



STROUD DISTRICT LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

<http://lsp.stroud.gov.uk>

Meeting held on Friday 1 December 2023

Council Chamber, Ebley Mill

Theme: Affordable Housing

Present:

Russell Warner (Chair)	Gloucestershire Area Lead, Federation of Small Businesses	Geoffrey Beckerleg	Chamber of Trade, Stroud
Will Mansell (Vice Chair)	The Grace Network	Helen Edwards	NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group
Anna Herbert	Chief Executive Officer, OPENhouse	Kathy O'Leary	Chief Executive, Stroud District Council
Adrian Oldman	Director, Transition Stroud (in part)	Paul Wigley	Specialist Services Manager, Citizens Advice Stroud & Cotswolds
Barbara Piranty	Chief Executive, GRCC	Tanya de Leensyder	Stroud Businesswomen's Network
Beth Whittaker	Third sector / community involvement	Dr Roma Walker	Stroud Hospital League of Friends
Cate James-Hodges	Leader, Stroud District Youth Council	Steve Miles	Senior Youth Officer
Cllr Catherine Braun	Leader of Council	Steve Olczak	Partnership Manager, Department of Work and Pensions
Clare Davis	CEO, Longfield		

Apologies received:

Anna Bonallack	Chief Executive Officer, Creative Sustainability	Lisa Ferneyhough-Moss	Deputy Director Care Operations, Lilian Faithfull Care
Chris Pockett	Head of Communications, Renishaw	Matt Fellows	CEO, Age UK Gloucestershire
David Owen	CE, Gfirst Local Enterprise partnership	Max Comfort	Director, Stroud Commonwealth
Mark McShane	Head, Stroud High School	Elizabeth Hall	Chief Executive, Citizens Advice Stroud & Cotswolds
Sarah Scott	Executive Director Adult Social Care, Gloucestershire County Council	Matt Amey	Stroud and Nailsworth Station Manager, Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service
Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown	MP, Cotswolds Constituency	Cllr Natalie Bennett	Deputy Leader, Stroud District Council
Cllr Lindsey Green	Conservative Group Leader, Stroud District Council		

Absent and apologies not received:

Alison Truphet	Amberley Shop and Cafe	Professor Sarah Scott	Executive Director Adult Social Care, Gloucestershire County Council
Kevin Hamblin	Group Chief Executive Principal, South Gloucestershire and Stroud College	Siobhan Bailie	MP, Stroud Constituency
Inspector Paul Cruise	Gloucestershire Police		

Guests and Support Officers

Cara Loukes	Affordable Housing Manager, GRCC	Julian White	Housing Advice Manager, SDC
Kate Hunt	Executive Assistant, SDC		

1. Welcome, introductions, apologies.

The Chair welcomed everyone and noted the apologies.

2. LSP survey results

The Chair thanked members for completing the LSP survey on strategic themes in September 2023. It was acknowledged there had been a good number of responses with some diverse results. It was agreed that meetings would be kept to Fridays and that partner updates should be kept to manageable times. The next meeting would have a focus on the High Street.

3. Housing Enabling Across Rural Gloucestershire: An Introduction to GRCC's Work, Barriers to Delivery, and the Importance of Partnership Working and Early Stakeholder Engagement (presentation attached).

Cara Loukes (CL) from GRCC gave a presentation on GRCC's work, barriers to delivery and the importance of partnership working and early stakeholder engagement.

The Chair thanked Cara for a comprehensive presentation and opened the floor to questions.

It was asked how the term 'rural' is determined by GRCC. CL explained that Homes England determines 'rural' as an area with sub-300K population. Homes England keeps a list of these areas, however, the number can be pushed to 500K in some situations.

Discussion was held around the issues faced by Uley when trying to develop a small housing scheme. The scheme took 15 years from start to finish due to issues and it was agreed that having supporting visuals is important to show the results of other developments so that residents understand that schemes with mixed communities can fit in and be positive.

Cara advised that there is a survey underway with Uley Parish Council to capture the difficulties they had run into. She also noted that GRCC, as a neutral organisation, can help by talking to communities, as they are not land holders or a profit focused organisation and are looking to get the right outcomes for residents. GRCC believes in the power of mixed communities.

Russell Warner asked if the houses they are looking at are 3 or 4 bedrooms as all housing estates seem to be 4 or 5 bedroom properties which are aimed at families. This perpetuates the issue as when the children grow up and leave this adds to the same position of people

needing to downsize to properties of which there are fewer, so the situation is not addressed. Cara noted that surveys showed people want to downsize to smaller properties so they can live independently for longer but there is a reluctance to deliver one person accommodation as the private market is dominated by profit. She agreed that developers should be designing sites which have different sized properties for different situations.

Cara also pointed out that there is a national issue of an aging population. Where two-bedroom bungalows are needed to allow people in their own homes private developers could build a 3-4 bedroom house on the same footprint and make more profit.

Cllr Catherine Braun talked about a report that has been released looking at the affordability ratios and how they are increasingly getting worse. She asked Cara if they were lobbying around these issues to national as well as local government. Cllr Braun said that there are complexities to understand the issues around building affordable housing and it is easy to blame planning. Cara agrees that planners have a hard job and they have lobbied DEFRA and Homes England.

It was asked if GRCC had looked at other countries to see how they are approaching this situation and there was reference made to first time buyers in Ireland who get £30K to help purchase a new build.

Cara noted that Scandinavia are the 'bright spark' in this area, but she acknowledged it was hard to compare countries as the tax systems are so different. She did say that the ROI is similar to the help to buy scheme in England. The Help to Buy scheme is where an ISA is set up and the government will match what the ISA holder puts in. This scheme is only valid for new builds and first-time buyers. She noted that this scheme, although helpful, has been hindered as they create high demand for smaller new builds which drives up demand. Developers then drip feed these properties to the market, knowing that they could be purchased by those on a Help to Buy scheme which is match funded. They also increase the price as their key driver is profit so the scheme is seen to be a double-edged sword.

Clare said it is interesting to look at affordable housing not as a problem in isolated areas but looking at opportunities as well by bringing more people into rural areas. Cara agreed that there needs to be more entry level jobs and career opportunities, currently there tend to be higher level management jobs but more diversity of employment is needed. People want the option of hybrid working as this is now the norm.

Education around the issues needs to be increased to build awareness and reduce stigma. There are graduates who cannot leave home. They require a hybrid way of working with an extra bedroom for working from home. DEFRA funding is required, and it is further on than 10 years ago but still needs much more work.

4. Social Housing Register & Homelessness in the Stroud District (presentation attached)

Julian White gave a presentation on the Social Housing Register and Homelessness in the Stroud District.

Anna Herbert from Open House, who have a 10-bed homeless hostel, said that since Covid there has been an increase of people waiting for housing. Previously there was 1 referral for one void, there is now 3 or 4 for one void. People are waiting up to seven months to be housed and this delay increases the chance of them returning to previous behaviours. Anna pointed out that getting the timing right is crucial, when these individuals are ready a need to move really quickly is important and is currently a real challenge.

It was acknowledged that the work done with providers including Start Supportive Housing and Open House are all fantastic schemes, but the challenges are the same, multiple people going for one property which is causing people to become disillusioned.

There were questions asked around the Bronze, Silver and Gold bandings and what determines who gets a property and how do people's health conditions go towards decisions. Julian explained that the short listing is a 3 tier system. Checks are carried out on whether the applicant has local connections. Someone in bronze for 5 years would always be below someone in silver, Julian noted that they receive a lot of GP letters, but it is not just a matter of assessing medical conditions, for example, if someone is wheelchair bound and is in a first floor flat they would go up a tier over someone that has a wheelchair in a bungalow. Whilst assessing homelessness people automatically are in silver. If by 56 days they are unable to relieve homelessness they are reassessed and if they have not made themselves homeless then they would go gold.

Deposit systems are available, and these are helpful when the Council are approached by people in a family breakdown situation. The deposit system supports with securing a private rental so that they can act as quickly as possible.

Cara Loukes asked what Stroud's position on intensive housing management was, Julian said that Housing first is offered which is pretty successful. Across Gloucestershire Housing First is an offer of permanent housing which builds support around the person in the property, offering support for a couple of years to allow them to stay in the property when the support is removed. He noted that Housing first is where people have failed in all other areas and that they usually have complex needs. The original project had 3 units, and there has been only one eviction with an 80/90% success rate. Within Stroud we have in stock housing which is helpful.

Steve Miles highlighted that the bottle neck is in the Gold band and that where people are unable to move on, young people especially lose faith and the lack of single bed properties are becoming a bigger issue.

5. Future LSP meeting themes

Russell Warner – Chair

- The theme for the next meeting will be the Local High Street. Please let Hannah Barton know if you have any themes you would like to be the topic of future meetings.

6. Partners' Updates

Steve Olczak – Partnership Manager, Department of Work and Pensions:

Stroud Job Centre overview.

- Stroud Job Centre closed on 12 July following flash floods which left the building with water damage to the building and electrics. Faults are currently being rectified.
- Staff have been moved to Gloucester Job Centre and Steve is happy to arrange a visit to the Gloucester site if anyone would like to visit.
- Recognises that there has been an impact on Stroud people, and they have had to alter the offer of service and how they support people and deliver a continued service.
- They are not expecting everyone to go to the Gloucester Job Centre every week but are seeing people face to face where there is a legal requirement to get documents or to get a new claim or review.

- First initial appointments will be invited in and will be seen in person, thereon after staff will be conducting telephone and video calls with customers.
- Where people are required to hand in a fit note, they will be able to upload the fit note and it will be accepted.
- In the event that people are called in to visit Gloucester in person they will be reimbursed for their fares. It was noted that they have had good feedback from people around this process.
- Despite not having an office in Stroud they continue to deliver above the national average of getting people back into work.
- They are continuing to support vulnerable people through the Restart Programme, Work and Health programme, job fairs, including one at Stroud District Council, outreach work and the National Careers Service.
- If you have any concerns Steve is happy for his details to be given out. If you are supporting anyone, he is happy to visit the local job centre.
- 6150 in Stroud are currently claiming universal credit.
- 1006 people are in an intensive work required group, which means that they should be looking for work.
- 45.2% of people claiming are not able to look for work due to health conditions.
- 13.6% of people claiming are self-employed people.
- Another meeting would be taking place 1 December and Steve is hoping the staff will be coming back to Stroud in the near future but currently has no fixed date.

Questions

Anna Herbert asked where vulnerable people can be seen. Steve said that they have people doing outreach work in Stroud and visiting officers would come out if needed. Open House offered offices if they wanted to use them.

Cllr Braun asked if transport to Gloucester was causing problems. It was noted that there haven't been any complaints and that there is only a need to travel if it is the initial meeting or if a legal requirement, but they are trying to be as flexible as possible.

Will Mansell - Vice Chair

- Hotspots network. Looking to build relationships. Is encouraged by a good beginning of the process. Positive conversation with GL11 Community.

Cllr Catherine Braun – Leader of Council:

- Rural England Prosperity Fund – the deadline was 1 December with a further round to be held in January 2024. This is a government fund and is worth having a look at. It supports organisations such as microbusinesses with less than 10 employees, small businesses with less than 250 employees, Parish Councils and community groups. They have given £100K of funding this financial year with £100K available for next year. All details can be found on the Stroud District Council website.
- Market Town Vitality fund – February deadline. Cllr Braun acknowledged that retail is difficult in the current climate and is looking to see how the council can support.
- Tourism – Lots of Good Will events taking place over the next few weeks.
- Budget setting – funding from Government is not confirmed until 23 December, before being finalised in February.
- Local Planning – local sites for new homes included in Local Plan but planning inspectors have raised issues around local transport and National Highways.
- Stroud District Council were recently shortlisted for Local Government Awards for work around equality and inclusion and wellbeing.

- Continued support for Community Hubs and cost of living crisis.

Clare Davis – CEO, Longfield:

- 1 month in post at Longfield.
- Currently looking at the next 5 year strategy and understanding role in end of life care.
- Looking at their role in the wider community. They currently employ 150 people, with an additional 500 volunteers.
- Longfield have a significant retail presence, so Clare is looking forward to the next LSP meeting.
- Christmas Fair will be held on 1 December 18:00-21:00.

Anna Herbert – CEO Open House:

- Disappointed that they can't currently offer Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) which is a space opened as shelter for people sleeping rough when there is an increased risk of death due to the weather e.g. temperatures fall near or below freezing.
- There is a current focus on looking at purposeful use of time of the people at Open House such as getting them into volunteering as there is a link with boredom and reverting to previous behavioural issues.
- Open House currently have offices available to rent. Please note there is no car parking.

Geoffrey Beckerleg - Chamber of Trade, Stroud:

- **Empty Shops and Businesses**
The recent closure of some of the main banks and several large shop premises in Stroud, has caused concerns about the number of empty shops and businesses, which gives a bad overall feeling to the town. The Chamber is embarking on a project to identify the vacant properties and to encourage / enable the use of pop-up shops and displays.
- **Visitor Economy Support**
The Chamber continues to create content to support the 'Save the Bus' campaign to encourage more bus usage.
10,000 copies of the new 'Visit Stroud Guide 2024' have been printed and distributed across the Stroud District.
- **Full Fibre Broadband**
The Chamber is working with Netomnia to encourage sign-up from businesses in town, although access to buildings is causing delays.

Barbara Piranty – GRCC:

- Working with the Apprentice Trust which is part of GCC – Stroud district cover.
- Working with Community Hubs.
- They have had a Pop-up Wellbeing Support Shop and Art Exhibition in Five Valleys Shopping Centre Stroud.
- Stall in Stonehouse High Street with handmade gifts.
- 2000 people promoting mental health.
- Working with the Jubilee Project supporting carers.
- Digital:
 - Digital Inclusion Manager secured and distributed £1million of data, 400 sims cards though Vodafone, giving unlimited texts and calls.
 - Distributed laptops and phones to Stroud to enable access to the internet.

Adrian Oldman – Director, Transition Stroud:

- Grant funding gained/needed to deliver an e-bike hire scheme through Community Hubs of which there are 18 across the district.
- 1 or 2 town councils have shown interest.
- The scheme would put e-bikes into communities with a low cost rental to try before you buy. Recognises that e-bikes are a high-cost purchase so giving people a chance to try an e-bike for a few weeks would increase purchases.
- People are being signposted to Great Western Credit Union for low-cost loans.
- Shops will only offer credit to people in regular employment and who are not on low incomes so the Great Western Credit Union is a supportive way of purchasing e-bikes.
- A Community Energy Group has been set up giving ways of empowering communities to come forward with ideas. The benefits offer 3 things for small communities: premises, insurance and bank accounts.
- The High Street Access Bike have taken on a short lease, until Christmas, on the old electric bike shop and are looking at keeping this going. They have asked Transition to go in with them.
- Transition are looking to set up a Green Scene Signposting website. Funding has been secured to allow someone to administer the site which will be launched in New Year. This will be a one stop shop for community and environment.

Cate James-Hodges - Leader, Stroud District Youth Council (SDYC):

- The Stroud District Youth Council have a manifesto document with key projects and issues. It is a private document and is used to track opinions. The SDYC believe within new housing developments youth work should be included in the design and younger people should have access to services in new developments. Cate referenced Article 31 Convention of the Rights of the Child which states 'Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts'.
- The SDYC recently ran a recruitment process for vacant appointments. They did not appoint and will run another round of recruitment.

Steve Miles – Senior Youth Officer:

- Manifesto Mondays – will profile on one of the statements they have within the SDYC manifesto mentioned by Cate.
- Social Media such as X, Facebook and Instagram are seeing more widespread issues around housing.

Paul Wigley – Specialist Services Manager, Citizens Advice Stroud & Cotswolds:

- There is an increase in people struggling with the cost-of-living crisis.
- People now present with multiple problems so it is taking more time to deal with each person.
- There was a mild Autumn, but now people are having to choose between eating or heating their properties.
- Debit is increasingly a common problem. In the last 12 months the amount of people in rent arrears in housing association properties has increased and there are more disabled people in housing rent arrears.
- Paul was encouraged by some of the autumn statements such as the Section 21 eviction that has been put on hold and will not be happening as yet.

Helen Edwards – NHS Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group:

- **General Practice appointment data**
 - All practices offer on the day urgent appointments.
 - A total of 27% (80,000) more appointments were offered in Sept 23 compared to Sept 19
 - Face to face appointments with a GP are back to pre-Covid levels - for a six month period April to September 2019 and 2023 the average monthly increase is over 5,500 GP face to face appointments.
 - Data taken from the annual National GP Patient Survey published in July 2023 shows satisfaction with services in Gloucestershire. For example: “Last time you had a general practice appointment, how good was the healthcare professional at treating you with care and concern? Gloucestershire 88% National 84%.” and “During your last general practice appointment, did you have confidence and trust in the healthcare professional you saw or spoke to? Gloucestershire 95% National 93%.”
 - All three Primary Care Networks (groups of practices working together) in Stroud District have invested in mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people. This includes the provision of mentoring from The Door and counselling from Cotswold Counselling.

- **Dental developments in Gloucestershire.**
 - There are 63 primary care NHS dental contract holders in Gloucestershire of which 11 are in the Stroud District. NHS dental access rates for adults 2021/22 was 29% for Gloucestershire (South West average 35.5%). For children the corresponding figures were 43.9% in Gloucestershire and 42.5% on average across the South West.
 - Since taking delegated authority for dental services from NHSE in April 2023, the ICB has commissioned additional out of hours urgent appointments on Saturday mornings & early evenings by seeking expressions of interest from all General Dental Practitioners (GDPs); commissioned additional in hours urgent appointments at the start/end of an existing session and increased up take of Stabilisation. The ICB will advertise these appointments imminently and access will be via NHS111.
 - In conjunction with Gloucestershire County Council who are responsible for the improvement of oral health of the population there are two new programmes commencing, namely Supervised Toothbrushing and First Dental steps.

- **Supervised Toothbrushing**
 - Prior to delegation, colleagues from NHSE - South West procured, on behalf of all Integrated Care Boards in the South West, a provider for Supervised Toothbrushing. Mobilisation in Gloucestershire is scheduled to begin in December with the service live from mid-January 2024. The aim of the scheme is to enable children in early years education settings to brush their teeth with fluoride toothpaste each day they attend under supervision from staff. This will be achieved by At Home Dental training the staff in each school or nursery and a named member of staff becoming the Oral Health Champion in each setting. The staff will then supervise the children brushing their teeth during the nursery or school day. This new programme is aimed at schools, nurseries attached to schools and special schools for children aged 3-5 years old in the more deprived six IMD (Indices of Multiple Deprivation) deciles. It is anticipated this will equate to approximately 172 primary schools across the county of Gloucestershire of which an anticipated 14 are in Stroud District and 4,070 children in total.

- **First Dental Steps**

- First Dental Steps is a new offer in Gloucestershire which forms part of each baby's health and development review at 9 to 12 months of age, undertaken by the health visiting team. Language and learning, safety, diet and behaviour are included as part of the review, together with oral health advice and the provision of a dental pack. These packs are currently being distributed to health visiting teams. The programme also includes a pathway for referral to the Community Dental Service for some specific groups of children (namely for Children in Care, those with a Child Protection Plan, those with Special Educational Needs or for children where an older child in family has had an extraction under General Anaesthetic).

Dr Roma Walker – Stroud Hospital League of Friends:

- Stroud League of Friends are running pre and postnatal yoga. This is not unique but it is free for users which makes it inclusive.
- This is a good model which they would like to increase in size. This has been a pilot but would like to continue as long as possible.
- In September there were three different focus mother circles including mother and baby singing groups and welcome bags for new mums.
- The 6-week courses have all been fully subscribed with between 10-12 attending each group.
- Currently mid-way through second tranche and the feedback has been overwhelmingly enthusiastic.

Please send any requests for future agenda items or suggestions for future meeting themes to Hannah Barton, hannah.barton@stroud.gov.uk

Next meeting
Friday 8 March

The meetings are 9:00am for a 9:15am start, with meeting end by 11:30am.