

Councillor report for St Briavels Parish Council

9th March 2026

Forest of Dean District Council

The full council meeting of 19th February had the budget to approve, preceded by a motion for a vote of no confidence in the leader and cabinet.

A heated debate ensued with concerns over the Local Plan and lack of engagement with councillors. The debate ended with a vote against the motion by 19: 18.

The minutes of the debate are available online

<https://meetings.fdean.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=29621>

The budget was debated and in the end approved by a majority of councillors. It will see a rise in council tax of 2.99%. It also includes a number of amendments or growth items as listed in annex C of the minutes:

<https://meetings.fdean.gov.uk/documents/s39063/F.768%20Annex%20C%20-%20Proposed%20Growth%20Summary%202026-27%20updated.pdf> including:

- an extra £10,000 for the nature strategy and ecoschools
- £36,000 for the Forest Food Network to work on food resilience.
- £25,000 towards Smart metering and the savings that will ensue.
- £80,000 for Active Travel feasibility studies for routes that local communities want.
- £25,000 for waste reduction and community composting
- £60,000 for a Town and Parish Officer
- £80,000 to extend contracts of Retrofit Officer, Climate Engagement Officer and Energy Communities Officer
- £40,000 for an ecologist to help boost the Wilder Leadon scheme.
- £40,000 for Sustainable Economy Community Grants
- £75,000 for the waste fleet to convert to using Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil making a significant carbon emissions reduction of 70 – 80%

The growth items included two years funding in advance of Local Government Reorganisation when the Council will be abolished.

I have reported potholes and liaised with the Highways Manager on other issues and hope to hear when time and resources will be available to complete them.

The County report has taken a different format this time. I'd be interested in what you think (see below)

Gloucestershire County News

Council votes to approve £698.4 million budget

Gloucestershire County Council has approved the £698.4 million budget for 2026/27.

Gloucestershire's landmark Local Nature Recovery Strategy goes live with school celebration

Gloucestershire County Council has published its first Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and interactive map. The plan – a statutory obligation from government – suggests measures to restore nature, boost biodiversity and create a healthier future for everyone who lives, works and plays in Gloucestershire. The Green group will push the administration to implement the promised improvements.

Fostering Service celebrates debut novel of young person in care

Gloucestershire County Council has celebrated the achievement of a young person in care as he published his debut novel at 17-years-old.

Council celebrate a year of Youth Hubs for supporting young people across Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire County Council is celebrating over a year of impact from its commissioned Youth Hubs, delivered in partnership with three not for profit organisations working across the county.

First project announced under Grassroots Neighbourhood Fund

Gloucestershire County Council has announced the first award from the Grassroots Neighbourhood Fund, with £3,000 granted to support the Youth Manager role at Brockworth Link Youth Club. **Please continue to send applications to your local councillors (see below for details).**

Government Consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Residents across Gloucestershire **are encouraged to take part** in the recently launched Government consultation on LGR, which opened on 5th February and will run for **seven weeks**.

LGR will result in the loss of Gloucestershire's existing county and district councils, which will be replaced by one or two new unitary authorities (UA). County Greens have long opposed these changes, citing them as undemocratic and a waste of limited local

resources. The Labour Government, however, has insisted they will go ahead. It is therefore vital that residents have their say on how services should be run in the future. The three proposed options for LGR which are being consulted on are:

- A single UA responsible for all services across Gloucestershire.
- Dividing the county into two UAs in an East (Cheltenham, Tewkesbury, Cotswold) West (Gloucester, Forest of Dean, Stroud) split.
- The 'Greater Gloucester' model consisting of one UA for a slightly expanded Gloucester City and a second for the rest of the county.

More information on the proposals can be found on the [Future Gloucestershire](#) website. To take part in the consultation, visit [local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire](#) website.

A final decision is expected in summer 2026. Elections to the new authority/authorities are planned for May 2027 with the new structure established no earlier than April 2028.

Grassroots Neighbourhood Fund

The Grassroots Neighbourhood Fund scheme is continuing to seek applications from eligible groups. The scheme delivers funding to community initiatives seeking to make a positive impact on health and wellbeing, access to nature, digital inclusion, community cohesion, and reducing inequalities. Each Councillor is allocated £20,000 to support projects in their division.

More information about the new scheme is available on the dedicated [webpage](#).

Guidance for how to apply is available [here](#). Note I have little left in the pot at this point.

GCC Meetings

Full Council

As highlighted above, this month's meeting of Full Council saw members vote on the budget. While the Greens voted in support, they also made clear that they would push the Lib Dem administration to go further on prevention and commit sufficient resources to environmental issues.

Cllr Craig Horrocks (Rodborough) said: "This is not a bad budget. But it doesn't match the council's own stated ambition to invest in prevention. Our borrowing is well within safe limits, and we have room to do more. Using that space to invest in the



Cllr Craig Horrocks speaking in the chamber



future is a brave but sensible choice — and I don't think this budget takes it far enough."

Leader of the Green Group Cllr Beki Hoyland (Blakeney and Bream) added: "The best way to tackle long-term problems is to invest early in our

communities. Spending on prevention today means spending less on fixing things tomorrow".

Cllr Beki Hoyland introducing Green amendments

The Greens managed to secure £390,000 worth of amendments to the budget, including:

- ✓ £110,000 to expand the Cam & Dursley Green Way cycleway
- ✓ £80,000 to improve access to Public Rights of Way
- ✓ £80,000 to sponsor care leavers through youth worker apprenticeships
- ✓ £100,000 to restore the Community Climate Grant
- ✓ £20,000 for air pollution monitors at high-risk schools

The Greens also seconded a Labour amendment to use £10,000 to help young people access work, training and education. Amendments from Reform UK and the Conservatives were rejected.

Reform UK's proposals, which included scrapping funding for climate action, cutting the council's nature budget and spending money on mass dredging were strongly condemned as unscientific by the Greens.

In her speech, Cllr Chloe Turner (Minchinhampton) said: “Dredging is exactly the opposite of the ‘slow the flow’ approach that experts have shown to be the most cost-effective and nature-friendly way to manage floods, and which has been championed by county Greens in the past.”

“Reform’s proposal to cut our already stretched ecology team, at a time when nature is under more pressure than ever, is also genuinely alarming. We already face damage from the Labour Government’s attacks on nature — and Reform show exactly the same ignorance about how vital nature is to our economy, our health and our safety. This is a party that doesn't understand the science, doesn't grasp the economics and doesn't give a toss about the natural environment that so many in our county care about.”



Cllr Turner speaking in the chamber



Cllr Luff speaking in the chamber

Cllr Gary Luff (Bisley and Painswick) highlighted ecosystem degradation as a national security issue, drawing on the UK Government’s recent National Security Assessment: “The threat from the nature crises to our national security couldn't be clearer”, he said. “However, Reform UK is more interested in siding with billionaires, the fossil fuel industry and Putin rather than protecting British citizens.”

Other meetings

Also held this month were meetings of the Police and Crime Panel, the Economic Strategy and Corporate Scrutiny Committee and the Pensions Committees.

Full recordings of all County Council meetings can be found [here](#).

Roads

Please continue to use and promote the use of [FixMyStreet](#) to report issues on the roads.

For any further questions please don’t hesitate to get in touch with me:

chris.mcfarling@fdean.gov.uk

chris.mcfarling@gloucestershire.gov.uk