

**The Publications Scheme (Freedom of Information Act 2000)  
Reviewed 22rd May 2017 – Minute No.TC1866/4  
Next Review: Annual Meeting of Town Council May 2018**

Local Government regulations require all Town and Parish Councils to adopt a publication scheme to allow all members of the public and other interested parties to access details of what the Council does – and how it does it. The Scheme requires us to provide the public with a structured listing of all the relevant information that the Council holds and how that information will be released on request.

Requirements under the act state how to set out within a series of classes how we intend to make that information available together with any charges that we may levy for researching and providing the information.

Stonehouse Town Council aims to make as much of the required information available via its website. This is not possible in all cases where, for example the information is bulky or difficult to adapt into a format appropriate for a website. In such cases the information will be made available, on request, in hard copy format.

The Publications Scheme is divided into seven classes.

**Class 1** Who we are and what we do.

**Class 2** What we spend and how we spend it.

**Class 3** What our priorities are and how we are doing.

**Class 4** How we make decisions.

**Class 5** Our policies and procedures.

**Class 6** Lists and Registers

**Class 7** The services we offer

**Class 1 Who we are :-** This section gives organisational information about the Council including details of Councillors and Officers and ways of getting in touch with us.

Members of the Council - There are a total of 14 Councillors covering 3 Wards within the Parish. The Chairman of the Council is also the Town Mayor. Currently the Town Mayor is Councillor Theresa Watt

Full details of all Councillors can be found in the Councillors and Officers section of the Town Council website.

Members of Council Committees – There are 4 Council Committees in addition to the Town Council. Full details of each of the Committees and the function of each can be found in the Meetings section of this website.

The Committees section of this website gives details of which Committee each Councillor is a member of together with details of any representations on external bodies.

Councillor contact details – Contact telephone numbers and email addresses are given for each Councillor in the Councillors & Officers section of this website.

Home addresses for each Councillor are available from the Town Hall offices in the High Street.

Staffing arrangements – Key Members of Council staff are listed in the Councillors & Officers section of the website together with contact details.

Full details of staffing are available from the Town Hall offices.

**What we do:-**

Allotments - Stonehouse Town Council provides and maintains one allotment site at Stagholt Lane and currently has 70 allotment plots at that site.

Christmas Lights – The Town Council funds the provision of the Towns annual Christmas lights including arranging the purchase or leasing, installation and dismantling of the lights each year.

Civic Events and Functions – The Town Council provides direct support and offers assistance where necessary, to the Stonehouse British Legion in the organisation and running of Remembrance Day and other memorial parades as deemed appropriate in the Town. In addition the Town Council funds and promotes Stonehouse In Bloom by providing hanging baskets and other floral displays and encouraging Traders to do likewise. Support is also offered to Stonehouse Partnership at the annual Horticultural Show and Summer Fair.

Community Grants and Funding – An annual community grants scheme provides financial support to a number of community groups and non profit making organisations. Grants are also made to support festivals and events and the Town Council provides core funding or benefits in kind to some key organisations in the voluntary sector.

Parks and Open Spaces – The Town Council is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of a number of open spaces within the Town, looking after general grounds maintenance, upkeep and grass cutting. These areas include playing fields at Oldend Lane, Stagholt, Meadow and Laburnum together with an Amenity area at Arrowsmith Drive.

Play Areas & Playgrounds – The Town Council checks, maintains and upgrades play areas at the playing fields situate Oldend Lane, Meadow Road, Laburnum Walk and Arrowsmith Drive.

Planning & Consultations – Stonehouse Town Council is denoted as a consultee on any planning applications which are lodged with Stroud District Council within the Stonehouse Town boundaries. The Town Council is responsible for offering legitimate planning observations in their capacity as consultees for such applications.

In addition the Town Council commissions and assists in various consultation processes which affect the present or future of the Town.

## **Class 2 What we spend and how we spend it**

**Annual Precept.** Each year in January the Town Council agrees its budget for the forthcoming financial year and sets the precept. This is the amount of money that the Council charges local council tax payers for its services.

The precept amount is collected on behalf of the Town Council by Stroud District Council and is paid in two instalments.

**Financial Accounts.** A summary of the Council's financial accounts for each of the last two years is available for inspection at the Town Hall offices and copies can be made available on request.

**Annual Return.** Each year the Council is required to complete and submit to our external auditors an Annual Return. Once this Return has been analysed and approved by the Auditor it is displayed at the Town Council's offices and on the website for a statutory period. The Annual Return can be inspected on request at the Town Hall offices.

**Auditors Annual Reports.** Each year the Town Council finances are examined by both an Internal and External appointed Auditor. The latter being appointed by the Audit Commission.

The External Auditors report and certificate forms part of the Council's annual return which is now available for inspection at the Town Hall offices.

In accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2014, where the Council's income or expenditure exceeds £200,000 the following items will be published on our website:

Expenditure, including grants totalling and exceeding £500 per item. (Quarterly report)

List of Assets (Annual report)

Salaries over £50,000 (Annual report)

Council decisions regarding contracts and supplies exceeding £5000 will be recorded within the minutes. (Minutes)

Unexpected expenditure will be recorded in the minutes.

## **Class 3 Our Priorities and how we perform**

**Stonehouse Town Council Annual Report.** The Town Council prepares an Annual Report for the current financial year. It is expected that this will be available in the Autumn of each year and included as an inclusive part of the Newsletter series which is delivered to every household in the Town. Alternatively it is available on request from the Town Hall offices.

**Audit Reports.** Copies of the Annual Report of the Council's Internal / External Auditor are available on request from the Town Hall offices.

## **Class 4 How we make decisions**

All Stonehouse Town Council decisions are made on the basis set out in the Council's policies and procedures (see Class 5) and in accordance with the Council's democratic structure.

The Committee section of the Town Council website sets out the function of each of the Committees meetings together with the areas of Town Council business in which they will make decisions and recommendations.

**Notice of meeting dates.** Meeting dates can be viewed in the Town Hall, noticeboards in the town and on the website.

**Minutes of meetings.** Recent meeting minutes can be viewed and downloaded from the meetings section of the website. Archived Minutes can be viewed on request at the Town Hall offices. Copies may be available although Minutes of meetings prior to the last six years may not easily be copied. It is recommended that anyone wishing to view these Minutes should contact the Town Hall offices for assistance. A fee may be charged for searching archives.

It should be noted that any Minutes of meetings, or sections of meetings, properly regarded as being of a private nature will not be available for public inspection.

## **Class 5 Policies and Procedures**

Stonehouse Town Council undertakes reviews and updating of its policies and procedures. These existing policies are available for inspection, on request, from the Town Hall offices.

**Procedural Standing Orders.** The relevant Standing Orders are available for view at the Town Hall offices.

**Financial Regulations.** The relevant Financial Regulations are available for view at the Town Hall offices.

## **Class 6 Lists and Registers**

Any lists or Registers maintained by Stonehouse Town Council will be listed in this section. Generally, these can be viewed on request from the Town Hall offices.

Currently available Lists & Registers:-

Stonehouse Town Council Register of Assets

### **Class 7 The services we offer**

You can find full details of the range of services provided by or overseen by Stonehouse Town Council in the **What we do** section of this document.

The classes of information will not generally include:

- Information the disclosure of which is prevented by law, or exempt under the Freedom of Information Act, or is otherwise properly considered to be protected from disclosure.
- Information in draft form.
- Information that is no longer readily available as it is contained in files that have been placed in archive storage, or is difficult to access for similar reasons.
- Any information which is excluded for publication under a confidentiality clause or agreement.

### **The method by which information published under this scheme will be made available**

Where it is within the capability of the Town Council, information will be provided via its website. Where it is impracticable to make information available on a website or when an individual does not wish to access the information by the website, information can be requested in copy form from the town council offices.

In exceptional circumstances some information may be available only by viewing in person. Where this manner is specified, contact details will be provided. An appointment to view the information will be arranged within a reasonable timescale.

### **Charges which may be made for information published under this scheme**

The purpose of this scheme is to make the maximum amount of information readily available at minimum inconvenience and cost to the public. Charges made by the authority for routinely published material will be justified and transparent and kept to a minimum.

Material which is published and accessed on a website will be provided free of charge.

Charges may be made for information subject to a charging regime specified by Parliament.

Charges may be made for actual disbursements incurred such as:

- photocopying
- postage and packaging
- the costs directly incurred as a result of viewing information

10p per copy for items retrieved from files 12 months in date from the date requested.

20p per copy for items retrieved from archives over 12 months in date from the date requested.

Charges may also be made for information provided under this scheme where they are legally authorised, they are in all the circumstances, including the general principles of the right of access to information held by public authorities, justified and are in accordance with a published schedule or schedules of fees which is readily available to the public.

If a charge is to be made, confirmation of the payment due will be given before the information is provided.

Payment may be requested prior to provision of the information.

### **Written Requests**

Information held by a public authority that is not published under this scheme can be requested in writing, when its provision will be considered in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.