on 23rd September at 6 p.m.

Finally! The pay & display machine in the Mangersbury Rd Car park was vandalised at the beginning of the year. A decision was made not to replace it immediately as CDC were looking at introducing new cashless machines, & a pay by phone option is available. However, there have been a lot of complaints as the phone payment is a real nuisance, involving downloading the MiPermit App which apparently doesn't always work. The council will be changing the contractor to PaybyPhone which should be more user friendly & a new payment machine, probably card only will be installed next month.

Graphical representation of climate change in England since 1884

