



Stonehouse Town Council Annual Report

May 2014

Introduction

The Council elected Cllr Chris Brine as Chair of the Council and Cllr Simon Lewis as Vice-Chair of the Council for the 2013-14 civic year. During the year we were joined by Councillor Paul Stephens who was elected to represent North Ward

The Council has had a busy year delivering new services and facilities. The Council has also been working towards the development of a Neighbourhood Plan. This increased activity has brought its own challenges to staff and councillors who have shown determination to cut through the workload to bring benefit to the community.

During the year the Council made a further bid to the Gloucestershire Local Transport Board for a re-opened station on the old Bristol Road site in the hope of providing sustainable transport for Stonehouse and removing some of the congestion we see today. This application was supported by

many people including the landowner but unfortunately it lacked the impetus required from the County Council to ensure its success. Further work will be undertaken to ensure that transport links are sustainable particularly in view of the large planning applications which may proceed to challenge current provision.

The Council's Community Right to Bid for the Ship Inn site was refused by Stroud District Council on the grounds that the site had not been used in the "recent past" which they have interpreted to mean 3-5 years.

The Stonehouse Community have supported us and community events such as the Remembrance Parade, the Horticultural Show, and High Street celebrations which are very popular. Our community supports a vibrant and thriving High Street and we thank our business and commercial partners for all they do for our Town.

Finance & Strategy – Committee Convenor : Cllr Theresa Watt

The Committee has carried out a review of policies and accounting methods. This work is ongoing as central Government makes changes. In light of the External Auditor's recommendation that the general fund should be increased, recognising the need to make pension provision and allow for an additional building's running costs, the Committee delivered an increased budget resulting in a precept of £203,940.

The Committee are considering changes to the Town Hall to make it a venue for meetings and exhibitions to mitigate the costs of insurance, business rate and Town Hall overheads.

The Committee regularly reviews our methods of communication and compliance with statutory obligations.

Summary of Accounts		
Expenditure	Past Year 2012-13	Current Year 2013-14
Open Space/Playing Field Maintenance/Youth Services/ Recreation Facilities Youth Centre Skate Park	111,186	378,353
Stonehouse in Bloom	2,906	3,295
Planning & Transportation	812	0
Festive Lighting	6,500	4,580
Administration, public advice, Town Hall maintenance, consultations and grant aid	112,851	154,039
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	234,255	540,267
TOTAL INCOME	249,713	502,456

The Town Council contributed £2000 to the Citizens Advice Service and £1000 to the Neighbourhood Warden. Grants were made available to Psalms £2500, Home Start £500, Park Junior School £500, Stonehouse Community Partnership £2000, Transition Stroud £500.

The Town Council is subject to two audits per annum as follows: Internal Audit is carried out by Iain Selkirk FCA
External Audit is carried out by Messrs Grant Thornton of Bristol

Regeneration & Environment – Committee Convenor: Cllr Clare Sheridan

The Committee has considered 54 Planning Applications through the Development Control Panel. The Committee has strived to ensure that Stonehouse preserves its character and rural aspect and we have campaigned very hard against unwelcome development such as the incinerator at Javelin Park, being represented by Cllr David Drew at the Inquiry. The Council obtained advice at a cost £5000 and worked in partnership with other councils and Glosvain to present joined-up opposition.

A Neighbourhood Plan Group consisting of residents and Councillors

are making progress with the Neighbourhood Plan consultation. To assist the Town Council have engaged Alastair Shankland to assist them with their administration. Alastair joins the Council with a wealth of experience in local authority planning. The Group have also obtained funding to allow them to engage Neighbourhood Plan specialists to ensure that the Plan is delivered in a robust format.

The Committee is also working with partners to try and improve existing transport structures including the train station and bus stops and reduction of HGV traffic

Amenities, Recreation and Tourism – Committee Convenor: Cllr John Aldis

The Committee were pleased to deliver a new youth building and skatepark which were officially opened on the 3rd May 2014. It was great to see so many residents enjoying the event and hear the positive comments about the facilities.

The youth sessions at the new centre are extremely well attended and the activity on the skatepark has been particularly encouraging.

The Committee have tasked their Recreation Working Group to consult the public regarding further recreation needs. A boules court was suggested and will be delivered during the 2014-15 financial year at the Laburnum playing field. It is hoped that a new

community building for social and sports events might be provided in the short term at Oldend. Consultation has begun with current facility users and will continue through the neighbourhood plan.

We have new grounds maintenance contractors and some of the grass cutting is now done by contractors. We have planted trees and wildflowers at Oldend to landscape the area and are working on improvements to the flower planters in the Town for this year.

The allotments site at Stagholt continues to be well used and with some of the larger plots being reconfigured the Council has been able to reduce the waiting list.

Members of the Town Council as at 31 March 2014

North Ward

John Aldis	822325	Chris Brine	825917
Simon Lewis	825229	Paul Stephens	791142
Gary Powell	826547	Vicky Redding	822933

South Ward

Roger Govier	826926	Clare Sheridan	827286
Anthony Howarth	825596	Rob Waite	825627

Central Ward

David Drew	825603	Pam Swain	822998
Theresa Watt	821428	Carol Kambites	827929