District and County Councillor report for Alvington Parish Council 1st October 2026

LGR Update

- Government have called a pause on LGR whilst they review the programme.
- There is uncertainty about timings and whether the programme will be relaunched in its current form or not.
- It would seem likely that under current boundaries, district and town and parish council elections will take place next May 2027 in the Forest of Dean.

FoDDC Full Council

The next Full Council meeting will take place on Thursday 22nd October.

FoDDC Cabinet

Cabinet met on the 10th of September. The agenda had the following reports to be determined.

- Introduction of Jame Watch to Forest Linkline & Cotswold Careline product range. (This watch can detect falls and also has GPS to allow greater freedom to those using the device and for those who fall outside to be located more quickly)
- Health & Safety Policies update.
- Q1 performance review (April – June 2026
- Financial Performance report Period One.

Cabinet meet next on 8th October 2026.

Road closure

I am chasing the GCC Major Projects Team to see if a meeting can be held ahead of future road closures of the A466 south of Redbrook.
I am focusing on the need to involve businesses that depend on passing trade with those involved in arranging the road closures so that the minimum economic harm can be discussed and agreed upon.

Gloucestershire County News

This section is long and comprehensive and gives you an idea of what is decided at Shire Hall. I cannot cover everything that goes on but try to make sure I am aware of the big decisions and how they help people live better lives.

Businesses invited to strengthen cyber resilience and embrace new opportunities at Gloucestershire Tech Week
Gloucestershire Tech week runs from Monday 12th October to Friday 16th October.

New strategy to create more SEND places and support closer to home
The new SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2026-2031 sets out how the council will plan and expand special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision over the next five years for children and young people aged 0 to 25. The number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in Gloucestershire has increased significantly in recent years, with demand expected to continue to rise. As of January 2026, there were 7,521 children and young people with an EHCP in Gloucestershire, compared with 4,854 in 2022. While the strategy is a welcome acknowledgement of the growing pressures facing SEND children, young people and their families in Gloucestershire, the real test will be whether future budgets provide the resources needed to deliver the additional places promised.

Cabinet members write to Rail Minister requesting improved rail services between Gloucestershire and South Wales.
During a recent review of transport connectivity and economic growth within the Forest of Dean, members discussed the strategic importance of reliable and frequent rail services linking local communities with employment, education and economic opportunities in South Wales and beyond. This prompted a letter to the rail minister requesting information on planned service enhancements, feasibility work or future opportunities to improve rail connectivity.

Family Hubs network helping more Gloucestershire families receive support
One year after launching its Family Hubs Network, Gloucestershire County Council is celebrating significant growth in the number of families receiving support locally and online, as plans to further expand support for families with children take shape. The Hubs aim to bring together family support, health, education and community services, to ensure families can access the right help, at the right time, in the right place. Building on the success of Gloucestershire's Family Hubs Network, the council is expanding support for families through the government's Best Start programme, with plans to establish a Best Start Family Hub in every district over the next three years. The first of these was launched at Bartongate, Gloucester this month: Gloucestershire celebrates launch of county's first Best Start Family Hub | Gloucestershire County Council

Continued support for unpaid carers across Gloucestershire
Gloucestershire County Council has awarded a new five-year contract to deliver services for unpaid adult carers. Following a competitive procurement process, PeoplePlus, locally known as Gloucestershire Carers Hub, will continue supporting unpaid carers across the county, having done so for more than seven years. Practical and emotional support to unpaid

carers at every stage of their caring journey, including information and advice, personalised support and emergency planning.

Applications open for grants supporting community projects across Gloucestershire

Community and voluntary organisations across Gloucestershire are being invited to apply for funding through Gloucestershire County Council's Thriving Communities Grant scheme. The scheme supports activities that help adults stay well, connected and independent, while reducing isolation and strengthening local communities. Applications are now open and close on 16 October. For full eligibility criteria and details about how to apply, visit: www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/thriving-communities-grants

Changes to adult social care services

During the summer, Gloucestershire County Council's earlier decision to transfer its reablement service to independent providers prompted strong opposition from some staff and their trade unions, who feared impacts on pay, job security, staff retention and continuity of care. The dispute led to protests, scrutiny committee involvement and threatened strike action, with councillors calling for greater transparency and consultation before the transfer proceeded. Agreements with staff were reached however and the services changes were implemented as planned on 1st September. The situation prompted the Green County Councillors to prepare a motion for full council, calling for increased scrutiny of all outsourcing proposals.

GCC Meetings

September saw Council meetings resume after a summer break, with full Council, Cabinet and a range of scrutiny committees meeting this month.

Full Council

Full Council met for both an Extraordinary meeting and a planned Full Council meeting on 16th September.

The Extraordinary meeting was called to debate a motion that related to changes to the Council's Reablement Service (see Changes to adult social

care services above) which largely duplicated discussions and actions of the Adult Social Care & Communities Scrutiny Committee. The motion to scrutinise the service changes was quickly passed.

The extraordinary meeting was followed by a Full Council meeting which dealt with regular items including reports from the cabinet and questions from councillors / members of the public, before debating two motions that were both passed.
Questions I submitted to the cabinet member for climate were the following:

Member questions from Cllr Chris McFarling
Question 1
The scientific evidence is clear that climate change and nature loss present a rising threat to the UK's food security, health, infrastructure, economy, and national security. These risks are already affecting communities across Gloucestershire and will only grow in the years ahead. Recent record-breaking heatwaves, wildfires and drought this summer in Gloucestershire have shown the need to be better informed and prepared for a worsening of weather extremes.

A film produced by the National Emergency Briefing (NEB) initiative is being screened around the country by many groups and individuals, with over 2,300 screenings confirmed. In reality, the audiences are often drawn from people who are already alert to the risks that our society and environment are facing.

Will the cabinet member consider liaising with the NEB coordinator to hold a screening for members of this council, officers and staff, as other Local Authorities are doing, to inform and prepare them of the reality of the situation?

Question 2

As the evidence base on the accelerating change in the climate has matured, the time has come to communicate these risks clearly and directly to the public. At the same time, public debate is increasingly shaped by disinformation, making clear and authoritative communication more important than ever.

The NEB initiative is calling for a televised emergency briefing to explain the scale of the climate and nature threats facing the UK, why these threats matter to people's lives and livelihoods, and – crucially – how government, business and society can engage constructively with the challenges ahead.

Will the cabinet member write to support the NEB initiative in its request to government to broadcast a prime-time televised national emergency briefing?

Question 3

In publicly supporting the National Emergency Briefing initiative's call for a live, televised emergency briefing hosted by the PM and the UK's Chief Scientific Advisor and delivered by independent experts, **will the cabinet member responsible please write to Gloucestershire MPs to ask them to support the Parliamentary Call for a live, televised emergency briefing?**

Motion 1 (carried)

The first motion (drafted before the LGR pause) called on the Council to ensure that local government reorganisation protects Gloucestershire's diverse communities by recognising their different needs, identities and priorities, and by strengthening local democracy and community influence.

Motion 2 (carried)

The second motion proposed creating a county-wide road safety education programme that supports children and young people from early years through to adulthood, and asked Cabinet to develop an age-appropriate pathway for schools, including child-designed safety mascots. During the debate, Green Councillors supported road-safety education but expressed

concerns that the motion unfairly shifted responsibility for safety away from adult drivers and onto children and young people.

There was an exceptionally long debate covering the first motion which meant the meeting ran out of time to consider the Green Group's motion around increased scrutiny when considering outsourcing of council services.

GCC Cabinet met on the 23rd September and covered a long agenda. At the meeting, cabinet members made the following decisions:

Received and approved Council Strategy Action Plan Update and Q1 Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report

Approved the Draft Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan (LTP), Rail Strategy and Active Travel Strategy Launches the next stage of transport planning to 2043. The Plan will be subject to a public consultation between 1 October and 15 November, with a final LTP being considered by cabinet and full council in early 2027.

Approved the Gloucestershire Local Transport Delivery Plan (LTDP) Provides a programme for delivering transport improvements between 2026-2030 (i.e. the implementation plan that sits beneath the Local Transport Plan). The decision commits £250 million budget to specific Highways schemes.

Approved the Annual Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report The report assesses whether enough childcare places are available and identifies gaps that may require intervention or investment. Overall, Gloucestershire has enough childcare places and quality is strong but the report highlights persistent challenges around SEND inclusion, workforce shortages, provider financial viability, and inequalities affecting disadvantaged children and communities.

Approved the SEND Sufficiency Strategy 2026-2031 and Delivery PlanSets the direction for increasing SEND provision in Gloucestershire, with positive steps to increase local SEND provision, reduce long journeys and improve inclusion.
Approved a new contract for Adoption West This decision extends the Adoption West contract term for an initial three years from April 2027, with two further two-year extension options.
Approved the Expert by Experience-led Quality Assurance Programme for Adult Services Gives people with lived experience a formal role in monitoring and improving commissioned health and social care services. The decision authorises a competitive procurement process for a contract of 3 years from April 2027 with the possibility of a further 2 year extension.

Approved a Jointly commissioned service for women experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage The service will improve support for women facing overlapping issues such as homelessness, mental health challenges, substance misuse, and domestic abuse. The decision enables Council to enter into a funding agreement with NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board and procure a service initially for two years from April 2027, with the option to extend for a further two years.

Approved the replacement of Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs)
The decision to replace 15 wheelchair accessible vehicles for Adults and Children's Services maintains safe and reliable transport for disabled children and adults who rely on council-supported travel.

Approved an extension to the Garden Waste Composting Contracts Cabinet exercised a three-year extension option for contracts with three suppliers, to ensure continued processing of garden waste collected across the county and avoid disruption to recycling services.

Approved a Rural Strategic Estate Plan refresh and an update on the Rural Task & Finish Group The strategy influences how the council manages rural land and property assets, with implications for farming tenants, biodiversity,

nature recovery, and rural communities. The green group were disappointed at the inclusion of plans to "rationalise" the rural estate and formally questioned the sale of county farms, given all their societal, nature and environmental benefits.

Approved the procurement of Breathing Apparatus for Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service
Replaces or upgrades critical firefighter safety equipment that is reaching the end of its operational life, improving operational resilience and complying with safety standards.

Scrutiny and Committee meetings

Environment Scrutiny Committee 02/09/26
Members scrutinised the county's preparations for winter highway maintenance, progress on the Minerals and Waste Plan, and received updates from the Executive Director.

Children & Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee 10/09/26
The Committee focused on the performance and future direction of children's services in Gloucestershire. Members reviewed progress against inspection recommendations, considered proposals for the regionalisation of care, and received updates on the implementation of SEND reforms and actions arising from recent SEND inspections.

Gloucestershire Police & Crime Panel 11/09/26
Panel members reviewed the Words Matters Policy, considered work being undertaken through the Combatting Drugs Partnership, and discussed proposals for a Community Engagement Strategy aimed at strengthening relationships between policing bodies and local communities.

Adult Social Care & Communities Scrutiny Committee 15/09/26

Members received an update on work to enable healthier lifestyles, including performance of the Adults' Healthy Lifestyles Service, progress in key areas of improvement, and the development of the Gloucestershire Tobacco Control Strategy (2026-2031) and Gloucestershire Healthy Weight Strategy (2026-2036). The committee also reviewed first quarter performance information for adult social care and communities services, considered broader updates on the delivery of adult social care and public health services. A closed session to discuss recent service changes to Adult Social Care services also took place.

Fire & Rescue Scrutiny Committee 18/09/26
Members received an update on the outcome of the Independent Review, considered progress on the development of the new GFRS Training Facility, and reviewed first quarter 2026/27 community safety performance data and strategic risk information.

Audit & Governance Committee 24/09/26
Members considered reports from KPMG on the council's audit findings and annual auditor's report, reviewed and approved the Annual Governance Statement, and scrutinised the Statement of Accounts 2025/26, including the Gloucestershire Pension Fund accounts. The committee also examined the council's performance in handling complaints escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, received the Data Protection Officer Annual Report, reviewed treasury management and internal audit activity, considered the draft internal audit plan for the remainder of 2026/27, and noted the annual health and safety report.

Gloucestershire Economy, Climate Change and Waste Overview and Scrutiny Committee 25/09/26
This was the first of a re-structured scrutiny committee (formally Economic Strategy Scrutiny Committee, with Environment sitting in with Highways). Members scrutinised the proposed GCC Food and Farming Strategy ahead of its consideration by Cabinet, reviewed the delivery and investment plan for the Digital Infrastructure, Inclusion and Innovation Strategy, and provided

feedback on stakeholder engagement plans for the emerging Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). The committee also received updates on economic and environmental matters through the Executive Director's Report, considered progress reported by the City Region Board and Climate Leadership Gloucestershire, and reviewed Quarter 1 performance and risk information.

Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee meets on 30/09/26

Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee
The committee did not meet in September, and the next meeting is scheduled for 13th October.

This is a long report and is meant to give you some idea of the breadth and depth of the County Council's work. I sit on planning committee, used to sit on environment scrutiny and sit on Climate Leadership Gloucestershire.

Any queries please don't hesitate to ask.

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