



ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17

Welcome from the Chairman - Councillor Theresa Watt

I am very fortunate to be supported by a very active Council with Councillors dedicated to delivering improvements for Stonehouse. Following the Elections in May 2016 we were joined by new Councillors Ray Clegg and Ginny Smart and welcomed back Councillor John Callinan returning to the Council after previous terms in office. Following the resignation of Ginny Smart a by-election was called and Councillor Trevor Baker became elected unopposed, he has also served on the council previously. We are not quite up to full strength due to a vacancy on the new Ebley ward. This ward was created following the electoral boundaries review and is perhaps not understood as being part of Stonehouse as it has always been.

I would like to commend the tremendous achievement of a Silver Gilt award in the Heart of England in Bloom which is down to the enthusiastic Stonehouse in Bloom volunteers, community groups and sponsors. Financial or plant donations big and small are always welcomed to be rewarded with the beautiful displays of colour all Summer long.

We continue to work as a Quality Award Council by continuing best practice in the sector and by not resting on our laurels.

This year we were honoured by a visit from Her Royal Highness Princess Anne who attended a training event at Stonehouse Youth Pod.

The Council made the following grants in this financial year:

- Stonehouse Community Partnership £499 to assist with the hire of stall for this year's Goodwill Event.
- Citizens Advice Bureau £2000 to assist with delivery of their advice service in Stonehouse.
- Bandit Music Projects £500 to assist in the delivery of music workshops at Maidenhill School, creating their own songs and music culminating in a performance
- Royal British Legion £37 towards a wreath for Remembrance Day
- Stonehouse History Group £1200 towards History Interpretation Boards to be located at Park School and Wycliffe Chapel
- Stonehouse Memory Link £117.60 towards postcards raising awareness about dementia support offered by the Link.
- Stonehouse Lunch Club £200 towards hall hire for lunch club
- Stroud District Council £250 towards the provision of neighbourhood warden support
- Hazelwood Social & Activity Club £324 towards the purchase of a hostess trolley

The Council commends the work of volunteers in these organisations who strive to make Stonehouse a thriving social community. Special thanks to all those people who give up their time to deliver the Stonehouse News.

The Council received one donation of a memorial seat in the Garden of Rest.

The Council received funding towards:

- table tennis tables in Laburnam Field from Gloucestershire County Council
- trees planted by Hopelands School children, volunteer residents and councillors in Meadow, from the Tree Council
- goalposts at Oldends Lane playing fields from Fields in Trust
- furnishings and activities at the Youth Centre from the Youth Development Grant and Youth Activities Grant
- seats and clearing of woodland at Doverow Wood

The Council's financial statements for 2016-17 will be available on the Council's website following audit and during the inspection period.

I would like to thank the staff Gill Jennings, Liz Lawrence, Rachel Russell and Ray Kaye and all our contractors for their hard work.

During the year it has been my pleasure to represent the town at:

- the opening of the new table tennis tables at Laburnum Park
- the Big Picnic held at Oldends Lane Playing Field
- Stonehouse In Bloom judging
- Stonehouse Horticultural Show and Summer Jolly
- Stonehouse Remembrance Parade
- Goodwill Fest
- Hopelands School Fete
- Launch of the Stonehouse History Group book
- the annual Carol Service held on the Town Green
- an invitation from Young Gloucestershire to attend a visit by HRH Princess Anne at the Stonehouse Youth Centre
- Opening of the Gate House at Bonds Mill

Report of the Finance & Strategy Committee

The Committee, chaired by Councillor Jo Byrne, has reviewed and revised Council policies and scrutinised the Council's finances. The Committee is responsible for the Town Hall and Youth Centre and ongoing council strategy content and direction. The Committee has supported councillors and staff to undertake training to maintain standards and expertise:

- All administration staff attended a networking/best practice workshop with Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC).
- Councillors Gibbs, Powell, Smart, Callinan, Clegg, Watt, Kambites attended training on the Code of Conduct given by Stroud District Council

- Councillors Curtis, Jackson and Byrne attended Better Councillor Training given by GAPTC
- Councillor Byrne attended Being an Effective Councillor Training with Stroud District Council
- The Town Clerk continues to study with the Society of Local Council Clerks on the Community Governance Programme Level 5

The Town Clerk is a member of Gloucestershire Association Parish & Town Council Training Panel.

The Committee checks the draft budget before it is presented to Council. Following a loss of income due to a void leasehold and in making an allowance for election costs an increase in precept was necessary:

<u>2016-17</u>	<u>2017-18</u>	
77000	61000	Administration costs, staffing and training
5000	5000	Grants
53400	61250	Town Hall, Communication and Youth Services
117850	124100	Amenities, Recreation and tourism
14500	17900	Regeneration & Environment
0	3000	Election Costs
<u>267750</u>	<u>272250</u>	Gross Expenditure
<u>-28400</u>	<u>-18250</u>	Income
239350	254000	Precept

The Committee is urgently reviewing the use of space at the Town Hall following the closure of the Post Office to ensure that costs are controlled and worthwhile service provided.

The Committee is assisted by the Town Clerk/RFO and Deputy Clerk. The Staffing Committee, Youth Working Group, General Policy Working Group, Internal Audit Team, Communications Working Group, Building Facilities Group, Events Group report to this Committee.

Report of the Amenities, Recreation & Tourism Committee

The Committee, chaired by Councillor Neil Gibbs, has drawn up a scheme to enhance the play area on Laburnum park. The Committee hopes to implement these with S106 funding in the Summer. This work will continue with a review of the other parks. The Committee is also working on proposals to increase community facilities at Oldends Lane with improvements to the street scene. Following consultation planning permission is being sought for housing which will provide funds for the building of a new community hall. Drawings of these schemes are on display in the hall.

The Committee will continue to support the In Bloom efforts and also create a display of Christmas lights. However, due to budget cuts the Christmas display will be reduced from last year unless sponsorship is found. We think you will agree that the display was particularly splendid last year with solar lighting and it would be a shame not to continue this.

The Committee is supported by groundsmen, the Town Clerk and Deputy Clerk. The Recreation Working Group report to this Committee.

Report of the Regeneration & Environment Committee

The Committee, chaired by Councillor Carol Kambites, has considered numerous planning applications during the year and has tried to prevent any negative effects of the Javelin Park construction. The Committee continues to work closely with the County Council and has made improvements to the footpath connecting the station to the District Council carpark with funding from Great Western Railways. During the year the Council has formed a Traffic Working Group to research and recommend traffic and transport improvements. A scheme is being considered for Oldends Lane.

The County Council have agreed to replace the bus shelters in the High Street using S106 funding. The Committee keeps a watch on matters such as speeding, potholes and congestion to ensure that they are acted upon.

It has been successful in getting agreement to new signage for the town centre carpark. The Committee continues to work towards raising the profile of a future station at Bristol Road. The Committee also considers consultation documents such as the Housing White Paper.

The Committee is supported by the Committee Clerk. The Development Control Panel and Traffic Working Group also report to this Committee.

