

1. Project Gigabit - Public Review Launch in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire

The government is on a mission to deliver lightning-fast, reliable broadband to everyone in the UK and is investing £5 billion in Project Gigabit to ensure that hard-to-reach communities are not left out.

Building Digital UK (BDUK) is carrying out a Public Review to help identify areas in Herefordshire and Gloucestershire that may be suitable for future public funding for gigabit-capable broadband.

BDUK is seeking information and supporting evidence from suppliers - in relation to the presence of gigabit-capable broadband infrastructure within the project area.

They wish to hear from all relevant stakeholders - including the public, businesses, internet service providers and broadband infrastructure operators - particularly in relation to the proposed mapped eligible areas.

This Public Review opens on 5th September 2022 and closes at 5pm on 5th October 2022.

To respond to this Public Review, and for more information, please see BDUK's page below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/project-gigabit-gloucestershire-lot-18-public-review-request-for-information>

2. £1.25 million investment in new fire service vehicles

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) is set to acquire three new and more modern specialist vehicles.

A report submitted to Gloucestershire County Council's cabinet says the current fleet is ageing and needs to be replaced.

Three new specialist vehicles will be purchased over the next two years, using capital funding that has already been secured from the county council totalling £1.25 million.

The vehicles, an Aerial Ladder Platform, Incident Command Unit and Crane Unit, are needed to maintain an effective operational response to keep communities safe.

They are more environmentally friendly than the old fleet as they use greener engines, so the amount of emissions they produce is reduced.

The vehicles would also help ensure the average availability of GFRS fire engines remains high. Currently the average availability is 91.8 per cent, higher than the average across England of 86.4 per cent.

Cabinet gave its approval to go ahead with the purchases at its meeting on Wednesday 21 September.

During cabinet the improvement plan developed in response to the most recent His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services report was approved for submission.

You can [read the full cabinet report here](#).

3. Council set to apply for new powers to improve road safety

Gloucestershire County Council is proposing to introduce new measures to cut congestion, encourage more walking and cycling and improve road safety.

Local authorities in England are now able to apply to the Department for Transport (DfT) for new powers to enforce 'moving traffic offences'.

It means they can be granted powers previously held by the police to issue fines for certain types of traffic offences.

Enforcement of these traffic offences would help to reduce congestion and improve traffic flow and road safety, which would encourage more people to take up walking or cycling and encourage greater use of public transport.

The offences include stopping in a yellow box junction, banned turns, going the wrong way in a one-way street or accessing a street where there is a prohibition of driving in place.

They would be enforced in various locations using Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras and a statutory six-week public consultation period would be held before an application is submitted to the DfT.

Traffic surveys were carried out at 14 sites around the county between November 2021 and March 2022 which showed that accidents had occurred at nearly all of the locations.

Enforcing traffic regulations at these sites would reduce the risk of collisions and improve road safety for all road users and pedestrians, as well as improve the efficiency of public transport services.

Any surplus funds raised through enforcement would be reinvested in parking services, environmental schemes, highways improvements or public transport.

Gloucestershire County Council's cabinet approved the proposal to apply for powers to enforce moving traffic offences, following the outcome of a consultation process, at a meeting on Wednesday 21 September.

You can [read the full cabinet report here](#).

4. New mental wellbeing service for Gloucestershire

Following a six-week consultation, Gloucestershire County Council's cabinet have decided to introduce a new service to support adult mental wellbeing in the county.

At its meeting on 21 September, cabinet considered proposals to enhance the mental wellbeing support available for adults in the county.

In 2020, the council launched new temporary mental wellbeing services to provide extra support during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic; and new funding has since been secured to continue the support on a longer-term basis.

Since 2010, the county council has funded a separate Self Harm Helpline which provides open access, anonymous support by phone, webchat, or text for anyone seeking support around self-harm.

The contract for the self-harm helpline is coming to an end in March 2023, so a consultation was carried out earlier this summer to find out what Gloucestershire thought about combining the standalone support for self-harm into an expanded new mental wellbeing helpline for adults.

An overwhelming majority of the 565 responses supported the proposals for a new service, which would provide anonymous support on a drop-in basis for people experiencing mild-moderate issues with their mental and emotional wellbeing, such as anxiety, stress, or low mood; alongside support for self-harm.

Following cabinet agreement, support will be available over the phone or via text/webchat; and will not require a referral from a professional. Being able to access support from trained advisers early may prevent symptoms from getting worse and help reduce demand on other mental health services in the county. Advisors will also be trained in supporting people with self-harm, and support will also be available for friends and carers.

Information about any service changes will be announced following procurement, so [sign up to the county council's bulletin](#) to get our latest news straight to your email inbox. Cabinet papers can be found online [here](#).

Everyone experiences ups and downs with their mental health, and anyone could need support for their emotional wellbeing. If you are struggling or feeling low there is support available – [go to our website](#) to find information.

Support for self-harm will still be available for under 18s when the contract for the current helpline ends. Children and young people wanting anonymous, 'drop in' support for self-harm will be signposted to the TIC+Chat helpline. TIC+ can also provide face to face counselling for young people. Find out more [here](#).

5. £3.6 million to tackle childhood obesity

On Wednesday, the cabinet approved £450,000 of funding per year to fund a healthier lifestyles programme for children and young people aged 4 to 18 (and up to 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities). The programme will run from April 2023 for a minimum of five years, with the option to extend it for another three years.

Childhood obesity is a serious threat to the health, wellbeing and life chances of children and young people. Without intervention, childhood obesity tends to carry on into adulthood and can cause serious health complications like heart disease and diabetes.

Levels of childhood obesity were a concern before the covid pandemic, but data from the 2021 National Childhood Measurement Programme shows that childhood obesity increased at an unprecedented level during this time. Rates of obesity in Reception aged children grew by 4.4 percent to 13.5 percent; and in Year 6 children grew by 2.9 percent to 21.1 percent.

Families across Gloucestershire will have access to a range of healthy lifestyle information and guidance, including a dedicated website. A more intensive family-based programme will also provide targeted help for approximately 500 families a year who are most at risk from obesity, with tailored face-to-face support that addresses food, physical activity and behaviour change strategies.

The healthier lifestyles programme will work in partnership with local communities, recognising and building upon the existing activities that support residents to live well, such as cooking and growing projects, physical activities, peer support, and opportunities to connect with others.

A pilot service has been running since January 2020 in Gloucester and the Forest of Dean to understand family and community strengths, and what the potential barriers are to people making changes to their behaviour, such as poor mental wellbeing, financial challenges, lack of time and energy, and difficulties accessing, planning and preparing affordable healthy food.

It has received national recognition as one of the first of its kind and resulted in the council being selected to be part of NHS England and NHS Improvement's Children and Young People Transformation Programme (2021-24) as an 'Integration Test Site' for childhood obesity.

6. Increased financial support for Ukrainian guests and their sponsors

In response to feedback from sponsors about the impact the increased cost-of-living is having on their ability to sponsor Ukrainian guests, the council will be offering all sponsors £375 per household (split into three payments of £125, per month, for the months of November and December 2022 and January 2023) to help towards their energy costs. This will be paid to every sponsor in the county, regardless of how long they have been hosting their guests. Any guest who has moved out into the private rented sector will also be eligible to receive this payment (conditions apply).

In addition to this, those sponsors who have offered to continue to provide accommodation beyond the first six months will also receive an additional £100 per month for months seven to twelve of their hosting arrangements, and this in addition to the existing monthly £350 'thank you' payment already offered to all sponsors.

Where is the money coming from?

This increased financial support is coming from the Government's Homes for Ukraine grant paid to local authorities. You can read the decision paper [here](#).

Since the conflict began, over 500 households have welcomed more than 1000 Ukrainian guests fleeing war, and all seven Gloucestershire councils have come together to make sure accommodation is safe and suitable.

What support is there for Ukrainians who are in Gloucestershire under the Families Scheme?

The Ukrainian Families Scheme allows a Visa to be granted for Ukrainians to live with family in the UK. This is different to the Homes for Ukraine scheme which is facilitated by national and local government, and people sponsor strangers to come and live with them or at least six months.

The Gloucestershire Homes for Ukraine partners have been supporting those who have come forward as being part of the Families Scheme. Gloucestershire County Council has been giving a one off £200 payment (per person) to people when they contact GARAS.

So far, 52 payment vouchers have been given out, along with travel cards for 50 free bus trips in Gloucestershire. Those who are part of the Families Scheme who have not come forward yet are encouraged to get in touch with GARAS or the Homes for Ukraine team by emailing UkraineFamilies@gloucestershire.gov.uk to get their support payments.

7. Bruton Way railway station entrance safer and more accessible as works completed

The upgrade to the junction has seen the pedestrian access to the station from the city centre made safer and easier to use with footpaths being widened.

In addition to the improvements on the Bruton Way junction, further improvements include a better road crossing across George Street, updated traffic lights at the pelican crossing of Bruton Way junction, and facilities to help guide visually impaired users towards the station.

The completed works will make it easier to access the station for all users and encourage more sustainable methods of travel, such as walking.

It comes after Gloucestershire County Council completed work to create a new entrance to the railway station from Metz Way.

With the upgrade to the Bruton Way junction complete, further improvement works can now take place at the station, including to the underpass from Great Western Road.

Thanks
Vernon

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