



Gloucestershire
Rural Community
Council
established in 1923

GRCC'S ANNUAL REVIEW | 2015/16



Planning and heavy snow in parts of the country in recent years has caused disruption and made us think about how prepared we were for any emergency. Communities are therefore being encouraged to produce their own Emergency Plan so that they can be prepared, know what to do, and then be able to bounce back.

This toolkit has been designed for communities to use, with a simple step-by-step route through the process of producing an Emergency Plan. Use the buttons and tabs to work your way through the document and the 'zoom' and 'fit to page' options on the right hand menu to adjust text size.

YOUR COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLAN
The 'how to' guide for rural communities

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GRCC would like to thank the following for their support in producing this toolkit:



GRCC FORGING AHEAD

Stability and strength during changing times

GRCC's greatest asset continues to be its skilled and committed GRCC staff team. We employ 64 members of staff and have over 150 volunteers, either working directly on GRCC projects in Gloucestershire or providing advice and support to thousands of volunteers who are active in their communities. GRCC's role has become even more crucial as we support parishes, neighbourhoods and voluntary organisations in considering changes to services offered by statutory authorities.

Working with these community volunteers is inspiring and we are delighted that our monitoring information demonstrates the clear benefits that GRCC's professional advice and support brings, helping communities help themselves. This year's annual review provides a flavour of our work with communities in 2015 to 2016, reflecting GRCC's countywide work and also its role as a rural specialist and champion.

During the course of the year, GRCC has also introduced changes to its internal operations, reviewing the leadership structure in response to

the retirement of both the GRCC Chief Executive, Lesley Archer, and the Chair of Board of Trustees, David Gwynn Owen.

The Board felt that stability and efficiency were key and therefore adopted a Co-Directorship model with each of the three serving Senior Managers focussing on a key strand of GRCC's work.

Each Senior Manager also has distinct responsibilities relating to finance, quality and governance and together they work with the Board of Trustees on GRCC's strategic planning and partnership working. The Board is delighted with this effective co-working by its Management Team.

The Board was also keen to retain Lesley's expertise during this time of transition and pleased that she accepted the invitation to join the GRCC Board of Trustees and become the Chair of the Board from March 2016.

Lesley's knowledge of the sector has been gained from serving GRCC for 15 years, 9 of which were as CEO.



David Gwynn Owen



Lesley Archer



Elin Tattersall, Active Communities Lead



Barbara Piranty, Healthwatch Lead



Kate Darch, Older People's Services Lead

THE KEY STRANDS OF GRCC'S WORK:

The Active Communities strand of GRCC work encompasses support to community groups and parish/town councils on community-led planning, guidance to the voluntary and community sector on running effective organisations, project concept and development, funding advice, rural services, community owned assets and enterprises, affordable rural housing and services for families. GRCC also offers data analysis, facilitation and mediation services.

The Older People's Services strand of GRCC's work covers a number of projects including Village and Community Agents and the In Touch Project, which works with older people's groups across the county, befriending services, Digital and Cyber Safety projects.

Healthwatch Gloucestershire is the independent consumer champion for health and social care in Gloucestershire and has statutory functions including: information and signposting, influencing and advocacy.

Healthwatch uses patient and public feedback to help influence, shape and change the way services are planned and delivered in Gloucestershire and its work is governed by a dedicated Healthwatch Board, although GRCC remains the accountable body for the contract.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES

Support for Gloucestershire's residents

Community-led planning

GRCC has a long history of supporting community-led planning especially through Parish Plans and Village Design Statements. 2015-16 saw around 40 of Gloucestershire's parishes capitalising on new regulations to prepare Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs). These are statutory planning documents that must be considered when appraising planning applications.

Communities use robust engagement methods to identify the issues of importance in their area and to set out a vision for their place. They then decide on priorities and define these as policies within their Neighbourhood Plan.

Lechlade-on-Thames was one of the first Gloucestershire communities to submit their completed Plan to the local authority.

Steve Trotter, Mayor of Lechlade, describes the basis of their Plan: "We want to achieve a town which attracts young people and families, but also caters for the ageing population so have listed sites for housing and employment and set out policies for design character to make sure that new buildings fit in with the town. We want to



recapture the town centre for people, encouraging them to spend longer exploring our shops, heritage and walks to the riverside and canal. Our plan sets out redevelopment of the Thames-side marina and the designation of our green spaces for special protection against development.

"GRCC helped by facilitating early workshops, supporting the working groups and policy drafting. Finally

GRCC supported us in drafting the NP including the Compliance and Consultation Statements.

"We're hoping to pass the referendum stage of Plan-making in the next few months but are pleased that it has already been used to influence planning decisions."

Steve now volunteers as a Neighbourhood Plan Champion in Gloucestershire, bringing his experience to other groups embarking on the process.

For more information on Neighbourhood Development Plans, or to book a free workshop please contact Barbara Pond bpond@ggcc.org.uk



Seven new affordable rented homes are opened by Anne Sutcliffe, Chair of Uley Parish Council

Affordable homes for local people

Gloucestershire is a highly desirable part of the country in which to live, with excellent communications, high employment rates, a wide range of job opportunities and a wonderful environment. However, a combination of low median incomes and rising house prices have increased barriers for those wishing to become home owners, particularly the young.

Changes in planning policies and the Government's Affordable Homes Programme 2016-20 have created new opportunities where developers and providers of affordable housing can provide mixed-tenure housing on rural exception sites. A reduction in the level of grant and the opportunity to use cross subsidy from open market housing to fund affordable homes has resulted in the creation of a new financial model.

Housing Associations and private developers are taking on this new challenge and GRCC has been helping

communities to consider all options. The first example of a successful mixed open-market housing and affordable homes for rent was built in Cambridge (Stroud District) by First Step Homes. They sold 12 two and three bedroom homes on the open market and transferred 12 affordable homes for rent to The Guinness Partnership, which let the properties to local people.

Other projects in the pipeline across rural Gloucestershire will help provide much needed affordable homes in Gloucestershire's market towns and villages.



Street elevation at Raglan Way, Uley

TRANSPORT AND ACCESS

Routes are growing in the Forest

Forest Routes is a Forest of Dean Community Transport Partnership Big Lottery project. It was set up to develop cohesive community transport for the 58% of residents with little or no public transport. Although 20% are over the age of 65 there is evidence that young people also have problems finding transport, especially during evenings.

Partners include Bream Volunteer Car Service, Lydcare, Newent and Lydney Dial a Ride, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and GRCC, which chairs the Partnership. It aims to find local solutions to transport issues and to enable a co-ordinated approach to developing transport services.

The Forest Routes partnership has worked closely with the Gloucestershire County Council Transport Strategy, providing evidence of transport needs, and has been involved in a response to the Non-Emergency Patient Transport consultation. It has a presence on the Healthwatch Task Group



and is reviewing cross border transport which is currently restricted by border-dependent grants.

A programme of support and training to build the capacity of the Community Transport organisation includes training in first aid, mental health first aid, dementia awareness and volunteer management. Partners have also shared skills and expertise and produced a Local Transport Partnership Volunteer Driver Handbook. Drivers often signpost passengers to services.

Community Forums have been set up to highlight and discuss local transport issues. The project continues to share information and good practice outside the Forest of Dean with organisations wanting to start or improve transport in their area.



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Training, aid and expertise

Village SOS

Thirteen communities in Gloucestershire have benefitted from the national, Big Lottery funded, Village SOS programme which aims to enable communities to tackle the challenges of providing local services and facilities in rural areas.

In England the programme is managed by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) and Rural Community Councils in each county have co-ordinated the local support.

GRCC has provided direct advice, brokered technical expertise and linked projects with others locally and nationally to enable peer learning for a range of projects, including:

- helping a football club to gain planning permission by commissioning a bat survey. The project would have stalled without this.
- helping a community building to survive by tracking down legal documentation to establish ownership. The hall now has a new committee and the continued support



Painting of St Christopher at Baunton Church

- of GRCC to ensure its long term future.
- enabling a conversion at Baunton church to move one step further to becoming a community facility by providing a conservation survey for a 14th century painting of St Christopher.

'Thirteen communities in Gloucestershire have benefitted from the national, Big Lottery funded, Village SOS programme'

Strategies and action to limit flood damage

Tewkesbury Flood Resilience

Deerhurst has benefited from a number of initiatives by working with Tewkesbury Borough Council, GRCC and partners such as the Environment Agency & Civil Protection Team on a resilience project.

A number of households and businesses gained grants to increase their flood resilience after they had been flooded in the winter of 2013/14.

These Government grants were made available through Gloucestershire Community Foundation and Tewkesbury Borough Council. This meant that people were able to take measures to limit damage by prevention where possible and installing materials to shorten recovery time.

Tewkesbury Borough Council also project-managed the Deerhurst Walton bund to help prevent damage to properties.

The Deerhurst flood coordinator/ flood wardens regularly attend training where the authorities and experienced flood wardens share advice.



A training session for flood wardens

The flood wardens value the chance to connect with others and raise questions / local knowledge from their patch.

By registering as flood wardens with Tewkesbury Borough Council, they are insured for their flood warden activities.

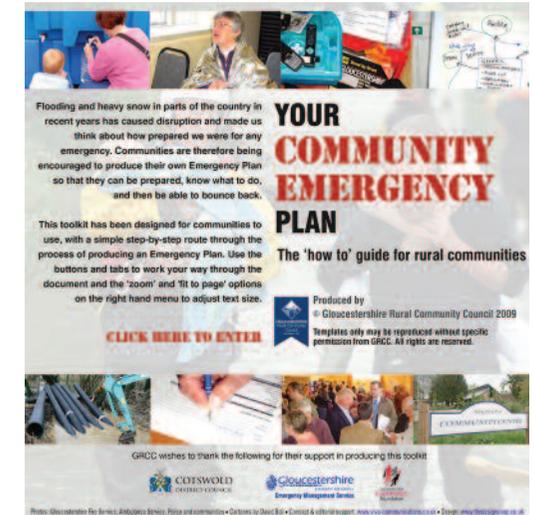
38

councillors / flood wardens attended training over the year

Facts and figures:

■ **Emergency Planning:** GRCC has updated the community emergency plan toolkit and made it available to download online. Parishes have used it to review or draw up new documents.

For details please go to www.grcc.org.uk



■ **Tewkesbury:** Over the year 38 councillors / flood wardens attended training from 22 parishes.



HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

healthwatch Gloucestershire **making a difference locally**

Healthwatch completed another successful year in which Gloucestershire residents continued to benefit from access to high quality information and signposting, referrals to advocacy and by sharing their experiences of health and social care to help shape, influence and improve the way services are planned and provided in the county.

Membership exceeded 1,050 with volunteers providing patient representation on more than 45 external health and social care project/working groups.

Patient feedback gathered has helped provider organisations to understand patient experience of local services including A&E, Non-Emergency Patient Transport, NHS 111, Domiciliary Care, Dementia Care, Learning Disability, hospital discharge and care homes.

Recent targeted engagement with parish and town councils is providing Healthwatch with greater access into the more remote rural communities, allowing constructive conversations on local issues and a route for our information.

Healthwatch carried out a number of hospital visits to observe dementia care and were also asked by the County Council to carry out an independent review of the support planning process for people with a Learning Disability.

Healthwatch's relationship with the University of Gloucestershire has been developed further this year, as they work together to embed patient experience in the new nursing associate degree.

Facts and figures:

- Attendance at 197 events and the collection of 2,463 individual views and experiences of health and social care from patients and the public at these events and through other sources
- 1,050 members at the end of March 2016
- 1,296 calls to the information and advice line
- 50 calls referred for health or social care advocacy
- 85% of calls received were dealt in house, needing no onward referral



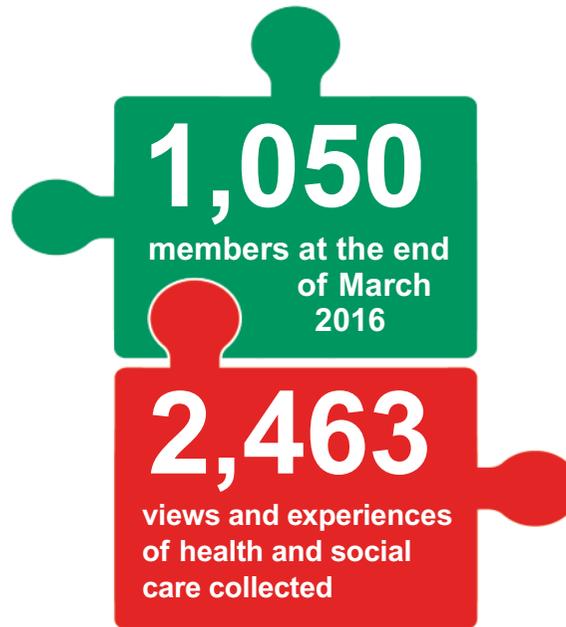
Healthwatch Gloucestershire celebrates its 1,000th member



- 3 task group reports published with recommendations, on Hospital Discharge, Patient Transport and Podiatry/Footcare
- 150 volunteer roles with members contributing over 4,500 hours
- Regular contact with 60 Patient Participation Groups in the county's GP surgeries
- Patient representatives on over 45 external health and social care project/working groups

- 27 volunteers trained as 'Enter and View' representatives
- 17 'Enter and View' visits carried out to support work plan activity
- 16 PLACE (Patient Led Assessments of the Care Environment) Representatives trained, carrying out assessments at 17 health and social care sites
- 31% of all feedback collected was positive and while compliments were received about all services, the three service areas attracting most were GP services, Integrated Community Teams and the acute hospitals.

Concerns around hospital discharge continued this year and other issues related to access to mental health services, access to GP appointments, increasing demand for pharmacies, Non-Emergency Patient Transport and domiciliary care.



For more information on the work of Healthwatch and to find out how you can become involved, please contact the team on freephone 0800 652 5193



Healthwatch Volunteer District Representatives

INTERVENING AND RESPONDING

In Touch

Gloucester Cathedral's traditional nativity scene was enhanced in 2015 by something a little different – GRCC's 'In Touch' 'Knitivity', created with loving care by individuals and communities from across Gloucestershire.

With a view to including as many people as possible, Knitivity captured the imagination of everyone involved. New knitting groups



started and the benefits to people who engaged were considerable. One participant said: "Thank you for giving me something to look forward to. I was so lonely, I thought things would never get better. I now have a group of friends and I am knitting myself a cardi!"

Knit group's donkey is a labour of love

The donkey was a work of art, knitted by Wallace House 'Knit and Natter' group in Cheltenham and perfectly captures the ethos of the project. "We felt a 'patchwork quilt' creation for the donkey would

represent the huge diversity of participants in our Knit and Natter group. We are such a mixture of people who come together for a shared goal, so we felt our donkey should be made out of little bits of us all!



"The character of the donkey could not be more appropriate for us as it is traditionally seen as a beast of burden (a lot of our participants live with many troubles and burdens). It is also used to describe a stupid or inept person, and many people ignorantly and incorrectly perceive those of us with disabilities or other problems as being stupid, so we are raising awareness and breaking down negative attitudes in this area as well!"

Cheltenham Borough Homes Representative

INTERVENING AND RESPONDING



Village & Community Agents celebrate 10 years

GRCC is extremely proud to support and manage the scheme it initiated as a pilot back in 2006, in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council, which is now a national exemplar that has been replicated throughout the country. We love to hear from people the agents help and understand the impact they have, helping to signpost, support and connect older people with their communities. One gentleman in the Cotswolds said: "They change lives, they really do."

So why does Gloucestershire love Village and Community Agents? Here's what some of the recipients of the service said:

"I rang Sue to say that my wife had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Sue visited us,

talked about assistance and is subsequently organising a range of services. Sue is very supportive and friendly which takes the pressure off me."

"My Agent helped me to get aids to help me keep mobile and be safe in my home. After my husband died she helped me to connect with groups and people in the same position as me."

"I believe this service is providing crucial support to the elderly in such a rural area which has its limitations of transport and access to all sorts of amenities. I know that my parents' age-group are fiercely independent and don't like to trouble anyone. It is such a positive experience for them to find someone on their side."

In 2015/16:

2,115

individuals were helped

6,791

assessment forms submitted

1,381

new clients accessed the scheme

'My Agent is helpful, knowledgeable, understanding, professional. I wish I had known her before'

Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, Community House, 15 College Green, Gloucester GL1 2LZ

GRCC is a charitable company limited by guarantee. It is a membership organisation with an elected Board of Trustees which oversees the organisation's work.

Registration number: 3181755 Charity number: 1054282

Executive directors: Elin Tattersall, Barbara Piranty, Kate Darch

If you require this report in an alternative format, please contact GRCC

GRCC FINANCE

The year to 31st March 2016 showed a decrease of 7.6% in income and 7.3% in expenditure to **£1,166.0k** and **£1,158.8k** respectively. This resulted in a year end surplus of **£7.2k** (2014/15 £11.9k) before movement in investment assets unrealised. Sources of funding continue to be project-based rather than from Service Level Agreements.

INCOME BREAKDOWN BY VALUE 2012 - 2016

