South Stoke Parish Council Newsletter No 50.

Annual Report 2013-2014

(This document and a comprehensive range of South Stoke Parish Council documents can be found on our website:- www.southstokepc.org.uk)

No local elections affecting the Parish Council were held in 2013, nor were there any other changes to the members of the Parish Council.

Parish Councillors and their individual responsibilities

Patrick Dawson		Midford Sweeper and liaison with Midford.
Michael Devenish	Chairman	Planning and Liaison with Midford
Sue Dustin		Village Hall Management Committee
Tom Geake		South Stoke Sweeper, Police liaison and Millennium Wood
Robert Hellard	Vice Chairman	Planning, VHMC and liaison with BPT
Jenny John		Footpaths, Allotments and Open Spaces
Chris Winpenny		Highways

Geoff Davis is Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.
Telephone 840201. Email. southstokeclerk@hotmail.com

Meetings

The Parish Council met on 16 occasions during the period 2013-2014.
6 full meetings, 4 special meetings, and 2 public meetings to address the consultations on the Bath and North East Somerset Council's Core Strategy, 3 planning meetings and the Annual Parish Meeting.
In addition to responding extensively to the Core Strategy Consultations throughout the year, the Parish Council also responded to 3 Consultation Documents.

Planning

During the year we have considered many different planning applications for works in or near the Parish. We have always commented on purely 'Planning' grounds, using Local and National planning policies for guidance. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has changed the process with an emphasis in favour of development, although this new 'Planning Framework' still supports the purposes of Green Belts and AONBs. Much political debate around these issues is taking place nationally, and there are numerous cases of decisions over-turned by Inspectors, and some over-turned again by ministers. A full picture of these crucial issues has yet to emerge.
The Parish Council has worked tirelessly, committing significant resource to achieving the adoption of the South Stoke Conservation Area Appraisal. At the time of writing we are within a 'hairs-breadth' of achieving this and hope to report that it is an instrument that carries full planning weight by the time of the meeting.
We have again been represented during the year at several Public Inquiries, as well as at Development Control Committee Meetings.
The most significant being the Examination in Public of the Core Strategy. This remains the main issue confronting the Parish Council this year, and again the Parish Council has devoted exceptional time and resources to defending the interests of the Parish against proposals within this document. In opposing these proposals the council has worked with other interested groups, Bath Preservation Trust, Combe Hay Parish Council, and South of Bath Alliance.
The Examination in Public of the final Core Strategy Amendments is currently taking place, running from 25th March to 10th April. The Parish Council is scheduled to participate on six of these days. A report on the current status and progress will be made at the meeting, however the final outcome will not be known for sometime.
The Parish Council has worked with B&NES Council to develop the Place-Making Plan, and has produced a character assessment for the village. However, the Parish Council will not publish this assessment until the outcome of the Core Strategy hearings is known, as it might prejudice the outcome of these hearings.

Registration of Community Assets.

The Parish Council successfully registered the Packhorse Inn as an 'Asset of value to the Community' last year. This year the owner notified Bath and North East Somerset Council of his intent to dispose of the asset. This triggered the moratorium under which the community had the right to make a bid to

purchase the property. An offer has been made and declined, and we must now wait to see what the owner wishes to do next. Other community assets are being looked at for possible registration, however this may be achieved more simply through the B&NES Place-Making Plan.

Snow Warden Scheme
The Parish Council continues to participate in this B&NES scheme. Happily there was no call upon the Snow Warden this year.

Parish Sweepers
Our sweepers, Martin Bambury for South Stoke and David Brown for Midford continue to do a fine job throughout the Parish, so a huge vote of thanks is once again due to both of them. The agreement with Hinton Charterhouse Parish Council to extend work within Midford to clean up to Clearbrook Farm has ceased as a result of safety issues.
They clearly make a very noticeable difference to the villages and surrounding roads as a whole and are one of the most important services provided by the Parish Council.

Footpaths and Open Spaces
Public footpaths are walked regularly and fallen trees and overgrowth of foliage are attended to when reported. The Parish Council continues to take pride in supervising care of the Churchyard. Various improvements and additional maintenance works have also been carried out during the year on the village green and other areas of the village.

Allotments
All 16 allotments are under cultivation, and are well tended by all tenants.

Highways Maintenance
The Chairman is the current liaison with B&NES Highways over potholes and general repair works.
The new Midford Footway was completed in its entirety this year and has been well received and works well to improve pedestrian safety through the Village.
The partial closure of the B3110 at Midford looks set to continue for some months more as the works to stabilise the embankment are very significant.
The proposed installation of an Electronic Vehicle Management Sign Board on the A36, which could lead to traffic being diverted onto the B3110, appears to have been dropped, but in any event it will not now be at the originally proposed location.

Villager Hall Management Committee
During the course of the year the Parish Council has been able to support the ongoing maintenance and refurbishment of the Village Hall and plan to do so again next financial year.

Parish Council Finances
For the year to 31st March 2014 we expect to record a significant deficit of income over expenditure of the order of £3100. This is expected to continue into next year with a further projected deficit of £1400. This is the result of the significant expenditure being incurred, progressing adoption of the Conservation Area Appraisal, obtaining professional advice and support to respond to the Core Strategy Consultations and participating at the Core Strategy Examination Hearings. The Parish Council had built reserves over previous years in anticipation of this need, and this will be significantly reduced as a result.
In order to maintain appropriate reserves going forward the Parish precept for 2014/15 was set at £6,680, an increase of £2,000 on the current year. We will also receive a Local Council Tax Support Grant of £180.

Millennium Wood
The Council has installed the four seated wooden bench in the middle of the wood. We are in discussion with the Woodland Trust about repair and maintenance of the information board.

Finally, we thank Neil Butters our Ward Councillor and current Chairman of BANES for his ongoing help and support throughout the year.

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held in South Stoke Village Hall at 7pm on Monday 7th April.
This is an opportunity for all residents of the Parish to attend a meeting with the Parish Council and allows us to hear from you. Please try to support the Council by attending.

Michael Devenish. Chairman, South Stoke Parish Council.