

Member Questions for Council – 20 March 2024

Question	Response
<p>Question 1 from Councillor Nikki Ind to Councillor Tony Dale, Cabinet Member for Economy and Council Transformation</p> <p>Following the recent Local Government Association survey, which found that most councils are aware of the agreement between mobile operators and the Government to switch off 2G and 3G mobile networks by 2033, can you please confirm to what extent is Cotswold District Council reliant on these networks, as opposed to the faster 4G and 5G technologies, and if we are currently reliant, what is the plan for upgrading systems to avoid loss of service? Clearly, any upgrades will have a financial impact on our already stretched budget, and I would like to be assured that provision has been made for this work.</p> <p>I am thinking primarily about parking meters, public toilets and alarm systems, but also waste in-cab technologies and telecare devices which may be being used by our residents.</p>	<p>4G has now been around for over a decade and systems using this type of technology are usually replaced at least every 7 years as the embedded software will no longer be supported and therefore are at risk of Cyber Attack.</p> <p>I can confirm that all the systems listed won't be affected by the switch off of 2G and 3G mobile networks as they use the 4G network.</p>

<p>Question 2 from Councillor Chris Twells to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Finance:</p> <p>The Leader appointed seven Cabinet Members following last year's local elections. Will the Deputy Leader tell us on how many days each Cabinet Member spent time on site here at Trinity Road since their appointment? I understand this data will be stored by the council via our security passes.</p>	<p>We do not collect attendance data and the security data we record cannot be used reliably for accurate attendance purposes.</p> <p>For example, the Council Chamber and other areas of Trinity Road can be accessed without using a security pass. Members who forget their card pass are often issued with temporary passes. Another example would be where a single Member or Officer accesses a door and multiple people enter at the same time.</p>
<p>Question 3 from Councillor Chris Twells to Councillor Joe Harris Leader of the Council:</p> <p>Many residents have contacted me to express their concern at the lack of progress with the Dolphins Hall project in Tetbury, which lies in my ward. The project was supposed to have been funded mainly via Section 106 contributions. There has been little obvious progress on site and the latest reports from Tetbury Town Council suggests that the project now requires at least another £50,000. In addition, the Town Council has admitted that a number of title deeds and other legal documents relating to the project have gone missing. Many residents share my frustration that TTC has failed to manage this expenditure or provide updates to residents.</p> <p>Given that it was this authority that originally provided the S106 monies to TTC, will either the Leader or the relevant Cabinet Member chair a</p>	<p>As the prelude to question sets out, this is a Tetbury Town Council matter.</p> <p>The District Council has previously invited its auditors, South West Audit Partnership, to undertake an investigation and it found that Cotswold District Council has discharged its obligations appropriately.</p> <p>The District Council has no jurisdiction over Tetbury Town Council's handling of the funds and the delivery of the project.</p> <p>Reference is made to several title deeds and other legal documents are missing. Tetbury Town Council has subsequently confirmed that the only missing document is a covenant to the access road between Sherwood Road and the Recreation Road. If you believe other legal documents are missing it is recommended that you bring such matters to Town Council's attention.</p> <p>I note the Project Chair of the Dolphins Hall Redevelopment Project last week offered you a meeting and is keen to engage you as the local ward member as the redevelopment progresses, I suggest this would be a great opportunity to understand more about the redevelopment and raise any concerns you have.</p>

<p>meeting with Town Councillors to discuss a way forward? It may be that we will have to commission an investigation by an external body.</p>	
<p>Question 4 from Councillor Len Wilkins to Councillor Juliet Layton</p> <p>Under the revised local plan CDC is working closely with several partners, including the National Trust, to increase access to the countryside. A new policy EN18 is to be provided for the Sherborne Park Estate near Northleach. The policy enables the production of a masterplan for the estate, which encourages more people to experience and enjoy Sherborne. 10.20.4 of the plan states that this will offer a sustainable tourism offer close to Bourton-on-the-Water which could help mitigate its 'honey pot' status.</p> <p>This particular honey pot has a large number of business owners who are worried about the effect of this new policy. Having just recovered from the effects of the Covid pandemic they are now suffering from the loss of the villages coach parking facilities and face have coaches banned from the village all together. What support, if any, can these business hope to receive from CDC as the local planning authority to ensure a level playing field and to ensure that any future development at Sherborne Park is supplementary to, rather than detrimental to, the vitally important businesses in Bourton?</p>	<p>The council is consulting on a draft Local Plan policy titled, EN18: Sherborne Park Estate Masterplan. It states that if the National Trust prepare a masterplan for the Sherborne Park Estate, then it would need to be prepared in consultation with local communities, relevant stakeholders and the council. The draft policy does not propose a masterplan.</p> <p>The draft policy sets out 11 criteria that a masterplan would need to adhere to, for example it would need to demonstrate how future development could be achieved without compromising the environment and local communities. The masterplan will act as a framework for determining any relevant planning application(s) that may come forward in the future.</p> <p>The draft policy has very limited status at this stage, and it is the first opportunity to gather members of the public feedback, such as this comment / question. The council will use this feedback to shape the eventual policy or, if deemed necessary, deleted from the pre-submission draft local plan i.e., the plan the council wishes to adopt.</p> <p>The National Trust has prepared concept plan and other supporting information, which is available to view on the council's website (https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/evidence-base-and-monitoring/ - within the "Local Plan update and Masterplan consultation" drop down menu).</p> <p>This provides an initial indication of the National Trust "Big Nature, Better Access" project on the Sherborne Park Estate. The policy is very much seeking to ensure a masterplan and future proposals on the estate are complementary in terms of the economy, community and the environment.</p> <p>The council welcomes and invites comments on the policy and useful suggestions to address the points raised.</p>

<p>Question 5 from Councillor Tom Stowe to Councillor Mike McKeown</p> <p>Please can you confirm the number of households who have signed up to a contract for solar panel installation via “Cotswold Home Solar”, the partnership between “Makemyhousegreen.com” and CDC?</p>	<p>In July 2023, Cabinet agreed to enter into an arrangement with Switchd Ltd trading as MakeMyHouseGreen, to co-brand and promote a district-wide domestic rooftop solar group purchasing scheme. The aim of this initiative is encouraging the domestic take up of Solar PV. The scheme launched in September and has so far resulted in 6 households having solar panels fitted, 7 more have paid a deposit and 64 customers are in the sales process. A total of 350 people have interacted with platform.</p> <p>MakeMyHouseGreen have recently agreed to fund letters to 4,000 homes, in addition to the existing social media promotion, depending on the results from this they may fund more letters.</p> <p>We are pleased with the progress to date, every home that installs solar reduces their energy bills and typically saves over a tonne of CO2 per year.</p>
<p>Question 6 from Councillor Len Wilkins to Councillor Juliet Layton</p> <p>At the Council's meeting on 24th January, changes were agreed to the planning scheme of delegation following recommendations by the Planning Advisory Service. These changes involve introducing a 28-day call in limit and will come into force on 1st April. These changes will involve significant changes to the way members work with, and engage with, Officers and Parish and Town Councils. Please can you confirm that an all member briefing by Senior Officers on the new process will be scheduled and confirm what engagement with Town and Parish Councils is planned?</p>	<p>Officers are in the process of arranging several events. With regards to members, an all-member briefing will be held online on Monday 25 March at 10am. For those unable to make the briefing a recording will be provided. A diary invitation should have made its way member’s calendars. With regards to Town and Parish Councils, the council is holding a ‘Planning Roadshow’ for Town and Parish Councils and the intention is hold the first event in July, but this will be confirmed nearer the time. This will be one of several planning topics at the first event.</p>

<p>Question 7 from Councillor David Fowles to Councillor Mike Evemy</p> <p>At the recent budget meeting, the Council approved capital expenditure in excess of £150,000 to make urgent repairs to the Council owned Old Station building which is in a very poor condition and will continue to deteriorate and cost a lot more money if nothing is done to secure its future. Over the years various approaches about the future of this important asset have been made to the Council by local organisations including the now defunct approach from New Brewery Arts. What plans does this administration have to secure the future of this building?</p>	<p>As announced at Full Council on 21st February the Council has issued a ‘Call for Interest’ encouraging local organisations and businesses to come forward with their ideas and funding schemes. The Council is looking for a new partner that can bring forward plans and secure funding to bring the building back into use. The ‘Call for Interest’ was promoted on 4th March, with stories in the local media and on the Councils social media accounts. Direct contact was also made with a number of local stakeholders to make them aware of this opportunity. A number of interested parties have already been in touch.</p>
<p>Question 8 from Councillor Daryl Corps to Councillor Juliet Layton</p> <p>Regarding the Local Plan update and the recent area ‘open sessions’ for members of the Public. Firstly, I want to thank James Brain and Mathew Britton, two fantastic officers. From 10am until 8am they stood valiantly answering hundreds and hundreds of questions from very concerned Residents of Moreton in Marsh and the surrounding Villages in the Redesdale Hall on Wednesday 6th March.</p> <p>The feedback I have been receiving from Residents is twofold.</p>	<p>The administration's number one priority us to avoid is the situation that we had in the first half of the last decade whereby developers had ‘free rein’ over the Cotswolds, and to quote Cllr Fowles the local authority ‘lost control of planning’ because of a failure to maintain an up-to-date local plan and 5-year housing land supply.</p> <p>This is one of the reasons why Moreton grew so rapidly without adequate infrastructure to support both existing residents and those who moved to new developments.</p> <p>A new local plan is the opportunity to right some of these wrongs and help fix Moreton; any plan to do this though will be predicated on some new development in the locality. For right or for wrong that is the way the national planning system works</p> <p>We’re committed to meaningful engagement with residents in Moreton and across the Cotswolds as we develop the next local plan. The development of a new local plan is a drawn out and complex process.</p>

One, they really want a clear and structured presentation of the proposed changes to the Local Plan, a properly structured meeting, chaired and minuted. They worry that the questions and concerns raised at the open day session were not properly documented. They worry this is not a genuine consultancy with Residents. They also saw the detailed, illustrated, clear and concise Masterplan for Cirencester and asked the question, why are we not getting one for Moreton? All they had were vague 'possible' proposals. For many residents the local plan document is confusing, its huge, it's not clear and concise, for many this can create suspicion over what's being hidden from them. A presentation in many resident's minds would at least go some way to giving the clarity that they want. The drop-in session was arranged with the best intentions, but is not enough for Residents, they deserve a proper presentation. Secondly, they are also asking why so many houses without a mention of any infrastructure? No environmental study or assessment on the potential impact on our services - our Doctors Surgery, Hospital, sewage treatment and the effect on our already heavily polluted Evenlode River? Cllr Layton, can the District Council reassure the people of Moreton:-

A –This is not a done deal?

B - They can have what they deserve, a properly chaired local plan update presentation?

The Leader and Chief Executive are currently looking at resourcing of the local plan process, which could include an officer, who's role is to help ensure that communities like Moreton are aware of engagement events, and how they can take part. It's also important that we help 'unpack' a lot of the process and associated planning jargon so residents can comment in a clear and informed way.

The drop in events were an opportunity for residents to ask questions about the Local Plan consultation and for planning officers to explain the proposals to residents. There were comments forms available on the day for residents to provide feedback. The best way to respond to the consultation, which is still open and closes on 7th April 2024, is to respond via your.cotswold.gov.uk.

A - This is not a done deal. This is the very start of the process of planning for housing, employment and infrastructure needs up to 2041.

The Local Plan consultation includes eight development strategy options – strategic scale growth of a settlement (e.g. in Moreton-in-Marsh) being one of those options, albeit the evidence we have gathered so far points towards this being part of the solution. We want to hear peoples' views though on how and where development needs up to 2041 can be accommodated in Cotswold District.

These will then be properly considered and responded to. Further evidence is also needed before any decision can be made – for example, a feasibility study on the proposed new road and an Infrastructure Delivery Plan. It may be that points raised in the consultation or further evidence that comes to light means that strategic scale growth in Moreton isn't the best solution.

B - We are holding a second event for residents in Moreton-in-Marsh to find out more from councillors and officers about the Local Plan and development proposals in Moreton-in-Marsh. The event will be in a Q&A format and attendees have been invited to submit questions in advance to local.plan@cotswold.gov.uk no later than midday on Wednesday 20 March.

C –There will be a concise Town “Masterplan” including all the relevant public Health assessments for Air quality and water?

D –Is this really the only option in CDC’s mind for Moreton as the scale is just staggering. Residents have been very clear with me that this is not NIMBYism, it’s the eyewatering scale and numbers of the housing being proposed and without a single mention of INFRASTRUCTURE or a proper presentation to them?

C - If, having considered all the consultation responses and obtained the necessary further evidence, Moreton-in-Marsh is determined to be a suitable location for strategic scale growth, then this will need to be planned properly in a new masterplan / strategy for the town. However, this would come further down the line.

Plan making is an iterative process whereby evidence gathering accumulates through the process. Early-stage environmental studies have been commissioned and published – examples include the Intergrated Impact Assessment and a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level I.

As the council begins to alight on a preferred strategy this will act as a catalyst for more in depth studies and assessments. Studies are published on the council’s website:

<https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/evidence-base-and-monitoring/>

D - The Local Plan consultation discusses eight development strategy options, which we are seeking feedback on. The scale of development mentioned in the Local Plan consultation document is around 1,500 additional dwellings for Moreton-in-Marsh up to 2041.

This number isn’t set in stone though – it’s an estimation, based on the evidence we have to date, which could be higher or lower. As mentioned previously, this is the beginning of the process of establishing how we collectively meet the needs of the future, jobs, housing, infrastructure, green spaces, etc.

We encourage and invite you and others, through the Local Plan consultation, to share views and to suggest credible alternative suggestions for how development in Cotswold District up to 2041 can be distributed.

Infrastructure - Future development will need to be supported by the necessary infrastructure. Any development proposals would be supported by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

It is also important to bear in mind that the government has set a target to deliver 300,000 additional homes each year. The government mandates how many homes the council needs to plan for. The 3,300 housing need figure that the Local Plan consultation discusses, and the figure of around 1,500 additional homes in Moreton-in-Marsh, both derive from the national housing need figure that is set by the national government and handed to the district council to deliver.

Furthermore, the National Planning Policy Framework operates a “principle in favour of sustainable development” policy, which is designed to ensure the government's targets are met.

For example, if the council does not prepare a plan the development industry is incentivised to submit speculative applications, which would likely lead to uncoordinated patterns of development and weaken the council's ability to negotiate needed infrastructure as we saw in the last decade.