

**CDC:** This round of parish and CDC meetings have mostly been of the Annual General (AGM) variety, and therefore largely procedural – choosing/confirming officials and confirming policies etc. This has meant that I haven't been able to ask my planned questions relating to Publica at full council, but instead I have written to the Chief Executive to chase the promised programme information (especially costs) for the transition back to CDC. There is also a full council briefing on the subject later this month, so hopefully I will have more detail in my next report. I also asked why there was so much colour printing of internal documents at CDC – there are large savings to be made for B/W prints and reducing print generally.

**Overview & Scrutiny** reviewed actions relating to the 'Ecological Emergency update' (see also below), and adoption of the 'Asset Management Strategy'. Both were noted.

**Value for money?** A resident contacted me recently, and as part of a wider discussion asked if I considered the services he received gave value for money for his council tax. He lives in a rural area, as most people in my ward do, and to put his question into context his tax bill is £300 a month which is a third of his state pension. However, what does he get; no mains sewage; no mains gas; no public transport; green bin collections at an additional (premium) price; and a dangerous road with constant, enormous commercial traffic running through it too fast on a road that's much too narrow. He could have added: pothole riddled roads; limited adult social care; a squeezed police force who may not respond to 'minor' crimes; poorly funded education; and little prospect of being looked after when you are old! Like most taxes, everyone shares the cost burden of services, even if they don't directly use them, for example education; the planning department isn't fully covered by planning application fees; there is a legal team, a call centre for service queries, an admin requirement to cover general processing, and of course a management overhead. The real question is are these teams run as efficiently as possible and are they working effectively?

Having been in my District Councillor role for a year now, I have come into contact with many CDC officers, all of whom have struck me as very knowledgeable, dedicated, and hard working. However, I don't know if they are working effectively. Judging by the number of emails I receive covering information on 'training', conferences, recognition awards, and other non-essential subjects, I suspect the situation is as it is across most public bodies, and is that they aren't.

The situation isn't helped by the administration who have been in control for 5 years, in which time they have declared: A climate emergency; a housing emergency and an ecological emergency to name but three. I'm not debating if these things are appropriate for a district council to fix, but when everything is deemed an emergency, it is impossible to prioritise. The result is resources are stretched too thinly, and as evidenced by quarterly performance figures many of the workstreams are not achieving success. Just this week in O&S we were asked to support a request to prioritise additional resource for the Ecological Emergency work – but is this to be ranked ahead of the Housing, or Climate Emergency work?? It puts

the Cabinet and officers in an impossible situation, so is it best to focus limited resource and do one thing well, or be spread too thinly and fail to achieve anything tangible?

**Roads** continue to form a large section in my inbox. The public are correctly addressing concerns directly to GCC (they operate the road infrastructure) but are copying me to support my drive to get improvements.

In my own small claims case the court offered an arbitration service which I accepted, but GCC wish to go to court to defend themselves, notwithstanding the additional cost burden. I guess they are worried about the implications if they lose the case, where their only defence is the Highways Act inspection requirement. The case will probably go quiet for a while, while we await a court date.

**River pollution:** I am meeting with the area manager of Severn Trent at the end of May to discuss the Avening sewage issues. Locals may have noticed many tankers attending the site for a few weeks in early May – this was due to a failure of one of the processing units, which then required the waste to be taken away to avoid it going into the stream.

### **Councillor Tony Slater**

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

#### **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](#)