



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Council Offices • Ebley Mill • Ebley Wharf • Stroud • GL5 4UB

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Members Question to Council

Questions from Lindsey Green

Question 1

Stroud District Council has signed up for SOLACE - a project aimed at creating safer communities with a focus on Anti-Social Behaviour within our communities. I am glad to see that Stroud District Council have signed up for SOLACE but why was SDC the LAST Local authority to sign up?

Reply 1

The SOLACE programme, funded through the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, was originally implemented exclusively in Gloucestershire's urban areas (Gloucester and Cheltenham DCs), The opportunity for a roll out to the remaining four, rural, district councils in the county came sometime later.

With the opportunity to become part of the SOLACE programme, all the rural councils reviewed the programme detail to properly understand its operational implications. Stroud District Council signed the SOLACE agreement only when this was properly completed. It was the final district to do so, approximately four weeks after the penultimate signatory.

The Community Services team has been working with SOLACE since January 2023, scoping community need, identifying officer resource and additional training requirements. Informed by this groundwork, One Legal assisted the Community Services team to adapt the SOLACE agreement to meet Stroud's needs at the beginning of June 2023.

The SOLACE team supported council officers as part of a Members' evening in June 2023, which discussed the Council's emerging approach to anti-social behaviour and explored how ASB can be tackled through a one council partnership approach.

Question 2

From Strategy and Resources meeting on Tuesday 11th July, agenda item 6, Appendix B, Point 1.5 it states that there is a significant efficiency saving for no longer handling cash deposits or using G4S.

SDC have also publicly stated that they no longer accept cheques too.

What are we doing to support the elderly and/or vulnerable who do not wish to or have the means to use bank cards for payments. How are we supporting those that have no other way to pay other than cash or cheque?

Reply 2

In April 2020 Stroud District Council stopped accepting cheques and cash due to the inability to process these payment methods during the Covid-19 lockdown. This period demonstrated that these payment methods were no longer essential for many of our residents. The ability



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to present cheques has since been further reduced with the closure of the many bank branches across the district.

Currently most of our residents and tenants are able to pay by direct debit, using online banking, or by telephone with a debit or credit card. Anyone facing difficulty with these methods is invited to contact the Customer Services team by telephone or email. They will then be supported with finding a payment method that fits their personal circumstances.

For regular payments, such as Council Tax and housing rents, this could include the issuing of a Girobank card. This enables payment at any Post Office and can include payment by cash or cheque.

Over the two months of April and May 2023, 27 cheques were received by SDC. After contact with the Customer Services Team, 23 of these accounts were paid using one of our standard payment methods. The remaining four accounts, of which two were residents and two were for a business, were supported with their payments by the Customer Services Team. The business has already set up an alternative payment method for future payments.