



Annual Report 2018-2019

Welcome from the Chairman/Town Mayor for 2018/19 – Councillor Theresa Watt

Can I first give thanks to the dedicated staff at the Stonehouse. We welcomed Jayne Bayliss to the team during the year and she has made great inroads into updating our communications and now being the front desk of our council. And we have had to say “so long” to Liz Lawrence our very long standing Clerk, deputy clerk and Customer Services officer who has retired after 32 year service with the council. Thank you Liz for your steadfast loyalty to the council. And I would like to give huge thanks to Rachel Russel who has had to take on so much additional responsibility and has done it so well with unfailing good humour since our Town Clerk has been on long term sick leave. And I also wish to give thanks to Ray who again has had to shoulder additional work as Barry has left his grounds maintenance role. We hope to re-appoint this post soon. Last but not least, a big thank-you to Richard Lacey who has stepped-in to help out with Clerk duties. Thank you all.

We welcomed four new councillors this year: Mike Davis, John Parker, Sally Pickering and Jennie Smith. Thank you to councillors who stepped down this year for their service: John Aldis, Becky Amor, John Callinan and Gary Powell.

I would like to commend the tremendous achievement of the enthusiastic Stonehouse in Bloom volunteers, community groups and sponsors which enable us to win Gold award and Best Small Town in the Heart of England in Bloom . The In Bloom Group with council staff help are consolidating their work in the High Street and Elm Road, and have new projects planned for the rest garden.

The Council has made grants to the Citizens Advice Bureau, Stonehouse Luncheon Club and the Bandit youth project in this past year.

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 funding from:

Precept,
CIL payment and S106 funds
Rent/pitch hire
Events/ fundraising

In addition, the Council received grants or donations from:

Stonehouse Dog Training	£500
Resident donation (Doverow Hill)	£40
Goodwill donations from businesses, organisations and individuals	£1069
GCC Grant (footpath)	£460
Gloucestershire Community Foundation(grant)	£2,000
Big Lottery Fund (grant)	£8,000
	£12,069

The Council made grants to:

Stroud Citizens Advice Bureau	£2,000
Stonehouse Lunch Club (Hall Hire)	£160
Share and Repair	£2,000
	£4,160

The Council's financial statements for 2017-18 will be available on the Council's website following audit and during the inspection period.

We continue to work as a Quality Award Council by continuing best practice in the sector. We have agreed to move to a 2 committee structure in this coming year to speed up decision making and make best use of resources. This will be the Town Business committee and Town Environment committee moving forward.

Report of the Finance & Strategy Committee

The Committee, chaired by Councillor Pam Swain, 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:

Cllrs Sally Pickering and Mike Davis attended a "How to be a councillor" training.

The Town Clerk attended Managing and Implementing Change

The Committee checks the draft budget before it is presented to Council. The Council has made an allowance for an increase in salary costs, youth services and town regeneration.

	2018/19	2019/20
Administration costs, election costs, staffing & training	61,000	68,000
Grants	5,000	5,000
Town Hall, communication & youth provision	61,250	70,620
Amenities, recreation and tourism	124,100	129,000
Regeneration and environment	17,900	21,000
Gross expenditure	272,250	293,620
Income and use of reserves	18,250	18,170
Precept	254,000	275,450

For a comparison of the precept with that of other parishes please see your council tax bill or visit our website www.stonehousetowncouncil.com/preceptcomparisons.

This year the Committee has

- been in lengthy discussion with Gloucestershire County Council about co-location of the library with the town council offices. This has now been consulted on with the community, and we hope we will see the changes needed to this building over the coming months to allow both the library and town council to work independently in the same building.
- Worked with The Door to deliver a youth club in the door, and supported more outreach work from the Door Staff. Worked closely with SDC on the Youth Forum for Stonehouse.

- The Events Group together with volunteers from the community put on a successful Goodwill Evening which the Town Council supported financially. We also held an event during the year to celebrate the 100 years of women's voting rights.

The Committee is assisted by the Town Clerk/RFO and Customer Services Officers.

The Staffing Committee, the Youth Working Group, the General Policy Working Group, the Internal Audit Team, the Communications Working Group, the Building Facilities Group, and the Events Group report to this Committee.

Report of the Amenities & Recreation Committee

The Committee, chaired by Councillor Deborah Curtis, looks after the recreation facilities in the town.

In 2018/19 the Committee has:

- Completed Phase 1 of a new play equipment scheme for Oldends Lane Playing field. This Phase was opened in April this year and has been well received and used. Funding for this project was achieved from S106 monies and funding secured from a variety of sources. The Council hopes to continue in the coming year with Phase 2 so watch this space. This work is part of an ongoing project to update all our play facilities.
- Welcomed Junior Parkrun to add activity to Oldends Lane playing field.
- Discussed with Gloucestershire County Council possible land purchase and changes to public rights of way

The Committee is committed to finalising details of the proposed redevelopment of the Oldends Lane pavilion and car park but the project has been beset by a variety of delays and frustrations relating to the Planning process. We hope to overcome these issues and be able to give you some good news on the project very soon.

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 business sponsorship is found. Please contact us if you are willing to sponsor a lighting display.

We recruited a new full time Head of Property Maintenance and we are pleased with the planned improvements beginning to come to fruition and hope to see this continue with the Barry's replacement.

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

Report of the Regeneration & Environment Committee

The Committee, chaired by Councillor Tim Jackson, has considered numerous planning applications during the year and is keeping a watchful eye on the West of Stonehouse development. The Council is only a consultee in the planning process and sometimes our views and recommendations are not heeded by the Planning Authority but we are keen to maintain a positive working partnership in respect of planning.

In 2018/19 the Committee has:

- Started to look at reviewing the Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan has now been "made" by Stroud District Council and now forms a key part in the planning process.

- Liaised with Network Rail and its contractors during the Station platform extension works.
- Lobbied to keep the re-opening of Bristol Road Station on the agenda of key decision makers.
- Arranged for cleaning of town centre bus shelters now in Town Council's ownership.
- Worked with Stroud District Council towards improving the Wharfdale Way canal side site and investigated funding. And held discussions with various parties about the Ship Inn site.
- Developed a signage scheme linking the Station with the town centre and local leisure opportunities for grant funding.
- Responded to consultations as received from Stroud District, Boundary Commission, Network rail and other bodies that consult with us as a town.

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