



Annual Report 2020-2021

Introduction from the Chairman/Town Mayor for 2020-2021 – Councillor Neil Gibbs

While this past year has certainly been the most challenging of times, we have seen an incredible community response. People have come together to help friends, family, neighbours and even complete strangers in their time of need – we know volunteers are continuing to help their neighbours. I would like to thank the frontline workers who have kept us safe over the last 12 months - NHS staff, carers, social workers and emergency services but also those who have kept the shelves filled with food, delivered medicines, taught our children, driven buses and emptied the bins. Everyone has played their part.

There are many different organisations supporting the community in Stonehouse. At the start of the pandemic the Town Council immediately set up Support Stonehouse to bring together local stakeholders such as All Pulling Together, Churches Together, The Long Table, Park Infant and Junior Schools, Maidenhill School, The Door, Stonehouse Community Centre, Homestart, The Coventry Building Society, Stroud District Council, Gloucestershire County Council and local businesses. Support Stonehouse has helped combat food poverty, support children's learning and promote local sources of help and advice.

Last year saw the opening of the new Public Library in the Town Hall building and the start of new partnership with the County Council. As part of the lease agreement all the facilities were fully refurbished with the costs being met by the County. We now have state-of-the-art Town Council offices and a Public Library fit for the future.

Stonehouse in Bloom and the Town Council have been working hard on the transformation of the Old Chapel Garden into a beautiful oasis of calm,

working hard on planting and landscaping. Residents have donated trees and a bench in memory of loved ones. A water fountain provided by Stonehouse Rotary has recently been installed and the History Group's new board gives lots of information about the Garden.

Whilst the national Britain in Bloom competition is not taking place for a second year, Stonehouse in Bloom will be filling the streets with colour in the coming year, including baskets sponsored by local businesses; it is hoped judges will visit the Old Chapel Garden which has been entered into the Its Your Neighbourhood In Bloom competition.

Stonehouse Community Climate Action Forum held a webinar in the winter of 2020 and carried out an Active Travel Consultation on ways to make walking, cycling and social distancing safer. The Town Council switched to a green energy supplier in April 2020, made changes to its grass cutting regime to encourage biodiversity, has begun air quality monitoring and continues with an ambitious tree planting and management programme. Much more is planned to make Stonehouse a greener, safer and more bio-diverse place to live.

Pandemic restrictions have led to Council meetings being held online, although "in person" meetings may have to resume shortly. Because of the restrictions, the usual public Annual Town Meeting with Civic Awards did not take place in June 2020, and we have again postponed Civic Awards in the hope that we can have a proper celebration of the community's efforts later this year.

This year we welcomed our new Groundsman Richard Smart to the staff team, working with Maintenance Manager, Ray Kaye. Thank you to Richard and Ray for their hard work which includes amongst many other tasks looking after

recreation grounds, Town Greens and play areas.
Thanks also to Lucas Edney for locum
Groundsperson support.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our
staff and Councillors for all the work that has
gone on behind the scenes to modernise,
increase efficiency and ensure that the Town
Council is fit to face future challenges.

Finally, I want to thank Richard Lacey our former
Town Clerk for his outstanding contribution in
project managing the town hall/library
refurbishment.

Stonehouse Town Council Income and Expenditure 2020-2021:

Income	2019/20	2020/21
Precept	302800	339,573
Investment interest	4,580	1,574
CIL/s106	33,996	0
Grants	30,005	49,029
Leases	9,350	11,688
Facilities Hire	5,640	29,185
Stonehouse in Bloom	2,902	1,678
Events	1,705	236
Other	1,684	6,382
	392,662	439,345

Expenditure	2019/20	2020/21
Staff	139,826	133,080
General Expenditure	45,678	36,785
Streetscene	49,214	47,268
Building Overheads	31,747	35,979
Youthwork	35,286	36,782
Events	9,564	6,513
Stonehouse in Bloom	6,954	2,042
Equipment and Vehicles	1,771	1,818
Grants	4,839	23,519
Petty Cash	91	299.05
Reserves	61,006	
	385,976	324,086

Grants received 2020-2021

Grants	
Stroud District Council Market Town initiative Fund 2020/21	30,000
Stroud District Council Covid 19 Local Restrictions Support Grant for Stonehouse Town Football Club	9,669
Barnwood Trust -Old Chapel Garden	5,360
Rotary Club of Stonehouse - water fountain	2,000
GWR Communities Cohesion Fund	2,000
	49,029

Grants awarded 2020-2021:

Stonehouse Town Football Club - Grant for 2019/20	1,500
Share & Repair	3,000
Severn Area Rescue Association	500
Home-Start Stroud and Gloucester	1,600
Stroud Valleys Canal Company -	200
Support Stonehouse - Household cleaning & baby products	2,493
Support Stonehouse- Books for local children	754
Support Stonehouse - Freezer of Love flier distribution	180
Stonehouse Town Football Club - SDC Grant	9,669
Home-Start Stroud and Gloucester	2,500
Find a Book (Grant)	123
Magpies Social Club - Grant	1,000
	23,519

The Council's financial statements for 2020-2021
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.

Report of the Town Business Committee

The Committee, chaired by Councillor Neil Gibbs, has reviewed and revised council policies and scrutinised the council's finances. The Committee is responsible for the Town Hall and Youth Centre (The Pod) and ongoing council strategy.

The Committee has supported staff to undertake training to maintain standards and expertise. The Town Clerk is undertaking the Certificate in Local Council Administration training.

Ray Kaye, Maintenance Manager, and Richard Smart, Groundsperson both attended working at height training. Ray completed an Institution of Occupational Safety and Health course. Richard also attended a Brush Cutter and Strimmer operation course. All staff attended a fire safety course in November 2020.

The Committee checks the draft budget and precept request before it is presented to Council. Given the difficult circumstances, the Committee recommended that there should be no increase in the precept.

	2020/21	2021/22
Staffing	138,723	152,885
Grants	15,000	20,000
Climate	7,000	7,000
Business	166,780	152,680
Environment	30,300	24,300
Contingency	0	0
Gross	357,803	356,865
Expenditure		
Income and	-18,230	-19,870
Use of Reserves		
Precept	339,573	336,995

For a comparison of the precept with that of other parishes please see your council tax bill or visit our website.
<https://www.stonehousetowncouncil.gov.uk/accounts-reports/>

This year the Committee has

- Worked with "The Door" to deliver a youth club in The Pod, and supported more outreach work from the Door Staff. The Door's service level agreement was

extended for a further year to provide continuity of service in this difficult time.

- Working on Council Strategy and Action Plan. Recommended revisions to Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Code of Conduct, Scheme of Delegation and the following policies: Grants, Environment, Health and Safety, Equal Opportunities, Complaints, Community Engagement, Risk Assessment, Procurement Recommended introduction of a new policy on Memorials.
- Worked on implementing the Climate Change Action Plan, for example by switching to a green energy supplier, installing cavity wall insulation at the Town Hall/Library and promotion of community webinar.
- Awarded grants as detailed including for Support Stonehouse initiatives.
- Recommended the purchase of additional IT system to facilitate homeworking.
- Worked to ensure Stonehouse benefits from the Canal restoration project and encouraged the development of strategic links between the canal and the town centre.
- Recommended contributing towards the cost of a Tourism Officer shared between Stroud District's market towns.

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

The Human Resources sub – Committee, Internal Audit Panel and the following working groups report to this committee: Business Networking, Canal Rejuvenation, Climate Action, Communications, Policy, Recreation, Youth.

Report of the Town Environment Committee

The Committee, chaired by Councillor Carol Kambites, has considered 87 planning consultations during the year: the Council is a statutory consultee in the planning process but does not decide applications.

In 2020/2021 the Committee has:

- Supported the work of Stonehouse in Bloom as they continued work on the Old Chapel Garden and around the town despite the cancellation of the Britain in Bloom competition for 2021.
- Supported the Events Group who put on a successful Carol bus Christmas event. Additional Christmas lights were purchased including for a tree outside the Woolpack pub.
- Lobbied to keep the re-opening of Stroudwater Bristol Road Station on the agenda of key decision makers, including writing a second application to the Restoring Your Railway fund.
- Through the Transport and Highways working group, liaising with Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) Highways local Transport Manager on a range of issues including: the resurfacing of the shared space after the incinerator cable installation & temporary covid related measures on the High Street in support of social distancing, including additional planters and temporary changes to parking restrictions. Stroud District Council also gave support with provision of signage and help from Neighbourhood Wardens with installation of signs. Gave detailed comments on safety issues related to A419 alterations.
- Arranged for cleaning of town centre bus shelters now in Town Council's ownership.
- Arranged for repairs of phone boxes in Town Council's ownership.
- Responded to consultations as received from Stroud District (Statement of Licencing Policy, Local Plan Review: additional housing options), Government (Right to Regeneration) and Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership.

- Responded to pre-application planning consultations relating to Wycliffe College and Land North West of Stonehouse.
- Started to plan 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.
- Continued as a Strategic Partner in Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Wild Towns Project in Stonehouse, working on the design of walking maps for the town.
- Supported a successful grant application to GWR Communities Cohesion Fund to fund tree planting around the rail station.
- Approved a request from the Climate Action Forum to begin Air Quality Monitoring.
- Supported the provision of three new town maps at Stonehouse Station.

The Committee is supported by the Deputy Clerk.

The following working groups report to the Town Environment Committee: Events, High Street, Public Rights of Way, Stroudwater Station, Transport and Highways.