

Pre Application Community Involvement Protocol for Stroud District Parishes

Addendum for Wotton-under-Edge Town Council

The Pre Application Community Involvement Protocol and completed addendum was adopted by Wotton-under-Edge Town Council on 20th January 2014

Contact Details

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Basic Profile

Wotton-under-Edge is a small Cotswold town, situated under the Cotswold edge at the very Southern end of both the County of Gloucestershire and the District of Stroud. It has a population of about 5,500 and an electorate of 4,500. The town acts as a service point for a large hinterland, including some villages in the neighbouring authority of South Gloucestershire. The centre of the town, one of the District's former market towns – which grew as a wool and cloth trading centre – is a conservation area and sits within the Cotswolds AONB.

The town has a range of independent shops and is also home to several successful companies, including Renishaw plc, whose main site is in neighbouring Kingswood Parish.

Physically isolated both by its geographical position and a lack of good public transport, the town has traditionally and remains currently in the habit of meeting many local social needs independently.

Town Council

Wotton-under-Edge Town Council was set up, originally as a Parish Council following local government reform in 1896. Town Status was restored in 1976.

There are thirteen Town Councillors and there are no political groupings in the working of the Council. It is an active council that is committed to improving the quality of life for all members of its community. There is no warding in the town. The council provides support to a range of partner organizations involved in regeneration and meeting the social needs of its residents.

There are various Standing Committees, dealing with Special Purposes, Finance, Planning, Allotments, Footpaths and Amenity areas.

The Town Council operates from offices in the Civic Centre where it also operates a One Stop Shop where local people can access services by principal authorities and can also obtain information on many topics. In addition, services such as CAB and Housing Advice are enabled to provide services for the local community.

The Town Council is also Trustee of the Wotton-under-Edge Town Trust which holds land and buildings historically owned by the Mayor and Feoffees and in that role, manages those properties which include the Listed Town Hall, Chipping Hall and the Heritage Centre, Youth Club and the Chipping Car Park. The Trust has separate accounts and meetings from the Town Council.

The expenditure budget for 2013/2014 is £307,000 of which nearly £270,000 is precepted for. The balance of income comes largely from lettings income, grants and fees.

Local Facilities

The town has historically provided access to good schooling for local children. There are two primary schools (The British School and the Bluecoat School) and one secondary school (Katherine Lady Berkeley's) which has a Joint Use Sports Centre, operated in conjunction with Stroud District Council

A major project to provide more sporting facilities on New Road is under way with new all-weather pitches opened in autumn 2013. Future plans include building a skate park on the site.

There is a historic parish church together with several other churches and chapels.

There are banks, doctors, dentists, public houses, and numerous other services available in the town. All of these services and facilities mean that most requirements for daily living can be obtained in the town

There are three sets of almshouses still in active and much valued use, each managed by their own Trustees. The town has a large and active community of volunteers who provide or manage various community venues and facilities, including an open air swimming pool, an active Arts Centre, a Heritage Centre, Bowling green (all in premises let to them by the Town Council/Trust), a Jubilee Playing Field and a fully digital cinema which generates a loyal following from near and far. There are something like twenty six meeting rooms of various sorts, from scout huts to church rooms, all in active use. The Town Council encourages and supports local groups in providing these important and valued community assets without having to provide and manage all of these itself.

Civic Centre houses the Town Council Offices, community facilities and three community rooms, together with the adjoining car park and a workshop. In addition the Council provides the Town Cemetery (and maintains the Parish Churchyard), a children's play area, two sets of allotments, a streamside walk and amenity land, woodlands and the town CCTV system. It has recently converted the former Police Station to a Youth Centre, and works in partnership with three other local Councils and other parties in commissioning Youth work in the town. The Council is actively involved with the Youth Liaison Committee. The Town Council was a founder member of the Gloucestershire Market Towns Forum.

Local Groups and Organisations

Wotton Youth Liaison Group
Wotton Community Sports Foundation
Wotton Civic Society
Historic Society
Beaumont le Roger Twinning Society
Chamber of Trade
Probus
Lions Club
Round Table

Existing 'Plans'

The Wotton-under-Edge Community Plan, published in 2005, articulated a 10-20 year vision for the town. Although the plan has not been updated recently, the themes, issues and actions needed remain valid today.

As identified in the Community Plan and the draft Local Plan (Paras 3.69 and 5.63), Wotton has severe parking and congestion problems which is a constraint to achieving most of its vision themes. As a result, the Town Council will continue to insist that any new housing developments must satisfy the Local Plan requirement (Policy EI12, Para 5.63 and Table B of Appendix 2) that a minimum of 2 parking spaces are provided for each new dwelling or flat.