

Stroud District Councillors' Report – March 2021

Report of meetings during February

All Stroud District Council and Committee papers can be found here:

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/meetings>

Full Council meeting – 25 February

The meeting approved the SDC budget for 2021/22. Papers can be found [here](#).

The budget includes continuing commitments to communities and the environment with £1.1million for projects relating to the coronavirus pandemic, £109,000 for regeneration projects, £115,000 for economic recovery, £60,000 for a strategy for wider benefits of the canal restoration projects, £20,000 on partnerships to develop community hubs and an extra £113,000 to support the council's aim to make the whole district carbon neutral by 2030 which includes retrofitting energy-saving measures in Council and private homes.

There is also £3.6million of capital works for environmental schemes including green homes, water source heating and promoting cycling schemes. The New Homes programme continues with £31 million in allocated funding.

A Band D household's bill for Stroud District Council services will go up by 2.35%, to £217.52 per year, from April 2021.

IT equipment for councillors - Following regular meetings of an IT Member's Working Panel, chaired Cllr Tucker, a resolution was put before Council to raise the allowance for members to either purchase IT equipment or participate in a loan-offset alternative with SDC. The previous allowance was set in 2010 and was no longer adequate for Members to carry out their elected duties properly, particularly during lockdown and foreseeable non-Ebley Mill based web-based conferencing facilities. The Motion, which was supported by an Independent Remuneration Panel, was passed unanimously.

Strategy & Resources Committee – 11 February

The papers for the meeting can be found [here](#). Papers were approved as follows:

- The Fair Pay and Senior Pay Policy Statement 2020-21. SDC operate well withing the guidelines for min to max salary levels.
- The continuing availability of the Council Tax Support Scheme.
- The Budgets set by individual Committees for 2021-22 and the revised Fees and Charges for SDC services were approved.

Other aspects of finance were discussed ahead of the presentation at Full Council described above.

Updates were received from the following groups that Members and/or officers participate in:

- o Leadership Gloucester
- o Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee
- o Brimscombe Port
- o Corporate Delivery Plan
- o Corporate Peer Challenge
- o Update on support for the Leisure Contract

- o Review of Council Tax Hardship Scheme.

Development Control Committee – 23 February

Committee papers can be found [here](#).

Brimscombe Port plans were approved - the Committee supported important infrastructure works which are crucial for creating a new waterside community. Officers have been given delegated authority to grant permission for a canal basin and highways infrastructure at Brimscombe Port – which means that the Council can work towards finding a development partner to transform the former industrial site with more than 150 new homes in a sustainable development with employment, commercial, retail, leisure, public space, community and business opportunities.

Positive conversations continue to help existing tenants (including Stroud Furniture Bank, The Long Table and Rush Skatepark) to find new premises. They had been granted temporary leases in some of the redundant 1960s and 70s industrial buildings which will be demolished as part of the project.

The next step will be to procure a developer partner, then draw up a detailed planning application for the redevelopment proposals – that will be preceded by more public consultation. Future plans for cycle provision will be addressed during this process. Although it is a brownfield site there are some heritage buildings including the Listed stone-built Port Mill and Salt Warehouse, which will be retained.

For more information on this project see: www.stroud.gov.uk/brimscombeport

Environment Committee – 4 February

Committee papers can be found [here](#).

- **Ubico contract extended for five years** - The Committee agreed to extend the contract with Ubico to continue to provide refuse, recycling, food and garden waste collections alongside other environmental services such as street cleaning and grounds maintenance. Ubico has also recently taken over the grounds maintenance function at Stratford Park.

The Committee recognised that Ubico offers value for money and was particularly complimentary about its response to the pandemic. SDC stopped outsourcing its waste and recycling service in 2016 and introduced a compostable food waste collection to its recyclable and residual waste collections with Ubico, in which Stroud District Council is a shareholder. Thanks to this partnership with Ubico and efforts by residents the District threw away the least residual waste to landfill/incineration per household in England in 2018. Find out more www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/bins-rubbish-and-recycling
- **Waste management policy** – a new document was approved. This waste policy has been drafted to be accessible to residents. The waste policy document does not make wholesale changes to the original policy, rather it brings existing practices up to date and outlines the standard waste services that all SDC residents can expect, including the collection of waste, recycling and food waste. Minor alterations to the waste management service have generally been brought about by operational need, or best practice. In summary, the changes are:
 - o **Battery Recycling** – batteries represent a considerable fire risk and have caused multiple vehicle and transfer station blazes throughout the country. The original policy indicates an intention to recycle batteries. However, given the legislation that mandates retailers to offer a free take back scheme on site, SDC no longer collect at the kerbside.
 - o **Additional Waste at Christmas/New Year** – for many years SDC stipulated that residents can present one additional sack on the collection immediately after Christmas, whilst the original policy suggests we will accept two.
 - o **Additional Waste Capacity for large families and similar** – In recent years SDC has changed from offering an additional wheelie bin to provide extra capacity, to giving a supply of beige sacks. This allows regular review of the requirement for additional capacity and limits additional capacity to realistic levels.

- o **Communal Bins** – where communal (commercial style 1100 litre) bins are used, as a preference over 140 litre bins for individual flats, SDC no longer provide the receptacle and now place the onus on the management company to buy and maintain a bin that meets our specifications. This is usually catered for within the management fee.
- o **Recycling Boxes and Food Waste Caddies** – the size of these receptacles has changed slightly to reflect market popularity and in the case of recycling boxes, to minimise health and safety implications for crews. Previously SDC used recycling boxes with a 55 litre capacity and food waste caddies with 7 litres capacity. For the last number of years, the standard issue has been 44 litres and 5 litres respectively. Residents can use multiple receptacles to increase this capacity if desired.
- o **Missed Collections** – the timescale has been simplified, changing from rectification by the end of the following day, to a simpler 48 hours.

The new policy document relates solely to standard waste collection elements which is where the majority of customer contact is generated. It is hoped that residents will be able to self-serve and find answers to questions online once the final version is published on the website. This will bring SDC into line with the practice of many waste collection authorities who have publicly available service documents. The Policy presented to the committee can be found [here](#).

Housing Committee – 2 February

Committee papers can be found [here](#).

- **Energy Strategy Action Plan Update** – the Committee approved a paper with a commitment to provide (in September 2021) a detailed costed plans for a whole house retrofit for each council home by 2030 (in line with the SDC Carbon Neutral 2030 Strategy) and an outline costed plan of options to achieve an ‘enhanced improvements’ scenario across the 30 years of the Medium Term Financial Plan for the Housing Revenue Account.
- **Eastington Community Land Trust** – the Committee agreed to allocate grant funding from the General Housing Funds of £50,000 to the Community Land Trust to support the purchase of land for affordable homes. The Eastington Community Land Trust has already delivered 23 homes for affordable rent – and plans a further 31 homes, to meet local demand.
- **Sheltered Modernisation Programme** – the Committee approved two more schemes to be modernised in 2021/22: Jenner Court in Berkeley and Vizard Close in Dursley. Modernisation works at Willow Road in Stonehouse were completed a week ahead of schedule in December 2020. This was the first “Independent Plus” scheme to be modernised following modernisation of four “Independent Living Hubs”. A Hub Coordinator has been appointed to develop the provision of the sheltered housing / Independent Living Hubs in the community. Modernisation is yet to be scheduled for Dryleaze House in Wotton as it has been assigned a “green” classification and so is lower down the priority list.
- **A new Income Collection Strategy** for Tenant Services 2021-24 was approved. This strategy sets out the priorities to ensure the continued financial viability of the service, and how SDC will work with customers to support them to pay their rent on time.
- **Performance Monitoring** – the report showed that 5 new homes had been completed in Woodchester in November and that contracted had been awarded for construction of 36 homes in Nailsworth, Minchinhampton and Eastington. Planning decisions are awaited for 5 units in Ebley and planning applications are being prepared for 36 new homes in Cam and Dursley. In terms of rent collection, there has been an increase of rent arrears of 35% this year. Officers are continuing to engage with tenants to ensure they receive the support needed to manage their rent accounts and sustain their tenancies.

Community Representatives needed for Review Panel – review of street & building names

SDC is looking for two community representatives to help with a review of street and building names, statues and architectural features to ensure they represent the community's values and those of an inclusive council. As part of its response to issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement last year and its commitment to tackle racism, the Council decided to undertake a review and community consultation.

The consultation will start in May and is not just be about removal versus preservation but about promoting equality through a sense of place. The Review Panel will analyse responses and put forward any appropriate recommendations.

The consultation will work within new laws announced by Government in January which say all historic statues, plaques and other monuments will now require full planning permission to remove, ensuring due process and local consultation in every case, and that the law will make clear that historic monuments should be retained and explained. Applications close on 11 March. Further details are available [here](#).

Annual council newsletter

Every household in the Stroud district will have received a copy of SDC News during February. This annual update on services is to keep the public informed on current projects – reaching out to those in particular who do not have internet access. It costs approximately 28p per copy to produce and distribute and is printed on FSC certified paper.

Meetings attended by District Councillors in February

- 1 Feb North Nibley Parish Council (all)
- 2 Feb SDC Housing Committee (Cllr Braun)
- 3 Feb Meeting with contractors Ascend to discuss findings of project on SDC culture (Cllr Braun)
- 4 Feb Member Briefing – Ubico (Cllr Braun)
Meeting with local MPs (Cllr Tucker)
Group Leaders meeting with CEO (Cllr Tucker)
Environment Committee meeting (Cllr James)
- 5 Feb Board Meeting – The Keepers Wotton Area Community Hub (Cllr Braun)
Chaired ITC IT Working Group (Cllr Tucker)
- 8 Feb Cllr workshop on SDC organisational values and behaviours (Cllr Braun)
Stroud District Climate Action Network Forum (Cllr Braun)
- 10 Feb Meeting of Alliance Group Leaders (Cllr Tucker)
Meeting with Strategic Director- Communities (Cllr Tucker)
- 11 Feb Strategy & Resources Committee Meeting (Cllr Tucker)
- 12 Feb Chaired ITC IT Working Group (Cllr Tucker)
- 15 Feb Wotton Town Council meeting (all)
Wotton Area Climate Action Network (Cllr Braun)
- 16 Feb MP Cycling Forum (Cllr Braun)
- 17 Feb Brimscombe Port Redevelopment briefing (Cllr Braun)
- 18 Feb Zoom meeting with the CEO (Cllr Tucker)
Strategic Recovery Board meeting (Cllr Tucker)
- 19 Feb Greenway Project Meeting (Cllr Braun)
- 23 Feb SDC Housing Review meeting (Cllr Braun)
Meeting with Policy and Governance Manager (Cllr Tucker)
Zoom meeting with Development Control Committee (Cllr Tucker)
- 24 Feb Meeting of Alliance Group Leaders (Cllr Tucker)
- 25 Feb Full council (all)
- 26 Feb Board Meeting – The Keepers Wotton Area Community Hub (Cllr Braun)
Monthly Zoom meeting with CEO (Cllr Tucker)
Update meeting with Strategic Director- Communities (Cllr Tucker)