

Cllr Lisa Spivey
County Councillor for the South Cerney Division
Gloucestershire County Council
Annual Report 2021/2022

Since winning the election a year ago, I have been focussing on 4 main issues which are the local issues residents spoke to me about most frequently during the election campaign and continue to get in touch with me about. They are:

1. Highway Maintenance issues
2. Road safety, especially speeding
3. River pollution
4. Flooding

Most parishes have a very good system of logging highway maintenance issues and have a working relationship with the Local Highways manager, Richard Gray. In the last year, I have had regular meetings with Richard (every few weeks) to keep abreast of these issues and to assist in seeing action on them.

To be very honest, however, I have been left very frustrated by a system which I do not think is delivering for residents, so in December last year, I brought a motion to Full Council asking for a complete overhaul of the Highway Maintenance system which is currently not fit for purpose. Residents email me on a near daily basis, telling me about road repairs either not carried out or shoddy repairs, uncut vegetation which creates safety issues, fallen down signs, abandoned road works signs cluttering the verge, debris filling gullies, potholes wrecking tyres- the list goes on.

It is clear that the Local Highways managers are not able to do all the work they would like to do and are financially constrained each year. This could be eased if the contractor, Ringway was doing a consistently good standard of work and if the maintenance schedule was overhauled.

The Lib Dem motion was not accepted by the Conservative administration, but I will continue to lobby for further change via public questions, meetings with the cabinet member and asking the Environment Scrutiny committee to consider looking at this in more detail.

I have tried to use my Highways Local funding to best effect, doing some patching work on some villages, helping with speed surveys, and contributing towards making walking and cycling safer and easier. I will be doing the same again in this coming year.

As far as speeding is concerned, again it has been a rather frustrating year, as the administration decided not to adopt the Stockholm Convention ruling that a default 20mph limit should be implemented “where cars and vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians meet” when it was proposed via a Lib Dem motion at the September Full Council meeting

The adoption of a policy on ANPR systems has also been painfully slow, and the Traffic Regulation Order team are way behind on dealing with requests due to staff shortages.

In many cases in this rural part of the County, we are just given a flat “no” when asked to look at speed reductions through our villages because we do not tick the boxes by national criteria which would necessitate a speed reduction.

This is disappointing because the speed reduction would not only make our villages safer, it would also improve health and wellbeing for residents.

The new PCC has made tackling speeding a priority and has been very supportive of community speed watch initiatives and the police have been out and about with their speed guns, but they can't be everywhere and so we need to affect a culture change where speeding is seen as unacceptable.

In the coming year, I will be looking at what ways I can lobby for change to the national criteria, so that speed issues can be tackled effectively in our communities.

I will work with you to lobby both the County council and our MP to help with this issue.

I was supposed to be seconding a motion on Highway safety at the Full council meeting in March, but we ran out of time, so I will be speaking on this at the May meeting.

The legal dumping of raw sewage into our local rivers and waterways is a scandal which is gathering national attention. According to recent figures there were over 2000 incidents of raw sewage being poured out into Cotswold rivers in 2020 and there are no rivers deemed to be healthy in the whole of England. This must stop and I have been actively campaigning on this issue, bringing a motion to the Council in May this year, and getting a good amount of media coverage on the issue.

I will continue to campaign for this practise to be disallowed, for water companies to be made to increase infrastructure funding and for the Environment Agency to be built back up to be equipped to deal with this terrible situation.

Flooding in this area was (fortunately) very localised and small scale this year, but it continues to be a risk as we face the effects of climate change and changed weather patterns, including flash storms and large amounts of rainfall.

Clearly, good gully maintenance is required to ensure that the sewers can deal with excessive rainfall and I will continue to lobby that this happens on a yearly basis, without the need for inspection (surely better just to do it rather than see whether it needs doing and then either do it or delay it?), and to work closely with landowners and other stakeholders to ensure that flood defences and mitigation work is happening.

The Council continues to support post pandemic recovery in communities via the Build Back Better fund which is open until 2025, please get in touch if you have a project you think appropriate for funding.

Brexit and the pandemic has had a very big impact on care home staffing, and this remains an issue for concern, with the proposed closure of 4 homes in the County.

Ambulance response times have been alarming at times with unacceptable delays. This is being closely monitored and improvements have been made.

Children's services finally moved out of Special measures after the inspection in February. There is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that the most vulnerable residents of the county are adequately looked after.

Home to school transport is still not as widely available as it should be in the division and this is another issue I will be looking at more closely in the coming year.

As ever, if there are particular issues you would like to discuss, I am available on the phone or email.

Best wishes,

Lisa

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