



**Responses to Member Questions for Council – 24 September 2025**

#	Questioner	Question	Cabinet Member	Response
1	Cllr Dilys Neill	<p>I have often raised concerns about the number of long-term empty properties across the district and in my own ward in particular (120) which I consider to be scandalous. The question I would like to ask today is about two specific properties, the Old Funeral Directors in Well Lane and the adjacent house, Shepherd's Cottage which are in the same ownership. These properties have been empty for over ten years and are in a state of disrepair and continuing to deteriorate. They have both been broken into and littered empty alcohol cans suggest that they may have been used for under-age drinking and possibly drug dealing. Windows have been broken with glass on the ground outside. Both properties have been repeatedly boarded up and then broken into. They are an eyesore in Stow and have attracted complaints from many residents. The latest concern is that they are</p>	Cllr Juliet Layton, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning	<p>With regards to Revenues (Council Tax/Business Rates) the owners who are liable are meeting their legal obligation to pay all the associated charges raised. Whether this be for Business Rates or for Council Tax with the additional premium due to it being considered a Long-Term Empty Property. This means we are not required to take additional debt recovery steps, such as a Charging Order or Forced Sale to recover any debt. As confirmed on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2025, the Empty Homes Officer has referred the matter to the Principal Environmental Health Officer due to the condition of the property, and has requested that ERS attend the property at the earliest opportunity. The Council served notices to board up the properties and carried out works in default to make the properties secure. The costs of the works are to be recovered from the owner. In spite of much correspondence with the landowner, no engagement is forthcoming. The service is currently investigating further complaints relating to the presence of pests. If found to be necessary the Council will take action in line with the adopted enforcement policy. The issue of houses being empty is being considered in the development of a private</p>



		infested with rats which are getting into the roof space of the house to which the properties are attached. The owner of the adjacent house has employed a pest control officer who is unable to gain access to the empty properties and so the rats are still present, causing a nuisance and health hazard. CDC know who owns the property but officers seem unable to take action. What can the council do about this longstanding and worsening problem?		sector housing strategy. Commercial properties are outside the remit of the Housing Team.
2	Cllr Tom Stowe	Does the council monitor and record the number of Social Houses sold on the open market by Housing associations in the district?	Cllr Juliet Layton, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning	Private Registered Providers of Social Housing (RP's) are required by section 176 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, to notify the Regulator of Social Housing (the regulator) about any disposal of a dwelling that is social housing. RPs are not obligated to notify the Local Authority. Some of our RP Partners do advise us, as a matter of courtesy, when they are planning a sale of an affordable dwelling.
3	Cllr David Fowles	The current administration has frequently stated its commitment to building affordable houses and has appointed a	Cllr Juliet Layton, Deputy Leader and Cabinet	The delivery of Affordable Homes is being influenced in a number of ways. <u>Strategic Sites</u>



		<p>very experienced officer to identify sites. Please could you confirm how many sites have been identified, how many houses these sites could deliver and if any of these sites have progressed to planning applications?</p>	<p>Member for Housing and Planning</p>	<p>CDC Officers are considering if there are suitable locations where strategic development may be appropriate.</p> <p><u>Open Market Housing Development</u></p> <p>The most common route for Affordable Housing delivery is via Open Market Housing Development providing a proportionate quantity of Affordable Homes. As part of the Local Plan Update, officers will be reviewing opportunities to allocate additional sites as suitable for Residential Development.</p> <p><u>Affordable Homes Delivery via smaller/Rural Exception Sites</u></p> <p>A Pipeline of Affordable Housing led sites is being developed which may be suitable for delivery. To date 8 potential sites have been identified which are at various stages of feasibility/pre-planning review. The sites identified to date may have the potential to deliver up to 100 Affordable Homes.</p>
4	Cllr Tom Stowe	<p>At Full Council in November 2022, I proposed a motion on the "Provision of Community Public Access Defibrillators on New Developments".</p> <p>This motion was passed unanimously, and officers began work incorporating new policies into the local plan. Policy SD4.3 –</p>	<p>Cllr Juliet Layton, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning</p>	<p>The draft Health and Wellbeing policy includes provision for community public access defibrillators on new developments, and this will be put forward in the Regulation 19 Plan.</p> <p><a href="https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/gdspmaj4/c2-1-2-draft-policies-with-tracked-changes.pdf">https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/gdspmaj4/c2-1-2-draft-policies-with-tracked-changes.pdf</a></p>



		relating to the provision of defibrillators on new developments - was included in the draft local plan update. Given the current situation with the Cotswold Local Plan and the work now being carried out to develop a new plan, please can you confirm that the Council remains committed to retaining these policies in the new Local Plan?		<p>Policy SD4: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p> <p>"3. Major development proposals will also be required to install sufficient, community public access defibrillator(s) (CPADs) for the development, where there is currently no existing coverage, so that no part of the development is further than 400m away from a safe, walkable access to a defibrillator as illustrated by the latest public access defibrillator location mapping"</p>
5	Cllr David Fowles	For several years I have monitored the use of the Cirencester Rugby Club car park. As I recall it cost over £300k to convert, since then it appears to have had little or no use. Could you confirm the occupancy levels and income that CDC derives from this car park?	Cllr Paul Hodgkinson, Cabinet Member for Health, Culture and Visitor Experience	<p>The income to date from permits as this location is £17,124. There are 18 live permits as of 16 September 2025. As Cllr Fowles will recall, the decision to fund the redevelopment of this car park was taken by the previous administration prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was done to provide decant parking during the development of a multi-storey car park at the Waterloo – a project which has not been pursued. The demand for season tickets at the car park has therefore been much lower than was anticipated when that decision was taken.</p> <p>We have encouraged season ticket holders to use the car park by charging considerably less for season tickets in the Whiteway than in our town centre car parks.</p>



6	Cllr Len Wilkins	Bourton-on-the-Water has been overwhelmed by tourists this year. The superb weather has encouraged them to stay until late with many remaining in Bourton until 9pm and 10pm. Bourton Parish Council has written to CDC some weeks ago requesting that public toilets stay open later and suggesting that car parking fees are charged beyond the current 6pm deadline. It is still awaiting a reply. Is there any information I can give them?	Cllr Paul Hodgkinson, Cabinet Member for Health, Culture and Visitor Experience	<p>The public toilets have summer opening times and winter opening times.</p> <p>During the summer, Church rooms is open from 8am to 6pm and Rissington Road is open from 8am to 8pm.</p> <p>We will be bringing forward a new Parking Strategy to November's Cabinet which will include consideration of charging periods.</p>
7	Cllr Gina Blomefield	<p>There are many areas across the Cotswold District where the current sewage systems are at or near full capacity.</p> <p>With the likely increase in new development in the coming years, please can you confirm that the concerns of local communities raised during the planning application process will be given due consideration and robust conditions will be applied to ensure local sewage networks are able to cope with the increased demand on their systems?</p>	Cllr Juliet Layton, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning	<p>Wastewater infrastructure is a material planning consideration, and any representations made by local communities during the planning application process will be fully considered by the Local Planning Authority (LPA).</p> <p>Where there is potential for foul water discharge into a watercourse, this is a material issue. In such cases, the LPA can attach planning conditions requiring infrastructure upgrades to be delivered prior to the occupation of all or part of a development. This is generally discussed with the utility provider who will provide details of the existing capacity, and a condition will often be sufficient to ensure appropriate measures are in place to prevent pollution and protect water quality.</p>



				<p>It is important to note that the LPA assesses applications within the framework of national and local planning policy. Broader infrastructure investment decisions fall under the remit of utility providers and are outside the direct control of the planning process. Under the Water Industry Act 1991, wastewater utilities such as Thames Water have a statutory duty to connect developments to the existing network. These connections are typically arranged directly between the developer and the utility provider, rather than through the planning system.</p>
8	Cllr Laura Hall-Wilson	<p>At the last meeting of Full Council I enquired about the process for distributing funds from UKSPF and the allocation to Tetbury through the Towns Centre Initiative being strange because there were no terms of reference for the initiative and the money was essentially being awarded by CDC to itself.</p> <p>Is there any update on the progress of this Town Centre initiative and any detail as to what the money allocated is likely to be spent on?</p>	Cllr Tristan Wilkinson, Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation	<p>The funds were awarded to allow the Council to procure expertise to support three town centres where vacancy rates are higher than the district average, with the support of the local town councils and business groups. I'm happy to report that we're in the process of appointing the successful bidder.</p> <p>In terms of spend, the project will review local circumstances, and liaising with local partners, identify appropriate solutions.</p> <p>Until the work is completed, we do not know what the consultant's recommendations will be. Some may simply require officer or partner time. Where recommendations come with a cost, funding will need to be identified by the partners involved</p>



9	<p>Cllr Jon Wareing</p>	<p>Denying the existence of a problem is a well understood tactic to avoid having to develop a solution for it.</p> <p>This is why it was pivotal that in July 2019 Cotswold District Council declared a climate emergency. CDC's response to this meant the Council committed to a range of activities including taking leadership in developing a strategy to address the emergency.</p> <p>Would the Leader of the Council agree with me and the Cabinet Member for Health, Culture and Visitor Experience, that we face another crisis in our District whereby Bourton-on-the-Water, and other iconic locations within the District, are suffering the burden of overtourism as defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors experiences in a negative way."?</p> <p>Would the Leader also therefore commit that the Council ensures that, going forward,</p>	<p>Cllr Mike Every, Leader of the Council</p>	<p>The Cotswolds is one of England's most iconic and internationally recognised destination brands. The region offers year-round appeal, with immersive experiences in food, drink, arts, cultural events and outdoor recreation.</p> <p>The visitor economy is a cornerstone of CDC's prosperity, generating £359 million in direct visitor spend and supporting more than 4,650 FTE jobs - 16% of employment in the Cotswold District.</p> <p>However, alongside the huge economic benefits there is no denying that the volume of visitors (over five million day visitors to the Cotswold District) puts significant pressure on our infrastructure and can cause serious inconvenience to local residents. This is particularly acute in peak season, especially in good weather, as the vast majority of tourists are day visitors. This issue is not unique to Bourton-on-the-Water or the Cotswolds – most popular holiday destinations face this type of problem. Nor is this problem completely new - the Cotswolds has been a popular destination for decades - although since the Covid-19 pandemic started in 2020 we have seen an increasing focus on particular must-see locations of which Bourton appears to be one.</p>
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	<p>the work of the Council acknowledge this crisis and demonstrates it's support, through sustainable tourism approaches, to reverse the degradation of the social, economic and natural environments of these special localities that define the unique character of the District?</p> <p>By acknowledging the reality of overtourism for thousands of residents in the District you will give impetus for change, faith that local politicians do listen and optimism for restoring balance and harmony in our communities.</p>		<p>The Council does not have the responsibility nor the powers to resolve the issues created by volume tourism on its own. We don't have the power to restrict movements of people, nor to determine what business operates where. However, we want to help our communities to minimise the negative consequences of large numbers of visitors and maximise the benefit to the economy that visitors can bring.</p> <p>Through the additional charge on parking at Rissington Road Car Park, known as the Tourism Levy, we are raising funds to help the village manage the number of visitors it receives. We have used funds from this levy to pay for a village warden, look after the village green and pay for more parking enforcement to name just three projects funded by the levy.</p> <p>Cotswolds Tourism, jointly employed with West Oxfordshire, works closely with other local authorities, Cotswold National Landscape and tourism businesses to try to spread the visitor footprint out from the hotspots, and works to encourage sustainable tourism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It does not actively encourage new day visits to our villages – working on the principle that most regular day visitors do not interact with websites or social</li></ul>
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				<p>media channels anyway – its focus is on encouraging overnight stays and visits to attractions. The service does not promote Bourton itself – only visitor attractions in the village</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The service encourages journalists and visitors to consider visiting other towns and villages, particularly at peak times</li><li>• It only supplying media requests with out of season images of Bourton</li><li>• It encourages partners and businesses to share messaging that Bourton can be very busy at peak times and people should visit at less busy times or ideally, for the best experience, stay overnight</li><li>• It promotes local minibus tours that will pick up from accommodation or from Moreton railway station</li><li>• It discourages use of the 'Venice of the Cotswolds' tag line</li><li>• It encourages visitors to come by public transport</li><li>• It promotes walks to and from Bourton including a circular walk out of the village centre</li></ul> <p>I recognise that the negative impacts of tourism in Bourton have increased this year, particularly as we have had a very</p>
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				<p>sunny summer. I want our officers to continue to work with the community in Bourton to help to find solutions to the problems that residents face living their daily lives in the village.</p>
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