

**Cotswold District Council:** There was no full council meeting this month but at Overview and Scrutiny we reviewed the waste collection implementation (see below) and the draft budget with the medium-term financial strategy. The latter caused me great concern as it shows CDC reserves running out in 2025/26 and a significant budget gap with an associated borrowing requirement in 2026/27. The Chief Financial Officer highlighted this was a worst-case scenario and is dependent on any new settlement from the government, but it may need the administration to take drastic action to avoid issues. Presently they are forecasting around £4m to cover the capital cost of replacement bin lorry fleet, but are working to mitigate this by spreading the need for a wholesale replacement in one hit. However, 5 years ago the reserves stood at £13.4m with a further £7m in property, and they are forecast to be completely depleted in the next few years.

While there have certainly been issues created by the previous government's sporadic settlement, much of the over spend is self-inflicted – this includes the costs for breaking up and the in-sourcing of Publica service company resources (enduring impact of c£400k per year plus project costs), and they have just announced the arrival of two new communications roles costing a combined £250,000pa.

**Bins:** At Overview and Scrutiny Cllr Evamy gave a verbal update, with the Ubico management contributing. When the new rounds were introduced the Ubico management failed to inform their employees that instead of finishing work mid-afternoon, they would be required complete a full day. This obviously caused individuals urgent issues with childcare and other commitments, but management were shocked that a significant number of staff suddenly went off 'sick'! The management also failed to tell workers that they had fitted tracking technology in the trucks. It has taken many weeks to rectify these issues that could so easily have been avoided with sensible advance dialogue with the crews. Both Cllr Evamy and Ubico have offered unreserved apologies for the inconvenience caused to residents.

The good news is that most issues have been resolved, and the new rounds will save £500k per year for a modest outlay of £91k (including the £75k they forgot to put in the budget!).

*Please continue to report missed collections to me as well as the official route at CDC - if I hear nothing, I will be delighted!*

**Roads:** My attempt to get recompense for a damaged tyre appears to be over. The local magistrates court has 'set aside' my claim on a technicality and I don't have the knowledge on how to overcome the required information. I have tried to get some legal representation but have been unable to get a law firm to help. So, GCC's expensive lawyers have once again been successful in fending off a perfectly valid claim for modest recompense. I do wonder how much more it has cost the taxpayer in legal fees versus refunding my burst tyre!

Pothole season is now in full swing, and I reported several holes the area, including a huge, repeat offender near Cherington lake – another example of wasting taxpayer's money by

dropping blobs of cold tarmac rather than fixing the cause, which in this case is spring water constantly flowing across the road. It was quickly fixed, with... more blobs of cold tar!

**Family Farm Tax:** Whatever your feelings on the recent budget, the 'APR' change means that inheritance tax of 20% will effectively apply on the full value of farms and rural estates above £1m. In my rural, agricultural ward, farming food for the nation does not pay the bills. Most farmers have to find creative ways to stay afloat, by doing two or more jobs or starting up a sideline business as they make stupidly little income from farming, even though they work long, lonely hours. Farmers tend to be asset-rich and cash poor. Farming is not a popular vocation due to the low pay, difficult work and increasing risk of having crops ruined by extreme weather. Farming is like nursing, it is a vocation, often handed down from father to child. If they cannot afford to pass their business down to relatives, the family farm as we know it will die out, along with all the localised knowledge - every farm is unique having different topography, soils, weather exposure etc. and food security will decline. Family farmers are caretakers of our landscapes, the countryside would look completely different without them. Or perhaps we could build houses!

### **Councillor Tony Slater**

Cotswold District Council, Representing Grumbolds Ash with Avening.

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### **Other updates and information for Parish Councils:**

#### **HOW TO REPORT POTHOLE**

I recommend using this link, especially if you have a smartphone and can take a photograph of the pothole and identify the exact position. It is more efficient than emailing the council as officers get a daily schedule of these alerts.

Gloucestershire County Council, report a pothole:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/roads/your-highways-report-it/>

#### **FIX MY STREET**

Report, view, or discuss local problems like graffiti, fly tipping, broken paving slabs, or street lighting. This reports back to the appropriate Council: [LINK](#)

#### **REPORT IT**

<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/report-it/>

New forms for reporting graffiti, overflowing bins, dog fouling and street cleaning are now live on the Cotswold District Council Website.

A map pin drop allowing for what3words location submissions can be used.

#### **PLEASE! NEVER PUT BATTERIES IN YOUR GENERAL WASTE**

Recycling operators and vehicles could be put in real danger. A 2021 study claims that Li-ion batteries cause about 48% of all UK waste fires per year, resulting in millions in damage to waste operators, fire services and the environment.

Recycling centres are full of combustible materials and too many 'zombie' batteries are going into either recycling bins or black rubbish bags, even small lithium-ion batteries explode "with a rocket flame" if punctured. The ESA has launched a campaign called Take Charge which encourages people to dispose of batteries properly.

How can you help fight the zombies?

- ✶ Never put a battery in the bin
- ✶ Take batteries out of electricals (phones, vapes, cameras etc.) before recycling
- ✶ Always use the right recycling facilities for batteries. Check waste wizard if you aren't sure.