

My January newsletter is back to the more usual format following the 'excitement' of the Local Plan in December – Thanks to those that attended the public event in Tetbury, and I hope everyone took the opportunity to complete the consultation document.

Cotswold District Council (CDC): There was no full Council in December, and I'm away for the January meeting, but the **Overview and Scrutiny (O&S)** meeting was quite lively! The Service Performance report for Q2 (July-September) made reasonable reading, but I asked for an update on progress in the Planning Enforcement team and their progress on reducing the backlog of cases – this will come as a written update to me. The Financial Performance Report was also good overall, largely thanks to the prudent hand of our Chief Financial Officer.

We then reviewed the Waste Fleet Replacement Report – There is an established need to replace the 31 ageing dustbin lorries in the next couple of years, as they are increasingly unreliable and cause 'service failures' (missed collections) when they break down. I had hoped that a review of the service would have been undertaken in good time to feed into the report, or at least some discussions in readiness for **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)** so that we would at least be aligned with our neighbours, but unfortunately the way our rubbish and recycling is collected was covered off in a couple of sentences and will remain the same for the foreseeable future – so we are stuck with the grubby white sacks for plastics and the completely unsuitable blue bags for ever increasing quantities card!

The bigger debate was around how to reduce carbon emissions from the fleet – The Cotswolds isn't suited to the current level of technology around electric vehicles, so other than one 'test' EV for Cirencester the rest will be diesel. The solution was to start using biofuels or HVOs. These are made from waste oils such as chip fat but often include palm oil or other specially grown crops. The latter were not palatable to many of us on the committee due to the environmental impacts and the loss of agriculture for food. As a result, there were only two votes in favour of adopting the policy, but the Cabinet will ultimately decide on any actions, or audit of the fuels supplied.

Litter: Litter is prominent at this time of year due to the lack of foliage in the verges, so in Avening I organised a small and targeted litter pick along the Nailsworth Road to collect the accumulation of bottles, tins, and especially lighter fluid bottles which have become a big problem lately. We achieved 12 dustbin bags full in an hour!

Roads are obviously suffering through the winter, so please continue to report potholes via Fix My Street. I continue to work with the local Highways Management to highlight areas of particular concern.

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