Annual Report 2024

County Councillor

This past year has presented many challenges for me as a county councillor. Private/confidential Case work with residents has certainly increased. Highways issues remain a significant problem in all the Parishes I represent. I continue to be a member of the Environmental scrutiny committee, Adult Social care and communities’ scrutiny committee, Health Overview scrutiny committee, Planning and traffic regulation committees. Over the past year. I have also been a member of task and finishing group for Improving Bus Services .

 I am also currently Vice Chair of Gloucestershire County council.

This past year has been challenging for all members of our communities. The cost of living and providing for our families has affected all of us. The reduction of public transport in rural areas by private companies has further added to the difficulties. Stroud District Council is one of the local partners assisting families who are eligible for income-related free school meals. Those families can also register for the Holidays and Food activities. (HAF) which is funded by the Department for Education. Now in its fourth year and continues to go from strength to strength, thanks to strong and successful partnerships like SDC who help make it possible:

The Continuation of the council’s **£100million**commitment to improve our roads, which over the past year has seen 212 roads resurfaced and 50,000 potholes filled. **Plus, an additional £500,000** pothole busting fund to add to the innovative range of tools to tackle potholes has seen improvements, however issues with utilities remains an ongoing problem in my division and are reported to Highways to contact the companies to repair the holes.

**Fix My Street**

A new method of reporting was also introduced making it easier for individuals to report problems and to see whether they were already reported and at what stage of the process the report is has proved popular and I certainly find it easier.

Many roads are affected by the amount of surface water which deteriorates the surface yet further and we have seen an increase in localised flooding and the risk to properties.

**The Property Flood Resilience repair grant scheme** assisted home and business owners to improve the resilience of their property, reducing the level of damage should flooding happen again. Tackling the areas where flooding is becoming more prevalent.

Continuing the Highways issues .The A417 Known as the missing link is now taking place after many years, whilst this will improve the freight traffic issues in the long term, the development is having an impact on the smaller lanes leading from the A417 being used as rat runs to avoid the congestion This has posed as problem for parishes and the quality of those roads has deteriorated yet further.

As County Councillor for the Painswick area, I have also had significant problems on the A46 firstly the traffic lights just outside Painswick which were eventually removed and the new surface, warning signs and speed restrictions in place More recently a huge void and land slip saw the road shut again. This is now under traffic lights and will be closed again in the summer to resolve the problem. Public transport was suspended and those reliant of buses were left stranded. This was a particularly busy time for me as a councillor trying to resolve these problems on behalf of individual residents and liaising with Highways, communications, and senior management for a rapid resolution.

 Once again, the local lanes suffered the impact of increased usage and have caused yet further requests for remedial work to repair the verges and banks. I continue to request Highways to repair the damaged areas and ensure measures are in place for the planned closure in the summer.

**Funding available for communities**

The Build Back Better Fund has enabled me to support many local initiatives. Examples being Improving a community orchard, play equipment for a recreation ground, improving 4 village halls, supporting community meals and local clubs. The Youth Fund was launched in April last year. This was additional funding made available to the Build back better funding specifically for a youth project. To date I haven’t received any application forms for this.

**Local Public Transport**

Over the past year I have been a member of the cross-party *Improving* *Gloucestershire’s bus services* task group. looking at how to support the communities’ infrastructure following a nationwide shortage in drivers and declining patronage plus increased fuel costs which saw rural routes becoming unviable especially during COVID and the slow post COVID regrowth.The County Council announced the wide-ranging bus service improvements being made after the county council was awarded more than£4.4 million by the Department for Transport over two years. The Bus Service Improvement Plan Plus (BSIP+) funding amounting to £2,209,623 was allocated to improve bus services in the county during 2023/24 and an anticipated further £2,209,623 will be given for 2024/25.The increase in funding will improve frequency and operating hours of county’s bus routes and extend the bookable bus service, **The Robin**, The responsive Robin Service will be rolled out in the Stroud area later this year,

**Budget set for the coming year**

The budget was brought to full council and agreed. Bullet points of some of the essential services and schemes the budget will help to deliver include:

* Over **£200 million** to support vulnerable adults and older people with a diverse range of needs and long-term conditions.
* Over **£180 million** to continue improvements to services for children with SEND and for children and families in need of help and protection. This funding will also support fostering and adoption services and children with disabilities.
* Continuation of the council’s **£100million**commitment to improve our roads,
* An additional **£7.5 million** to purchase 10new fire engines and equipment and **£750,000**for a new ariel ladder platform.
* Over **£2 million** to tackle road safety.
* **£24 million** for school improvements, including installing solar panels and the delivery of a new special school in Gloucester and a new primary school in Bishops Cleeve
* **£2.2 million**to increase the frequency and operating hours of county’s bus routes and extend our bookable bus service, The Robin, to three more areas of the county.

I will continue to work hard in the coming year as your County Councillor.