ERMIN WARD

COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCILLOR REPORT

NOVEMBER 2026

@ErminWard
I post helpful information, including road closures for infrastructure repair etc., on my Ward Councillor Facebook page. Please could you mention this in your Parish News and Village Website. ***Underlined text is linked.***

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Parliamentary constituency is North Cotswolds CLIFTONBROWNG@parliament.uk
County Division is Cirencester North with Ermin - Mark.Harris@gloucestershire.gov.uk
GCC Cabinet Member for Highways - Mark.Harris@gloucestershire.gov.uk
Coberley County Division Bourton-on-the-Water & Northleach
Paul.Hodgkinson@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Forthcoming Committee Meetings (underlined texts are linked)

Wednesday 11 November	2.00 pm Planning and Licensing Committee
Monday 16 November	4.00 pm Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Thursday 19 November	6.00 pm Cabinet
Wednesday 25 November	2.00 pm Council
Thursday 26 November	2.00 pm Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis, Private Hire, and Street Trading

Recent Committee Meetings

Monday 5 October	4.00 pm Meeting of Audit & Governance
Monday 12 October	4.00 pm Meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday 14 October	2.00 pm Meeting of Planning and Licensing Committee
Thursday 15 October	6.00 pm Meeting of Cabinet
Tuesday 20 October	10.00 am Meeting of Cabinet Member for Finance Decisions
Thursday 22 October	2.00 pm Meeting of Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis, Private Hire, and Street Trading

Cabinet Meeting Decisions - 15 October

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)
The minutes of the September Cabinet meeting were approved, confirming the withdrawal of an item relating to Local Government Reorganisation following the Government's announcement on 7 September 2026 pausing implementation of its decision on reorganisation in Gloucestershire.

Private Rented Housing – Enforcement Policy
Cabinet approved a new Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy, reflecting the

powers and duties introduced by the Renters' Rights Act 2025, alongside existing housing legislation. The policy aims to protect tenants, support responsible landlords and ensure that housing standards are enforced consistently, fairly and proportionately.

2027/28 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy
Cabinet approved the budget strategy for 2027/28 and reviewed the Council's financial outlook through to 2030/31. Despite financial pressures facing local authorities nationally, CDC remains in a comparatively strong financial position, with no immediate risk of requiring exceptional financial support. The Council has made progress in reducing its projected budget shortfall and intends to maintain sound finances during Local Government Reorganisation. Cabinet also authorised the start of procurement for replacement waste vehicles identified in the 2027/28 fleet replacement programme, which can be funded without borrowing.

Council Tax – Age-Restricted Properties
Cabinet recommended an amendment to the Council Tax Premium Policy for second homes and long-term empty properties restricted to people aged 55 and over. Where a previous owner has died and an executor or administrator has been unable to sell the property despite marketing it at a reasonable price, an additional exemption of up to 12 months may be available. The proposed change must be approved by the full Council.

Council Tax Debt Write-Off
Cabinet approved the write-off of £5,760.12 in Council Tax debt after more than six years, following the exhaustion of all available recovery and enforcement options.

LGR Update

Local Government Reorganisation – Gloucestershire

The Government has indicated that it is 'minded' to confirm a single unitary authority for Gloucestershire, with a final decision expected before Christmas.

In an update to council leaders and chief executives on 29 October, followed by a statement to Parliament, Jim McMahon, the Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Growth, confirmed that all decisions announced in July have been withdrawn. However, the Government intends to reach a decision on Gloucestershire before the end of the year.

If confirmed, the proposed timetable is:

- **May 2026:** Gloucestershire County Council elections (already held).
- **May 2027:** Cotswold District Council elections, proceeding on existing ward boundaries.
- **May 2028:** Elections to the new unitary authority.
- **April 2029:** The new unitary authority formally takes over, replacing the existing county and district councils.

It is welcome that there is now greater clarity about the Government's intentions and that the single unitary model appears to be its preferred option for Gloucestershire. However, the process so far has been far from satisfactory. The withdrawal of previous decisions and the resulting uncertainty have caused considerable disruption, confusion for council staff and residents, and an estimated £3 million in costs to Gloucestershire taxpayers.

There are also legitimate questions about the cost and practicality of holding elections in three consecutive years. The May 2027 Cotswold District Council elections alone are expected to cost around £250,000, only to be followed by elections to the new authority in 2028 and the abolition of the existing councils in 2029.

While the revised timetable gives councils more time to prepare for reorganisation, it also means continuing financial and organisational pressures. There is a real risk that repeated elections will cause confusion and voter fatigue, potentially affecting turnout.

The priority now must be for the Government to provide certainty, minimise further unnecessary expenditure and ensure that the transition to a new council structure is properly planned, with taxpayers' money and the interests of Gloucestershire's residents firmly in mind.

New Government Policy Change to the Planning Decision-Making Process and Delegated Powers

The Government has introduced changes to the way planning applications are considered and decided, so from 31 October 2026, every local planning authority in England will operate under a national scheme of delegation.

There will be greater emphasis on decisions being made by planning officers under delegated powers. The new framework introduces a series of schedules setting out which applications officers can determine themselves and which may be referred to the Planning Committee. The aim is to establish a clearer, more consistent process, while retaining a route for elected members to request committee consideration where an application raises significant local issues or involves complex planning matters.

Cotswold District Council (CDC) has updated its Planning Protocol to reflect these changes. The new arrangements affect how applications are handled, when councillors can request a committee decision, and the responsibilities of members throughout the planning process.

1. How are planning applications classified?

Schedule 1 – Officer decisions

These applications are normally decided by planning officers without going to committee. They include most householder applications, minor residential and

commercial developments, lawful development certificates, many applications for approval of conditions, and certain amendments to existing permissions.

Councillors can still submit representations on Schedule 1 applications, but these will not automatically result in a committee hearing.

Schedule 2 – Officer decisions unless referred to committee

These applications are also normally decided by officers, but may be referred to the committee if the required referral process is satisfied. They include larger planning applications, listed building consent, certain amendments to existing permissions, major reserved matters, advertisements and some works involving Tree Preservation Orders.

Applications involving the Council or a member's own interest

A separate statutory procedure applies where the Council, a councillor or an officer has an interest in an application. Special referral arrangements may apply, depending on the nature of the interest and the relevant regulations.

2. How can an application be referred to the Planning Committee?

The new process introduces a formal assessment, known as the **Gateway Test**, to determine whether an application should be considered by committee rather than decided under delegated powers.

The process has six main stages:

1. **Validation:** Members are informed whether the application is valid and which schedule applies.
2. **28-day period:** A member must submit a written referral request, or request an extension, within the applicable 28-day window.
3. **Initial assessment:** The request is checked for eligibility, and the main planning issues are summarised.
4. **Gateway review:** The nominated councillor and nominated officer consider whether the referral criteria are met.
5. **Decision on referral:** If both agree that the test is satisfied, the application can be referred to the committee. If they do not agree, the decision remains delegated.
6. **Public record:** The outcome is recorded and members are informed.

3. What is the Gateway Test?

The Gateway Test considers two questions:

- **A. Local significance:** Does the application raise an issue of particular importance to the local community?
- **B. Planning matters:** Does it involve significant complexity or important planning issues requiring substantial planning judgement?

Only one of these two criteria needs to be satisfied. A request must explain clearly why the relevant criterion applies to the particular application.

Worked example: A major town-centre development

Imagine a proposal to redevelop a four-hectare former factory site in a market town centre. The scheme includes 240 homes, a 500 m² community hall and 1,200 m² of retail space. Although redevelopment of the brownfield site is supported in principle, there is no detailed site allocation, and conservation concerns remain unresolved.

Criterion A – Local significance: met

- The number of homes and the effect on local infrastructure are significant.
- The community hall would help address an identified shortage of local facilities.
- The retail development could affect the town centre.
- Unresolved conservation concerns raise environmental and heritage issues.

Criterion B – Planning matters: met

- Without a detailed site allocation, the proposal requires careful assessment against general planning policies.
- The conservation concerns require consideration of heritage policies.
- The combination of housing, community facilities and retail requires substantial planning judgement across several policy areas.

Outcome: In this example, both criteria are met. If the nominated councillor and nominated officer agree that the Gateway Test is satisfied, the application can be referred to the Planning Committee. It is important to remember that satisfying either criterion is sufficient.

4. What makes a good referral request?

The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) guidance emphasises that a referral request must identify the actual planning issue and explain why it matters. Simply citing a large number of objections, a petition or a departure from policy is not enough.

A strong request should:

- **Explain the impact:** Describe the nature and scale of the issue, how long it may last and how it will affect the local area.
- **Provide evidence:** Refer to relevant planning policies, supporting evidence or consultation responses where appropriate.
- **Identify what remains unresolved:** Explain which concerns have not been addressed by the applicant or resolved through proposed mitigation.
- **Be concise:** Set out the key issue clearly and proportionately to the scale of the application.

For example, a request concerning the loss of a village hall might explain that it is the village's only community hall, that local groups rely on it, that no accessible alternative has been identified and that no suitable replacement is proposed. The request should then explain why this represents a significant social issue for the local community.

Important: These criteria are prompts to assist judgement, not a points-based scoring system. Every application must be assessed on its own merits. The number of objections is not, in itself, a material planning consideration.

5. Other changes to CDC's Planning Protocol

Member representations and conduct

Councillors may continue to submit representations on Schedule 1 applications. However, members must not lobby statutory decision-makers improperly or attempt to direct officers towards a particular outcome. Representations should focus on relevant planning considerations.

Committee voting

The previous practice of referring a tied committee decision to the Full Council has ended. Where a vote is tied, the Chair may exercise a casting vote in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

Other planning functions

Matters outside Schedules 1 and 2, including enforcement and conservation-area tree notices, will continue to be dealt with under Part C of the Council's wider Scheme of Delegation.

Site Inspection Briefings (SIBs)

The criteria for requesting a site inspection briefing have been clarified. A site visit should materially help members understand the proposal, its likely effects or the effectiveness of proposed mitigation in a way that cannot be achieved from the published application material alone.

Members may submit a Site Inspection Briefing request alongside a Gateway referral request.

Feedback from planning appeals

The outcomes of appeals involving committee decisions will be reported back to the Planning Committee. The intention is to help members learn from appeal decisions, promote consistency and identify where planning policies or procedures may need to be reviewed.

What this means for Parish Councils

Parish Councils should continue to submit clear, evidence-based representations on planning applications, identifying the specific effects on their communities and referring to relevant planning policies wherever possible.

Where a parish council believes an application raises an issue warranting consideration by the Planning Committee, it should explain the underlying planning or local significance issue clearly to its District Councillor. Relevant evidence, unresolved

concerns and the practical consequences for the community will be more useful than relying solely on the volume of objections.

The new framework makes it particularly important to identify the key issue early, observe the referral timescale and provide a concise, reasoned explanation of why committee consideration may be justified.

Parish Council Action Checklist: Planning Applications

When responding to a planning application, Parish Councils should:

- **Check the application promptly.** Identify the type of application, the applicable schedule and the deadline for submitting comments or raising a referral request with the District Councillor.
- **Agree a clear parish council response.** Identify the main concerns and ensure they are supported by evidence wherever possible.
- **Focus on material planning considerations.** For example, the effect on highways and access, local infrastructure, design, landscape, heritage, ecology, neighbouring properties and relevant planning policies.
- **Explain the local significance.** Describe the practical effect of the proposal on the village or local community, including the scale and likely consequences of any impact.
- **Identify unresolved issues.** Be specific about concerns that remain unanswered or inadequately addressed by the applicant, including any shortcomings in proposed mitigation.
- **Provide supporting evidence.** Include relevant photographs, surveys, policy references, professional advice or other factual information where available.
- **Contact your District Councillor early.** If you believe an application warrants consideration by the Planning Committee, explain the significant planning issue as soon as possible. Your councillor can advise on the Gateway referral process. If it looks as though an application is likely to be approved, suggest Planning Conditions which might make a difference.
- **Do not rely solely on the number of objections.** Petitions and public concern may provide useful context, but the referral request must explain the underlying planning issue. The number of objections is not, in itself, a material planning consideration.
- **Consider whether a site visit would help.** If members need to see the site to understand an impact that cannot adequately be assessed from the submitted plans and documents, discuss a Site Inspection Briefing request with your District Councillor.
- **Keep a record.** Retain the parish council's agreed response, supporting evidence and relevant correspondence.

Planning officers will normally determine applications under delegated powers unless the appropriate referral process is followed. A request for committee consideration must explain why the application raises a ***significant local issue*** or a ***substantial planning matter***. The Gateway Test requires only one of these two criteria to be met.

Act early: Do not wait until the end of the consultation period to contact your District Councillor if you believe committee consideration may be appropriate. The member

referral process has its own timescale, which should be checked against the Council's current Planning Protocol, currently a member must submit a written referral request, or request an extension, within the applicable 28-day window.

N.B. *The Planning Committee meeting scheduled for Wednesday 11 November has been cancelled. I have been on the Planning Committee since May 2019 and apart from during Covid19, I cannot remember any other cancellation.*

LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

The deadline for making representations on the Cotswold District Local Plan 2026-2043 was extended by four weeks and will close at 11.59pm on 3 November 2026.

A417 MISSING LINK

A major milestone has been reached, as the A417 moved into its final layout. A new section of the A417 will open, allowing northbound traffic to continue from Cirencester directly towards Gloucester without exiting at Shab Hill junction. Single-lanes will remain in place until more work is completed. Please continue to plan ahead and allow extra time for journeys, particularly at peak times.

The new A417 will be closed in both directions between A46 Brockworth junction and Shab Hill junction:

Overnight closure: 9pm on Monday 2 November to 6am Friday 6 November

Weekend closure: 11pm on Friday 6 November to 6am Monday 9 November

For work to the Grove Farm underpass.

Ullenwood roundabout will be closed each night:

Monday 9 November to Friday 13 November - from 9pm to 6am
The A436 will be closed in both directions between Ullenwood Roundabout and Seven Springs.

- Leckhampton Hill will be closed between Ullenwood Roundabout and Crickley Hill Country Park.
- The new A436 will be closed between Shab Hill Junction and Ullenwood Roundabout.

For the installation of signage and ducting.

The old A417 will be closed between Cowley junction and the existing B4070:

Weekend closures:

- 11pm on Friday 13 November to 6am Monday 16 November
- 11pm on Friday 27 November to 6am Monday 30 November

There will be no access to Birdlip via the old A417 at Cowley junction. Traffic travelling from Cirencester, Elkstone and Brimpsfield will travel to the north on the A417 towards the A46 Brockworth junction before continuing to Birdlip.

Monday 16 November for approximately two weeks There will be a lane closure on the **B4070** from Birdlip towards the junction with the existing B4070 and old A417, with temporary traffic lights in place.

Surfacing, drainage and vegetation clearance will be carried out in readiness for the switch over traffic to the new B4070 in December 2026.

Once the new B4070 opens, the old A417 will be permanently closed between Stockwell Lane and the former B4070. Traffic travelling towards Birdlip will instead be directed along the new B4070 from Shab Hill junction.

Road closure dates may change at short notice. Please regularly check the A417 webpage for updates and our previous communications for full listings of road closures.

Diagram and information about the new layout.

Any updates will be communicated on the project website nationalhighways.co.uk/a417-missing-link.

Check the National Highways website for updates and other works in the region.

To receive National Highways updates, opt in to ensure compliance with GDPR, please follow this link.

Visit the A417 Missing Link web page.

The Customer Hub, located at the crusher compound at Shab Hill, is open every Tuesday and Wednesday from 10am until 2pm. You can visit any time during these hours, without pre-booking an appointment. Members of the team will be on hand to answer questions. 10 mph and site restrictions. Please Reverse Park.
A417 Project Office, Birdlip, Gloucester, GL4 8JX
What3words: https://what3words.com/shaped.quietest.payback

Site visits for members of the public. If you are interested, please contact A417MissingLink@nationalhighways.co.uk

All roadworks and planned road closures on motorways and major A roads, including the A417, are published here: https://www.trafficengland.com/

Road Closure Reports, which includes a seven day look ahead of planned road closures, are updated twice daily, Monday to Friday except for bank holidays: https://nationalhighways.co.uk/travel-updates/road-closure-report/

To find the latest information about local road closures, please visit:
https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/roads/roadworks/

Webpage:
https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-roads/south-west/a417-missing-link/
Email: A417MissingLink@nationalhighways.co.uk
Phone: 0300 123 5000
X: @HighwaysSWEST Facebook: @HighwaysSWEST

Please report highway issues, such as potholes, and track their progress online at www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/fixmystreet Or download the app: FixMyStreet

Ermin Ward villages have a new PCSO (Except Frampton Mansell who still have Beverley Rowe)

Edmund Maina (Ed)
PCSO 249346
Tetbury Neighbourhood Policing Team
Gloucestershire Constabulary

The Forum | South Way | Cirencester | Gloucestershire | GL7 2PG
Group: 01452907215 |
www.gloucestershire.police.uk | Twitter page | Facebook page

Cotswold District Council NEWS