

## District Councillor's Update for Blockley Parish Council Meeting, 19 March 2026

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### 1. Planning – Local Plan Update

Feedback from the Local Plan Consultation has been published today; I haven't had a chance to review it but there is a high level summary available here: . <https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news/community-input-shapes-next-steps-in-cotswold-district-councils-local-plan-update>

At the full council meeting yesterday, we agreed to move a planned extraordinary council meeting from June to August, to allow the team working on the Local Plan update enough time to process the phenomenal number of responses to the Local Plan Consultation and review the new sites that were put forward by landowners. Around 200 new sites were put forward and due diligence to assess whether they are developable and deliverable must be undertaken. These are not in the public domain so I don't know if it includes any sites in the Parish.

The next consultation (Regulation 19) will also be delayed by a few weeks and will now launch at the tail end of the summer. The full details of sites proposed for development will be available at that point.

### 2. Planning – changes to the delegation protocol.

Some minor changes were made to the delegation protocol at full council yesterday, to add clarity to how conflicts of interest are handled: councillors cannot take part in planning Committee decision making if they have a relevant disclosable interest (and should discuss any possible interests with the legal team in advance of a Planning Committee meeting).

### 3. Enforcement of Planning issues

Councillors continue to have concerns about the rate at which enforcement cases are being resolved. Often times they are complex and challenging to resolve but this is exacerbated when the team is not operating with a full complement. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be reviewing enforcement in the coming months but in the meantime, the following information was supplied in response to a members question:

“There are currently 684 live planning enforcement cases as of 09/03/2026, with 420 of these designated as backlog, originating from 31/12/2024 or earlier. The team has recently been re-structured, including the creation of 2 additional roles, resulting in a team of 6. Four of the six roles are currently filled following recruitment in January (including 2 agency staff). A further role will be filled on 30/03/2026 following a successful recruitment campaign and we anticipate the final role to be filled when an officer returns from long term sick in late March/early April. As such, it is hoped in the coming months the team will return to 100% staffing and will have capacity to tackle the backlog. It should be noted that the nature of planning enforcement means that there will always be cases outstanding as formal action may be required if matters cannot be resolved through negotiation or a new planning application. Formal action, by its nature, is often lengthy and usually comes at the end of an unsuccessful dialogue.”

#### **4. Overview and Scrutiny**

I stood in as vice chair at our last meeting when we received a useful update on LGR from the Chief executive and other lead officers. There is a huge body of work taking place to prepare for one or two unitary authorities. We also discussed how Scrutiny of the decisions around the creation of the new authority (or authorities) would take place.

We also covered how the CDC portion of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money is allocated – a number of improvements in the processes of applying for and awarding funds were identified by officers and these will be implemented in the coming months.

I was pleased to retain my place on the Overview & Scrutiny Committee amid reorganisation to reflect the new political balance, following recent by-elections.

In line with the Extraordinary full council meeting in August, which will cover the Local Plan, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also meet in early August to scrutinise the progress of the Local Plan.

#### **5. Political make-up of the Council**

The Liberal Democrats have won both the recent by-elections (The Rissingtons in January and The Beeches, Cirencester in March) so the Council is now made up of 22 Liberal Democrats, 10 Conservatives, 1 Green and 1 independent councillor.

#### **6. Climate and Ecological Transformation in Cotswold District and Gloucestershire**

I was very pleased to support a proposal that Food and Farming be included as an active element within climate planning work, in the context of local government reorganisation (the creation of a unitary authority to replace the existing District and County Council in Gloucestershire). The motion was brought forward by Cllr Jenkinson and Cllr McKeown who have roles relating to Farming and Climate respectively.

Recognising the significant potential of local agriculture to contribute positively to climate and ecological recovery, and the need for coordinated local and regional support to enable this, Full Council resolved to:

*1) Request that the Chief Executive and the Leader propose the following when representing the Council on the work to prepare for local government reorganisation:*

- a) That the LGR Programme formally adopts Food and Farming as an active element within its climate planning work - whether as its own strand or as a sub-strand as officers determine as most effective; and*
- b) That the LGR Programme uses Climate Leadership Gloucestershire's Food and Farming track as a convening mechanism.*

*2) Report back to the July 2026 meeting of the Council with an update on the development of the Future Operating Model(s) of the new unitary council(s) and how Food and Farming is being considered within them and including the following:*

- a) who will take ownership of it (political and officer leads),*
- b) what the early priorities are, and*
- c) which partners could be involved (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, catchment partnerships, Environment Agency, National Landscapes, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, National Farmers Union, and others as appropriate).*

The Conservative group abstained on the vote suggesting that this shouldn't be a priority and questioned whether now was the right time and place to work on this. It will be no surprise to hear that I strongly disagreed with their position and endorsed the motion with enthusiasm. We have a lot of farmland in our

District and across Gloucestershire, and there is huge potential for local agriculture to contribute positively to climate mitigation, carbon storage and ecological recovery.

#### **7. Local Government Reorganisation/Devolution**

The government's consultation on plans for Gloucestershire is still open for a few days and residents are encouraged to share their views via the survey here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-gloucestershire/proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-gloucestershire>

With regards to joining a strategic authority, the CDC leader Cllr Mike Evely advised that all Gloucestershire Council Leaders are in agreement that joining the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) would be the best option for Gloucestershire.

#### **8. Low Income Family Tracker programme (LIFT)**

In February, CDC reported successes of the Low Income Family Tracker programme (LIFT) which has helped more than 9,300 residents across the district to access more than £341,000 in financial support since the tool was launched in December 2024. Full story here: <https://news.cotswold.gov.uk/news/targeted-data-driven-support-puts-money-back-into-the-pockets-of-cotswold-residents>

The government recently announced a £53 million fund to help vulnerable households cope with increases in heating oil costs. Support will be targeted to help low-income households in rural communities and it is to be expected there will be a significant number of these in our district. Details about the process are still to be confirmed and CDC will promote this to qualifying residents when possible.

- 9. Casework.** I have been supporting residents with issues around housing, planning and community concerns. I also attended a meeting at Haberdashers with BPC's Cllr Turton to discuss the situation with the Local Green Space land that has been purchased and will be sold on (as a separate title) with properties on the development.

#### **10. Community litter picking**

I joined volunteers in Draycott to undertake a litter pick of the village and surrounding roads. There was a great turnout and lots of litter collected. I have liaised with LVH and Blockley's litter pick will take place from 2pm on the afternoon of 29<sup>th</sup> March with tea & biscuits available for volunteers. Paxford residents are leading a litter picking session on Sat 28<sup>th</sup> March (meet 10am at the village hall). A date for Aston Magna is still to be confirmed.