

STONEHOUSE TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

Introduction from the Town Mayor – Cllr Carol Kambites

As the newly elected Mayor of Stonehouse, it is my privilege to introduce the Annual Report for the year 2022/23. In doing so, I would like to thank all the Councillors and Staff who have made the Council run smoothly over the past year and contributed to our achievements. In particular, I would like to thank the outgoing Mayor, Councillor Gary Powell for seeing us through two years in which Stonehouse, like the rest of the country, has been faced with a number of problems due to factors outside our control.

I would also like to welcome the Councillors and staff who have joined us during the last year, all of whom have hit the ground running and are making valuable contributions to the Council and the town. We have gained two new members of staff during the year. Many of you will have met Carla Swindells, our Business Support Officer, who has already become an invaluable asset to the Council and the town. More recently, we have appointed Gary Wetson as Projects Officer. Gary has only been with us a few weeks but is already proving his worth in his contribution to a number of projects.

Carla and Gary have joined our existing staff team of Town Clerk, Carlos Novoth, Deputy Clerk, Jacqui Sanders and groundsmen, Richard Smart and Paul Crosby I would like to thank them all for their hard work and dedication during the last year.

I am confident that we have a strong team of staff and Councillors, who can work together over the coming year to meet the challenges that will inevitably come our way and to work with you, the people of Stonehouse, to help our town to adapt to external changes and become an even better place to live, work and play.

Stonehouse Town Council Income and Expenditure 2021-2022/2022-23

Income	2021/22	2022/23
Precept	336,995	357,130
Investment interest	929	3,059
CIL/s106	*	*
Grants	9,014	15,027
Leases	11,002	10,228
Facilities Hire	2,504	1,355
Stonehouse in Bloom	1,833	1,788
Events	3,044	934
Other	6,749	6,027
	372,070	395,548

*CIL Funding included in Grants total

<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>2021/22</u>	<u>2022/23</u>
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Staff	125,308	151,297
General Expenditure	44,098	52,460
Streetscene inc SIB	66,390	47,424
Building Overheads	32,092	34,491
Youthwork	37,360	46,851
Equipment and Vehicles	6,999	20,285
Grants	9,258	37,497
I.T.	8,397	10,882
Events	12,652	5,372
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	342,554	406,559

Business Committee activities/achievements

The Committee has more recently been chaired by Cllr Mike Davis with Cllr John Callinan serving as Vice Chair. The Committee has a 'Terms of Reference' that can be viewed online; it covers the review of council policies, scrutinises the council's finances, oversees the council's staffing including their training, and generally supports the council in its efforts to deliver quality services to the community. The Committee also checks the draft budget before it is presented to Full Council.

Owing to the increased costs of contracted services across the board and a much-needed increase in staffing levels, the precept has had to be increased by 4.7% in 2023, representing an increase of £7.00 per property per year. Of the total increase in the council's budget, £17,800.00 is being met from reserves.

Human Resources Sub Committee and the Internal Audit Panel report to this Committee in addition to the following working groups: Business Networking, Climate Change Action Forum, Communications, Policy and Youth, Oldends Lane Development, Support Stonehouse and Events.

Grants Received 2022/23

Ecotricity	£10,000.00
GCC Defib units	£3,000.00
CIL Payment	£1,270.00
Total:	£14,270.00

Grants Awarded 2022/23

Stroud Book Festival	£500.00
Homestart	£10,000.00
Cotswold Canals Trust	£10,000.00
Friendly Circle	£500.00
Sportily	£540.00
St Joseph's RC Church	£300.00
Bethel Church	£390.00
Tiny Toes Stay and Play	£360.00
Sunflowers Suicide	£2,000.00
Miscarriage Mumma	£1,500.00

Sherbourne	£600.00
Stonehouse Community Assoc	£10,000.00
Door	£807.00

*Total: £37,497.00

*This figure allows for adjustments to original codings.

Budget Headings	2022/23	2023/24
Staffing	168,885	180,000
Grants	15,000	15,000
Climate	7,000	5,000
Business	139,880	146,380
Environment	61,800	69,600
Contingency	0	0
Gross Expenditure	392,565	415,980
Income and Use of Reserves	-35,435	-42,007
Precept	357,130	373,973

For a comparison of the precept with that of other parishes, please see your council tax bill.

This year, Business Committee has:

- Completed the programmed review of the Town Council's policies including its Standing Orders, Financial regulations, Scheme of Delegations, Investment Strategy, Safeguarding.
- Reviewed the Town Council's internal controls with very positive outcomes, through its Internal Audit Panel for each quarter of the 2022/23 financial year and reported these to Full Council
- Contracted Severn Wye Energy to initiate a carbon-reduction scheme within the community to undertake energy efficiency surveys in their homes. Once all are complete, results will be disseminated to all households in the area.
- Supported Stonehouse Town Football Club in improving its welfare facilities, primarily to allow the club to maintain its current status and also to support additional facilities for the wider community.
- Provided grants for a number of organisations in need of financial support.
- Supported signing of a new five-year agreement with Stonehouse Allotments and is proposing an extension of the allotment area to provide an extra 21 plots.
- Secured a new 3-year Finance package with the current service provider 'Edge'.
- Purchased a replacement vehicle for the groundsmen to use as the previous one would cost too much to repair.
- Undertook to digitally scan all of the council's paper files to move closer to a paper free office. By digitally scanning all paper files, it has enabled the small office in the Town Hall to be converted into a combined meeting room/office area.

Environment Committee

The Committee has more recently been chaired by Cllr Neil Gibbs, with Cllr Carol Kambites, serving as Vice Chair.

In 2022/23, the Committee has:

- Continued to support Stonehouse in Bloom in its efforts to prepare for the Heart of England in Bloom National finals in 2022 with its Jubilee colour scheme, new planting containers and plant suppliers. They won Gold in the Heart of England in Bloom and Silver Gilt in the Small Town category of the National Britain in Bloom competition.
- Supported the Events Working Group in organising community events such as Goodwill and the 'Picnic in the Park' to celebrate the coronation of King Charles 111.
- Responded to consultations on Stroud District Council's Local Plan review of Additional Technical Evidence, Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) Management Plan, Community Governance Review, Proposed 2023 Parliamentary Boundaries, Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Emissions Policy and the naming of a new street in Stonehouse.
- Undertook a tree survey of trees in Doverow Wood and various other trees in the town, including the Willow at the Globe. Following the tree surveyor's recommendations, employed qualified and certified specialists to carry out the necessary remedial works.
- Led a public consultation regarding the future of Verney Fields. Over 120 questionnaires were completed by residents supporting the application for Town Green status to be applied to the fields which was presented to Gloucestershire County Council.
- Supported the proposal to proceed with the adoption on the Newt Ponds.
- Secured the services of a planning consultant to prepare a planning application to extend the allotments at Stagholt and turn the remaining field into a Natural Wildspace Area.
- Secured a 3-year Ground Maintenance contract.
- Supported a drainage proposal put forward by GCC for Gloucester Road.
- Supported the canal rejuvenation by networking with stakeholders along the canal frontage in Stonehouse to pinpoint future opportunities for economic regeneration, health & wellbeing, and environmental conservation that will come with the restored canal. Produced an outline business case for a community facility on the former Ship Inn site as well as identifying potential opportunities at other locations between Bond's Mill and Ryeford.
- Supported a proposal for the top of Regent Street, to move some of the bike racks to more suitable places in the High Street, and for Stonehouse in Bloom to put planters there.
- Supported the Town Council's work on ensuring the town's Public Rights of Way remained protected.
- Supporting highway improvements through its Transport and Highways working group
- Providing support for the community's most vulnerable through its Support Stonehouse working group, All Pulling Together (APT) and its contributors.
- Provided coronation mugs for all children up to year 6 in Stonehouse schools.