



STONEHOUSE TOWN COUNCIL

Annual Report April 2015- March 2016

Welcome from the Chairman - Councillor Theresa Watt

I present the Annual report on Council activities with thanks to my fellow Councillors for their hard work and commitment over the last year. This year has been exceptionally busy with scrutiny of the Local Plan which has involved Councillors and staff in additional meetings. We have also worked with facility hirers on a review of current facilities and this work is ongoing. This year the Council welcomed a number of new Members Cllr. Jo Byrne, Cllr. Amy Coombs, Cllr. Gwen Atkinson, Cllr. Deborah Curtis, Cllr Neil Gibbs and Cllr Tim Jackson all of whom brought fresh ideas into the mix. Councillors will soon be standing down as the Council goes into another round of elections on May 5th for a membership of 14. However, this year the elections required the selection of 1 candidate for Ebley, and 13 candidates for Stonehouse ward. All 14 candidates chose to stand for the 13 Stonehouse places which will leave a vacant seat for co-option in Ebley.

The Council made the following grants this year:

Stonehouse Lunch Club	200
Transition Stroud (Edible Open Gardens Project)	150
Stonehouse Community Partnership (Arts Project)	500
Itchy Feet Dance Group (Competition Fees)	350
Royal British Legion (Poppy Appeal)	25
Citizens Advice Bureau (advice service)	2000
Neighbourhood Warden	1000
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	4225

The Council received the following donations this year:

Stonehouse Football Club (Pavilion Changing Rooms)	3000
Hurns Hardware & Delta Nine (Christmas Lights)	<hr/>
	285
	3285

The Council, Stonehouse Rotary and the Cooperative Society also jointly funded the purchase of a defibrillator which is for community use and situated at the Cooperative Store in the High Street.

The Council and Doverow Hill Trust also contributed towards information boards produced by Stonehouse History Group which have added some interest in various locations in the town - more planned!

The Council would also like to acknowledge all those volunteers and contributors to the Stonehouse In Bloom 2015-16 which scooped a Silver Award in the Heart of England In Bloom. Thank you all for making Stonehouse so full of vibrant colour.

The Council would also like to thank the contributors and deliverers of the Stonehouse News, which goes to every household in Stonehouse. We would also like to thank the traders, businesses, community groups, schools and residents who all make Stonehouse a vibrant place to live, work and visit.

The Council's financial statements for 2015-16 will be available on the Council's website following audit and during the inspection period. A first draft of the financial statements shows the following income and expenditure in the year compared with last year:

Income:	<u>2015/16</u>	<u>2014/15</u>
Precept	217570	209800
Agency Services	835	800
Interest & Investment Income	2749	1739
Leisure & Recreation	14924	23499
Allotments	902	970
In Bloom	2949	0
Establishment/General Admin	37998	57456
Section 106 (Projects)	82438	18188
Donations (Projects)	4165	2417
Grant Neighbourhood Plan	7985	2583
Grants (Projects)	9999	28000
Local Council Tax Support	16035	20938
	<u>398549</u>	<u>366390</u>

Expenditure

Establishment/General Expenditure	137934	81215
Staff, NI & Pensions	73082	68083
Recruitment	30	30
S106 Expenditure	82438	15934
Capital Expenditure	0	24849
Recreation & Amenities	81415	56216
Allotments	535	223
Stonehouse in Bloom	5960	3714
Neighbourhood Plan	6161	3221
Recreation Projects	2048	35483
Projects Expenditure (Donations)	4165	1986
Projects Retention Fee Payment	2926	0
	<u>396694</u>	<u>290954</u>

Finance & Strategy Committee

The Committee, chaired by Cllr Robin Waite, has reviewed and revised Council policies to ensure they meet the standard required under the Local Council Award Scheme. The Council was awarded Quality Status in March 2016. The Committee has supported Councillors and staff to undertake training to maintain standards and expertise:

Rachel Russell attended a workshop on Planning arranged by GAPTC

Carol Kambites attended a workshop on Planning arranged by CPRE

Town Clerk/RFO, Gill Jennings has attended training sessions on HR management and Pensions arranged by GAPTC and continues to study with SLCC & the University of Gloucestershire on the Community Governance Level 5 programme.

The Committee also arranged a bespoke training session for councillors through GAPTC.

The Committee is responsible for the Town Hall and the youth centre. Young Gloucestershire and other groups still provide well respected youth provision on 4 evenings a week at our Youth Centre in Oldends Lane. This included working with a disabled national artist and appearing on Songs of Praise. The Committee has continued to maintain an overall strategic view of council's affairs and has communicated with the public with news items and consultations. The Committee maintained checks and balances on the Council's finances and prepared the draft budget for precept purposes. Following a decision by the District Council to withhold the local council tax grant, an increase in precept was necessary:

<u>Stonehouse Precept Spending Plans</u>	2015-16	2016-17
Administration costs, Staffing & Training	82600	77000
Grants	5000	5000
Town Hall. Communication & Youth Provision	27300	53400
Amenities, Recreation and Tourism	139900	117850
Regeneration and Environment	2000	14500
	<u>256800</u>	<u>267750</u>
less income and use of reserves	-39230	-28400
<u>Precept</u>	<u>217570</u>	<u>239350</u>

The Staffing Committee, General Policy Working Group, Internal Audit team, Communications Working Group, Youth Working Group, report to this Committee.

Amenities, Recreation & Tourism Committee

The Committee, chaired by Councillor Neil Gibbs, considered proposals to extend the changing room facilities at Oldends Lane and have seen these through to completion. These facilities were largely funded by S106 monies. The Committee are now considering further improvements to Oldends Lane recreation facilities to enhance the area and increase wellbeing. The Committee has been working closely with the Allotment Tenants Association in fulfilling their desire to directly manage the allotments. Allotment tenants have been consulted. The Committee is working on a programme of replacing and refurbishing street furniture and play equipment. The Committee supported by a part-time groundsman and subcontract staff continue to maintain the play areas, town greens and Doverow Wood. The Committee also supports the efforts of the In Bloom Committee and provides the Christmas lights. The Recreation Working Group reports to this Committee and actively seeks funding for recreation improvements.

Regeneration & Environment Committee

The Committee, chaired by Councillor Carol Kambites, led the Town Council's opposition to the Local Plan and West of Stonehouse and has considered numerous planning applications. The Committee has been successful in networking with neighbouring parish councils to take a strategic view of issues and concerns and will continue to encourage the District Council to do the same. The Committee continues to work closely with other agencies to seek improvements to transport, traffic and parking. The Committee has been successful in obtaining £6000 in funding from Great Western Railways for improvements to the footpath between the station and the District Council carpark. The Development Control Panel and Neighbourhood Plan Group report to this Committee. The Committee welcomed Committee Clerk Rachel Russell this year. Rachel takes care of the administration for this Committee and the Neighbourhood Plan Group.

Aims in 2016-17

- Completion of the Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Designs for redevelopment of Oldends Lane community facilities
- Replacement play equipment and street furniture
- Feasibility study of Bristol Road station (with partners)
- Explore funding for environmental/recreational projects