

Annual Report 2017 - 2018

Welcome from the Chairman/Town Mayor - Councillor Theresa Watt

I am very fortunate to be supported by a very active council with councillors dedicated to delivering improvements for Stonehouse. I am supported in my role by Cllr Carol Kambites as Vice Chairman/Deputy Town Mayor. We were joined this year by new councillors John Aldis (returning for another term) Becky Amor, Leigh Binns, David Thorpe. Our new councillors will be undertaking training and are already immersed in projects.

I would like to commend the tremendous achievement of a Gold award in the Heart of England in Bloom which is down to the enthusiastic Stonehouse in Bloom volunteers, community groups and sponsors. The In Bloom Group are already extending their planting efforts with new borders in the High Street and Elm Road.

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

The Council made the following grants in this financial year:

Grants 17/18	£
Citizens Advice Bureau (towards advice centre costs)	2000
Cotswold Boatmobility (towards a new craft)	100
Canals Trust (towards clearance and heritage work)	300
Royal British Legion (poppy appeal)	35
Stonehouse History Group (information board)	500
Stonehouse Lunch Club (hall hire)	240
Bandit Music Project (rehearsals at Maidenhill School)	1000
	4175

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 memory of Mr Mike Trim which will be placed outside the medical centre.

The Council received funding from:

Donations/Grants 17/18	£
Film Company (for youth centre)	80
Glos County Council (funding for station signage)	137.51
Glos County Council (funding for gate to footpath)	1940
Tree Council (Grant for trees in Meadow Rd playing field)	300

Cotswold Conservation Board (seats in Doverow Wood)	1667
UBB (Christmas Lights & Free parking)	5400
	9524.51

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

We have been so disappointed at the works done by Western Power Distribution which has had such a negative effect on the town. We hope that 2018 will bring improvements and recovery to the High Street and urge the community to support the traders and any initiatives to bring people back into our town.

In my capacity as Town Mayor I have been pleased to be invited to Moreton Hill Care home, Hopelands School, Dream Doors shop opening, and the Bar 1601 opening at Stonehouse Court Hotel. I have also had the pleasure of meeting the Heritage Lottery team at the gatehouse at Bonds Mill, and also Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Gloucestershire and invited guests as she opened a new building at Wycliffe College.

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

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:

- Rachel and Gill attended a networking/best practice workshop with Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC).
- Gill attained a Degree in Community Governance with merit
- Rachel is continuing her Certificate in Local Council Administration study
- Caroline attended training on Social Media

The Town Clerk is a member of Gloucestershire Association Parish & Town Council Training Panel and Independent Audit team.

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.

	2017/18	2018/19
Administration Costs, Staffing & Training	61,000	67,000
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

Election Costs	3,000	1,000
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. Premises layouts have been perused and costs examined for feasibility.
- made improvements to the youth pod with grant funding. The Committee are excited about plans to work with The Door in the new financial year.

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

The Events Group together with volunteers from the community put on a successful Goodwill Evening which the Town Council supported financially.

Report of the Amenities & Recreation Committee

The Committee, chaired by Councillor Neil Gibbs, looks after the recreation facilities in the town.

In 2017/18 the Committee has:

- completed a new play equipment scheme for Laburnum park and is working on a new scheme for Oldends Lane Playing field. The Committee hopes to implement this new scheme with S106 funding in the Summer. This work will continue with a review of the other parks.
- welcomed 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 were disappointed with the outcome of the planning application for a new community centre and enabling housing at Oldends Lane, which was refused by Stroud District Council. The only other way to raise funds for a new centre would be through a Public Works Loan or commercial loan. A loan would add approx.£32000 to the precept for many years. Please take part in the survey attached to this report to confirm whether you feel Stroud District Council should have used Core Policy 15 to support this application. Core Policy 15 allows development outside the settlement boundary where it increases public enjoyment of the countryside or participation in sport and it involves the creation of essential community facilities. (Note: This is not a survey to support a public works loan application)



Photo. Magpies Social Club at Oldends Lane (side view) The frontage of this site would have been improved with much needed housing (10 units)

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 were joined this year by our new Property Maintenance Manager Barry Croose and we are pleased with the planned improvements beginning to come to fruition.

The Committee is supported by groundsmen, the Town Clerk and Committee Clerk. The Recreation Working Group report 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 has tried to prevent any negative effects of the Javelin Park construction, UBB cable routing in particular, and is keeping a watchful eye on the West of Stonehouse development. The Committee's objections are not always heeded by Stroud District Council or Gloucestershire County Council.

In 2017/18 the Committee has:

- Overseen Stonehouse Neighbourhood Plan through the stages of submission, independent examination on to a 85% “Yes” vote at referendum. The Plan has now been “made” by Stroud District Council. The Plan includes five areas designated as Local Green Space; it means the Town Council will receive 25%, rather than 15%, of Community Infrastructure Levy payable.
- Contributed to the cost of a Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) crossing survey at Oldends Lane.
- 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.
- Modified an iron gate to the Queens Road footpath to improve its accessibility, with GCC funding.
- Lobbied successfully for a new street sign for a lane off the High Street.
- Worked with Stroud District Council towards improving the Wharfdale Way canal side site and investigated funding.
- Developed a signage scheme linking the Station with the town centre and local leisure opportunities for grant funding.
- Responded to consultations including Stroud District Council’s Heritage Strategy and a draft Cotswold AONB Management Plan. Provided draft response for Town Council to Stroud District Council’s Local Plan Review: Issues and Options paper.

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

Survey about New Community Facilities and enabling development:



Photo. The Changing rooms which require demolition and replacement.

Tick one response and hand in to the office:

I believe it is a good idea to provide much needed small unit private housing to fund new community facilities at Oldends Lane

I believe it would be preferable to borrow the finance to fund new community facilities at Oldends Lane

I do not know enough about the project to make a judgement

My Postcode