

CDC: At both the **Overview & Scrutiny** meeting and the full Council I asked the leader directly 'how much is the Publica* transfer project costing'? The response was a deafening silence! Nothing other than an original £500k (increased from a ridiculous £150k) has ever been acknowledged, and nothing that I have seen counters my original 'fag packet' estimate of £2-3m! What I have found out from the Chief Financial Officer and from published documents is that the cost of additional pension contributions will be £1.4m over the first 3 years, and there will be no savings as a result of the transition – in fact current estimates show an INCREASED cumulative cost of some £1.1m by 2027/28, contributing to a budget deficit forecast of almost £4m. That's a shortfall of FOUR MILLION POUNDS! The Leader's only response to this self-inflicted financial catastrophe is his repeated mantra that 'difficult decisions will need to be made'. As a council tax payer I am outraged by this 'do it at any cost' profligacy with our money when there is no need to do so.

Do check out the article in the Wilts & Glos Standard for more details.

*Publica is a shared service company owned by three local councils providing many of the operational functions to the councils.

Bins: The new bin collection schedule has been running for several weeks, and hopefully you haven't experienced too many issues. In Grumbolds Ash the missed collections rate is around 6-7%, but in other areas it is up to 19%! If you experience a missed collection, you can report it after 4:00pm and it should be rectified the next day. If you have repeated issues there is a complaints process on the CDC website – please also let me know and I'll notify Cllr Mike Every, who is the cabinet member responsible for the implementation. He has already apologised for the somewhat chaotic roll out of the new routes.

Planning Enforcement: This team has suffered with significant staff shortages in recent years and as a result some planning cases have slipped through this important safety net. At the CDC meeting I raised concerns about this and what plans were in place to rectify the issue, and also asked for performance stats to be provided against their published targets. I suggested they approach the Veterans charity as a potential source of officers as their skills have a good overlap with those needed in the role – the cabinet member will look into this.

Crime: There have been several thefts from churches in our area, so please look out for anything suspicious and check your security is as good as it can be.

Unsung Heroes: you may recall that a new award scheme was planned to recognise local heroes in the community. This has now been officially launched, with full details and nomination forms available on the CDC website. The first award will be made at the September CDC meeting.

Roads: It's fairly quiet on the roads in our area but do keep reporting potholes as you come across them.

My own case against GCC/Highways for tyre damage has been transferred to the local

magistrates court. They wanted to 'strike it off' due to lack of evidence, but hopefully this was because there was no facility on the system to enter it. I have now sent additional details in, and we'll see if it's enough to get into court.

Customer Service hours: In September 2023, the Council began trialling new opening hours for its customer services call centre, operating from 9am to 2pm instead of 9am to 5pm. It reduced the opening hours on quiet afternoons and increased operators on the phones during busy lunchtimes. At the same time the Council invested more in its online services and maintained its 9am to 5pm in person service at the council offices, in Cirencester and Moreton-in-Marsh. The change is estimated to save £125,000 per annum. CDC will now permanently change its call centre opening hours having seen a significant increase in the use of online services and improvements in customer satisfaction.

Councillor Tony Slater

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Other updates and information for Parish Councils:

SOLAR PANELS INSTALLED AT TRINITY ROAD OFFICES

Cotswold District Council's Trinity Road offices have had solar panels installed. The new solar system also includes a 130kWh battery storage unit which will increase the council's ability to use renewable energy beyond when the sun is shining and allow the Council to charge up overnight on cheap off-peak electricity from the grid. The power generated by the panels is largely expected to meet, and at times exceed, the building's electricity needs during the summer, allowing the Council to sell any excess energy back to the grid. This income will help offset any topping-up of the electricity required from the grid during the cooler months, when the panels will generate less power.

The panels are likely to save the District Council in the region of £42,000 per year once installed. The cost of the installation is likely to be recovered in just over five years.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK A QUESTION TO THE COUNCIL?

A parish councillor recently asked for guidance on asking a question at a full Council Meeting, and I found that guidance for doing so on the Council website is lacking. Firstly, inform democratic services democratic@cotswold.gov.uk that you intend to ask a question at full council, it helps them as the Chair will be notified. You do not have to disclose your question if you don't want to and you have one minute to pose it. The general advice is that you keep your question tight and precise in order to get a good answer. After your question has been answered/addressed, you are allowed to ask one follow up question. At the meeting, the Chairman will ask whether any members of the public present at the meeting wish to ask a question and he/she will decide on the order.

FREE CAR PARKING IN CIRENCESTER

Did you know that on the weekends and on Bank Holidays, free parking is available at St James Place Headquarters on Old Tetbury Road (GL7 1FP)? This is the open air carpark on the Old Tetbury Road, on the left just before the Leisure Centre. Also at weekends and Bank Holidays, there is free parking at the CDC offices in Trinity Road, and at Queen Street (just off Victoria Road).

HOW TO REPORT POTHOLES

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.