

Upper Rissington Parish Council

Meeting 9th January 2023

Report from GCC Cllr. Mark MacKenzie-Charrington

- Ubico, our refuse and general services contractor is working hard to improve their environmental impact. Cheltenham now has 49 new refuse vehicles fuelled by hydrotreated vegetable oil, emitting 90% less carbon than their fossil fuel counterparts. 16 new small and even large electric road sweepers have been introduced. In the Cotswolds we now have 36 refuse vehicles fitted with Telematics software to improve performance and eco efficient driving. To date this has save 90 tonnes of CO2 and financial savings for the CDC. Lastly, they are working with all local partners to enhance bi-diversity & wild flower growth along our roadsides. This includes a different and varied grass cutting routine while maintaining safety.
- Our new Innovation Labs, based at an increasing number of Libraries, are offering membership gift vouchers. The Labs offer all ages the chance to learn new digital skills using Adobe Creative Suite. You can learn all about robotics, design studio, virtual reality, 3D scanners & printer, podcast recording, 360 photography & micro computing. The cost is £15 for a month or £30 for 3 months. Labs are currently found at Coleford, Gloucester, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, Stroud and Chipping Campden.
- More trees are being planted to achieve our target of a million by 2030. Over 3 days early this month a group of volunteers planted a variety at GCC owned Stocks Farm, near Stonehouse adding to 3,200 already planted to create a wild life corridor alongside a disused rail track. Thus far the GCC has planted 66,390 in the last 2 years with a further 80,000 scheduled in the current planting season. DEFRA have recently granted a further £150,000 towards the project.
- The 2023/24 Budget is looking like £560 million, a rise of almost £40 million over the current budget. The committed infrastructure project totalling £119 million are protected and proceeding with Arle Court transport hub, Gloucester SW Bypass, the 26 mile cycle route and flood relief programs. It's anticipated that a typical Band D Council Tax will increase by £6.04 per month. Savings of around £33 million in efficiencies have been identified for the forthcoming year.
- A Cost-of-living "Support Hub" is launched by the GCC alongside a county warm bank offer. Following county wide consultation the Hub will focus on five key areas – money, food, energy, warm spaces and protecting health & wellbeing – all of which is available on-line and shortly in printed format.
- "Warm and Welcome" spaces will be located in libraries and offer: Warm places to relax, Hot drinks, Free access to the internet & Wi-Fi, Access to computers, charging points, Advice for further support, Free activities such as homework support, Knit & Natter and Library Clubs
- Increased support for Ukrainian guests and sponsors in response to cost-of- living increases. From Nov – Jan 2023 a payment £125 towards fuel cost increases. 'Hosts' who extend their welcome over and above the initial 6 months will receive a further £100pm on top of the standard £350 monthly payment. Currently the numbers are: UK Applications Issued 198,100, with 143,100 people arriving. 1,533 issued in the county and 1,274 having arrived. In the Cotswolds we have 320 issued and 268 people having arrived and staying within 135 family homes. Across the county 367 children have been placed in schools near to their new homes.
- The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has commenced an 18-month review of the GCC's division boundaries owing to the growth of population. Any changes will take effect as of the May 2025 County Council elections. Full consultation will take place with input from local stakeholders, Parish, District and County Council.