



STONEHOUSE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes (subject to agreement at the next Committee meeting) of a meeting of the **Town Environment Committee on Monday 29th January, 7pm at Stonehouse Library, High Street, Stonehouse, GL10 2NG.**

Present:

Councillors: Debbie Curtis, Marcus Dixon, Neil Gibbs (Committee Chair), Carol Kambites (Chair/Town Mayor), Val Randell, Keith Terry (Committee Vice Chair).

Also present: Jacqui Sanders (Deputy Clerk)

Two members of the public

Attendees are reminded that the Proceedings of this meeting may be filmed, photographed, or recorded.

The meeting started promptly at 7pm.

The two members of the public were invited to speak. They were the owner and planning consultant for the former Severn Plywood site, who shared their vision for an alternative use of the site with committee members. The committee provided feedback that related to the town's current needs as a helpful guide.

E/734 To receive apologies.

Apologies were received from Cllrs Armstrong and Watts.

E/735 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

E/736 To approve the minutes of the Town Environment Committee meeting held on Monday 8th January.

Committee APPROVED the minutes as a true and accurate records of the meeting.

E/737 To receive the latest updated Environment Budget.

Committee **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the latest Budget position.

Total Actual Net Income £1,894.64

Total Actual Net Expenditure £49,034.67

Total Reserve £5,191.70

E/738 To recommend for town council approval the award of the Council's Grounds Maintenance contract



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The town clerk attended the meeting to present this item with a detailed support paper. The original contract put out to Tender had a significant error - this error had only come to the officer's attention very late into the tender process. The Clerk's proposal was to stop the tender process and move forward with the recommendations detailed in the support paper. It was highlighted that this course of action was necessary both to ensure that the town council received value for money during a long-term contract and that the successful contractor would not be financially disadvantaged. Councillors raised some clarification questions about the tender process itself which were answered by the Clerk. Council RESOLVED to accept the Clerk's recommendations:

- Stop the current tender process
- Notify existing bidders of the position and the reason for it.
- Seek agreement with incumbent contractor to secure 'service as usual' for the month of April '24 at an agreed rate in case required
- Amend the contract document to reflect the necessary service change with a view to publishing on 'Contracts Finder' by the 2nd February '24.

E/739 To consider taking over the management of the grass verge opposite the horse trough on the Ebley Road, as a wildflower meadow.
Committee recommended to Full Council for approval.

E/740 To comment on planning applications.

S.24/0006/FUL Units 1/3/7 Button Mills Estate, Lower Mills, Bridgend
Fire damage reinstatement work to three industrial buildings - replacement roof structure and new metal coverings over. External repairs to fire damaged brickwork and new roller shutters.

Comment: No objections but suggest some Environmental improvements such as solar panels and/or improved insulation.

S.23/2401/HHOLD 16 Laburnum Walk, Stonehouse
Erection of a dormer extension and loft conversion.

Comment: No objections, however council is aware that some work has already started on site.

S.24/0003/HHOLD 8A Gloucester Road, Stonehouse.
Erection of rear extensions, replacement garage with a 2 storey side extension and installation of solar panels.

Comment: Application has been withdrawn by applicant.

S.24/0096/TCA Unit 5, Brunel Way, Stonehouse
Oak tree - cut back the two secondary limbs hanging over the building by circa 50%. Balance the whole crown all around. Removal of all dead wood.



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Comment: No objections as long as work undertaken by a qualified tree surgeon.

E/741 To receive Working Groups updates.

Members may wish to note any reports from the following:

Comms - There have been no recent meetings.

Stroudwater (Bristol Road) Station - This is ongoing and the working group are hopeful of some wider publicity shortly.

Canal Rejuvenation - Ongoing.

Transport and Highways - Not met.

Public Rights of Way - Meeting scheduled for Friday 2nd February.

Recreation - In regards to Stagholt, a planning application will be submitted for an extension to the allotments.

E/742 To receive a report on planning decisions received from Stroud District Council.

**S.23/2539/DISCON Parcel E5, Land West Of Stonehouse, Grove Lane, Westend
Discharge of Condition 46 of outline permission S.14/0810/OUT relating to the
Area Masterplan in respect of Parcel E5
REFUSED**

**S.23/2304/HHOLD 1 Arrowsmith Drive, Stonehouse
Erection of a front canopy and a replacement single storey rear extension,
alterations to fenestration.
PERMITTED**

E/743 To approve communications in support of the meeting's decisions.

Committee NOTED no noteworthy communications.

E/744 Date of next Environment Committee meeting: Monday 26th February 2024.

Committee NOTED the date of the next meeting.

Financial Budget Comparison

for Town Environment Committee

Comparison between 01/04/23 and 19/02/24 inclusive. Includes due and unpaid transactions. Includes commitments.
Excludes transactions with an invoice date prior to 01/04/23

	2023/2024	Reserve	Actual Net	Balance	Bal %age
INCOME					
Town Environment Committee					
200 Stonehouse in Bloom	£1,500.00	£0.00	£0.00	-£1,500.00	-100.00%
205 Event Income/Donations					
205/1 Events	£1,200.00	£0.00	£1,110.00	-£90.00	-7.50%
205/2 Donations	£0.00	£0.00	£259.64	£259.64	100.00%
205 Total	£1,200.00	£0.00	£1,369.64	£169.64	14.14%
210 Planting Sponsorship	£1,500.00	£0.00	£650.00	-£850.00	-56.67%
215 Grants	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
Total Town Environment Committee	£4,200.00	£0.00	£2,019.64	-£2,180.36	-51.91%
EXPENDITURE					
Town Environment Committee					
1190 Amenity Areas					
1190/1 Grounds Maintenance (contract)	£25,000.00	£0.00	£22,112.98	£2,887.02	-11.55%
1190/2 Grounds Maintenance (in-house)	£2,000.00	£0.00	£978.09	£1,021.91	-51.10%
1190/3 Play Equipment maint/repairs/insp	£2,500.00	£0.00	£2,418.74	£81.26	-3.25%
1190/4 Public Space Improvements	£5,300.00	£1,582.80	£5,217.49	£1,665.31	-31.42%
1190/5 Tree & Hedge/boundary maintenance	£6,500.00	£0.00	£2,942.00	£3,558.00	-54.74%
1190/6 Waste Collection	£5,000.00	£0.00	£4,784.00	£216.00	-4.32%
1190 Total	£46,300.00	£1,582.80	£38,453.30	£9,429.50	-20.37%
2000 Christmas Lights	£5,000.00	£0.00	£571.00	£4,429.00	-88.58%
2005 Climate Change	£2,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£2,000.00	-100.00%

Financial Budget Comparison

for Town Environment Committee

Comparison between 01/04/23 and 19/02/24 inclusive. Includes due and unpaid transactions. Includes commitments.
Excludes transactions with an invoice date prior to 01/04/23

	2023/2024	Reserve	Actual Net	Balance	Bal %age
2010 In Bloom					
2010/1 Contract Planting	£0.00	£2,677.98	£0.00	£2,677.98	100.00%
2010/2 Non-Contract Planting	£3,000.00	£0.00	£2,209.06	£790.94	-26.36%
2010/3 Watering Services	£3,000.00	£0.00	£0.00	£3,000.00	-100.00%
2010/4 Other	£1,000.00	£0.00	£3,971.33	£-2,971.33	297.13%
2010 Total	£7,000.00	£2,677.98	£6,180.39	£3,497.59	-49.97%
2050 Cultural Events & Studies					
2050/1 Goodwill	£5,000.00	£0.00	£4,765.10	£234.90	-4.70%
2050/2 Civic Awards	£300.00	£0.00	£111.34	£188.66	-62.89%
2050/3 Other	£3,000.00	£930.92	£1,224.54	£2,706.38	-90.21%
2050/4 Communications	£1,000.00	£0.00	£300.00	£700.00	-70.00%
2050 Total	£9,300.00	£930.92	£6,400.98	£3,829.94	-41.18%
2080 Neighbourhood Plan Review	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
2090 Planning Specialist Advice					
2090/1	£0.00	£0.00	£234.00	£-234.00	100.00%
2090/2	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	0.00%
2090 Total	£0.00	£0.00	£234.00	£-234.00	100.00%
Total Town Environment Committee	£69,600.00	£5,191.70	£51,839.67	£22,952.03	-32.98%

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

1ST FEBRUARY 2024

Report Title	Establishment of Stroud District Market Towns Vitality Fund			
Purpose of Report	To propose the establishment of a Market Towns Vitality Fund for Stroud District			
Decision(s)	<p>The Committee RESOLVES to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the sum of £200k from the Business Rates Pilot Reserve for the Market Towns Vitality Fund. • Approve the approach to operation of the Market Towns Vitality Fund, as set out in section 2 of this report 			
Consultation and Feedback	<p>The principle of establishing the Market Towns Vitality Fund (MTVF) was approved at Strategy and Resources Committee on 23rd November 2023. The concept has also been discussed at two meetings of the Market Towns Forum (comprising the relevant town councils and the district Chamber of Commerce), most recently on 9 January 2024. These discussions have informed the approach set out in this report.</p>			
Report Author(s)	Email: brendan.cleere@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	<p>There is an option to not support the recommendation to introduce the MTVF. This is not recommended as to do so would hinder the development of local initiatives to benefit the vitality of the High Street in our Market towns.</p>			
Background Papers	None			
Appendices				
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	Yes	yes	No	No

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** With the ongoing transition of high streets nationally from retail to experience destinations, there is a need to support our district's Market towns. Combined with the growing concern as businesses leave the high streets due to factors such as inflation, high energy costs, wider cost of living pressures, and the continued growth of online retail provision, it is important to continue developing our work with our town and parish council partners and other key stakeholders, to ensure that we are doing all we can to promote thriving market towns for our residents, businesses and visitors.
- 1.2** Our Council Plan (2021-2026) outlines our commitment to support high street businesses in the area, to deliver local incentives to increase footfall, and to grow a sustainable visitor economy, including the night-time economy. Similarly, the Economic Development Strategy prioritises boosting our market towns and rural vitality and our Local Plan has a well-established focus on supporting market towns and their hinterlands. To deliver against these priorities, and to respond to the challenge of empty shops given the decline of retail in many places, we are proposing to introduce a Market Town Vitality Fund (MTVF), aimed at supporting the vitality of our market towns during the ongoing challenging economic climate.
- 1.3** This proposal was discussed at the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting on 23 November 2023, where it was agreed to carry out further engagement with our Market towns and other partners, to help shape the design and operation of the MTVF. Final proposals for MTVF would then be brought to this meeting (1 February 2024).
- 1.4** Engagement with the Market Towns Forum has now taken place (in November 2023 and January 2024) and the proposals in section 2 have been shaped by that engagement. Membership of the Market Towns Forum comprises representatives from each of the Town Councils and the district Chamber of Commerce.

2. PURPOSE AND APPROACH TO THE MARKET TOWNS VITALITY FUND (MTVF)

2.1 Purpose

- 2.1.1** The purpose of the MTVF will be to support locally led initiatives to promote the vitality of the High Street and address key priorities identified by different market towns across the district. Details of the initiatives will not be prescribed at this stage but could include (for example) tackling the impact of empty shops, promotions and campaigns to promote greater footfall/spend, pop-up shops, schemes to beautify the High Street and other projects.

2.2 Funding Levels and Eligibility

- 2.2.1** A new allocation of £200k will be included in the 2024/25 budget, to be drawn from the Business Rates Pilot Reserve. This will be committed to specific projects across the district's market towns over the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 and will also cover SDC costs associated with running the Market Towns Vitality Fund.
- 2.2.2** The market towns eligible for this funding will follow the settlement hierarchy established in both the adopted and emerging Local Plans for the district. Accordingly, this will include the five 'Principal Market Towns' of Dursley, Nailsworth, Stonehouse, Stroud and Wotton-

under-Edge, plus the four 'District Centres' of Berkeley, Cam, Minchinhampton and Painswick.

2.3 Community Engagement and Partnership

- 2.3.1 Boosting engagement and partnership and strengthening relationships with market towns, who know their own places best, will be at the heart of the whole approach to the MTVF.
- 2.3.2 Engagement will focus initially on the identification of main priorities and potential projects for each market town. This process will be led by the Council's Economic Development Team and will include different approaches to gather input from a variety of stakeholders and interested parties, working closely throughout with the relevant Town Council and engaging the relevant ward members. The engagement process will also seek to utilise and not duplicate any consultation exercises that have been carried out by others, such as the District Chamber of Commerce.
- 2.3.3 As the engagement process moves forward, there will also be an emphasis on sharing ideas and emerging priorities across all market towns, as there may well be some initiatives that will be more appropriately delivered across more than one market town. There is an established Market Towns Forum that would provide a useful mechanism for this sharing of knowledge and intelligence, and the Economic Development Team will also work with Market towns to widen participation further.
- 2.3.4 The process of engagement will be informed by existing strategies and plans, as they relate to Market towns. These strategies and plans already have a strong evidence base and grounding in consultation and will include (for example) the Economic Development Strategy, the adopted and emerging Local Plans for the District and the emerging Cultural Strategy.
- 2.3.5 The engagement process will also be informed by research into successful approaches and ideas to boost vitality that have been successfully implemented elsewhere, as well as opportunities for funding and other support that is available from the Council and other partners.

2.4 Allocation of MTVF

- 2.4.1 The amount of funding to be allocated to individual Market towns will not be prescribed at this stage. This will be determined by the challenges and opportunities identified through the engagement process, and the priorities and actions to address these.
- 2.4.2 As mentioned above, there may be some projects that are more appropriately delivered on a wider geographic basis, potentially even district-wide, to benefit more than one Market town.
- 2.4.3 In determining the allocation of funding, there will be a focus on achieving the greatest possible impact from the money available. Whilst match-funding will not be a requirement, the engagement process will also seek to identify potential other sources of funding that could assist in making a project happen.
- 2.4.4 Funding will typically be allocated to the relevant Town Councils who will be leading on project delivery. For some projects, such as those being delivered across more than one market town, it may be appropriate to allocate funding to a different constituted body, such as the Stroud District Chamber of Commerce.

- 2.4.5 Decisions on funding for specific MTVF initiatives will be delegated to the Strategic Director of Place, in consultation with the Strategic Director of Resources and the Chair and Vice-Chair of Strategy and Resources Committee. The relevant ward members will be kept informed of any funding awarded and how this is used.

2.5 Indicative Timetable

- 2.5.1 Preparation for the engagement process described in section 2.3 will begin shortly after the scheme is approved. Priorities and potential actions for MTVF support will be identified during the spring and summer period, with decisions on funding support to be made in Autumn 2024.
- 2.5.2 Although considered unlikely, there may need to be further engagement to identify projects if the full allocation of funding is not taken up.
- 2.5.3 There will be a 'light-touch' and proportionate process of project monitoring and reporting established, to ensure that actions and desired outcomes from funded projects are being achieved.

3. IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Financial Implications

The value of the fund will be set at £150k with additional administration costs of £50k. The total of £200k can be allocated from the Business Rates Pilot Reserve. Strategy and Resources Committee has previously agreed the principles of distributing that reserve, which include supporting local businesses.

Andrew Cummings, Strategic Director of Resources

Tel: 01453 754115 Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk

3.2 Legal Implications

Whenever the council gives funding to persons other than individuals, it needs to consider the Subsidy Control Act 2022 which is in force to ensure that financial assistance given using public money causes minimal distortion to UK competition and the UK's international obligations. The Act applies to 'enterprises' which are defined as "persons engaged in economic activity that entails offering goods or services on a market, to the extent that the person is engaged in such an activity". Passing the funding onto the Town Councils in itself is unlikely to be considered subsidies because the Town Council will not be acting as an enterprise offering goods or services.

The Town Councils will need to be mindful of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 when deciding how to use the funding so that it complies with Act if it intends to give direct or indirect financial assistance to one or more enterprises.

Appropriate terms and conditions on the payment, use and monitoring of the funding given to the Town Councils can be prepared by One Legal.

legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

3.3 Equality Implications

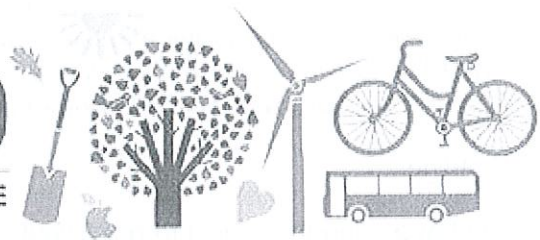
There are no equality implications arising from a decision to support the establishment of the MTVF. There may be equality implications arising from specific projects supported by the MTVF, but these will be identified at the appropriate time, along with any actions required.

3.4 Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications arising from a decision to support the establishment of the MTVF. There may be environmental implications arising from specific projects supported by the MTVF, but these will be identified at the appropriate time, along with any actions required.

TRANSITIONSTROUD

INSPIRING ACTION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE



E-bike Project proposal information for Stonehouse

Transition Stroud and social enterprise The Bike Drop are working together to run three e-bike hire pilot projects across Stroud district in collaboration with Climate Action Networks, community groups and cycling enthusiasts in our region. These pilots will form affordable e-bike hire hubs that are run by local communities to help more people decide whether they would like to make the switch from car to e-bike.

This project has been funded by Stroud District Council's Active Travel fund, and aims to introduce more people to e-bikes and help reduce the number of short car journeys in our area.

We currently have active interest from four potential pilots in:

- Minchinhampton
- Brimscombe
- Stonehouse
- Nailsworth

Timeline

We are looking to establish which pilot groups are ready to go ahead in February, and start providing training and other forms of support to community volunteers in March.

Each pilot scheme will launch in their own time locally, but it helps both Transition Stroud and The Bike Drop for planning and efficiency if we can all agree to some initial dates for bike purchase and training in preparation for launch together.

We are hoping to have the bikes themselves bought by the end of February. If Stonehouse is still definitely interested, we can include up to 2 e-bikes for Stonehouse in our initial bike order. It would help us financially to do this, since it affects cost if we can buy them all together or not.

We are putting together booking systems, promotional copy for volunteers and hirers, draft agreements etc over the next few weeks and circulate for feedback from our project partners.

Volunteers

We anticipate that a small team of 3 regular volunteers would need to commit to around 2 hours

/ fortnight in order to manage this project. We need volunteers to help sign the bikes in and out, complete monitoring forms, and give new hirers some help and guidance with riding if they need it. The Bike Drop will provide volunteers with e-bike safety and maintenance training, and Transition Stroud will provide volunteer recruitment, communications, admin, booking and financial support, as well as any other support that arises throughout the project's life.

Funding

We have enough funding to run 3 limited pilots with one bike each, but have applied to partner organisations and national funds to improve the offer to communities. The Rural Development Fund (REPF) have been very positive about funding this for Stonehouse and Nailsworth but are having to do some extra checks with their own funding sources to make sure the project is eligible. We expect to hear back on this within a couple of weeks.

In the meantime, we have had offers of £500 from Minch, and £2,500 from Brimscombe and Thrupp P Council in match funding. If Stonehouse was able to offer similar match funding this would really help given the uncertainty around REPF.

Costs

2 e-bikes (one standard, one cargo) will cost us £8,600 to provide. This includes full servicing for the year. We also cover all other overheads including project support, insurance and booking software etc. If REPF falls through and Stonehouse is unable to match fund, we will still be able to offer Stonehouse 1 standard e-bike (costing £3,500).

Financial management

After consulting with other groups, we are going to suggest running this on a donation basis, with a suggested minimum donation of £10 / day or £50 / week. We will leave it to each group's discretion whether this donation can be waived or reduced where this presents a barrier to accessing the e-bike. We are hoping that these pilots become financially self sustaining in the long run, but for this first year we are happy to find out whether this is possible through donations or not.

We intend to sell the ebikes on an annual basis, with the income from these sales (plus donations) going to help buy new e-bikes. This is to keep the equipment in good condition and make sure we can continue to fund bikes past the first year.

We intend to hold all funding generated through both grants and donations in a ring fenced project fund with Transition Stroud for the first year, with spend going on equipment and overhead project costs. Any surplus after the first year made through donations plus bike sales will be ploughed back into new equipment, after consultation with each involved group.