

South Stoke Parish Council Newsletter No 52.

Annual Report 2014-2015

(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 2014, 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	Highways 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		Planning & BPT Environs Committee
Geoff Davis - Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer – Tel. 840201. Email southstokeclerk@hotmail.com		

Parish Council Elections - The Parish Council must be elected on Thursday May 7th this year. All the present Councillors are standing for election again this year with the exception of the current Chairman, Mick Devenish who retires after 8 years service.

This Parish is supported by 7 councillors, usually 2 from Midford and 5 from South Stoke. The Parish Council carries out important work to help to sustain our community, so it is particularly important that anyone interested in standing for election should submit their Nomination papers before the deadline on April 9th 2015. To collect nomination papers please contact our clerk, Geoff Davis. If you have any questions about our role please ask Geoff or any current Councillor.

Meetings - The Parish Council met on 15 occasions during the period 2014-2015. 6 full meetings, 1 special meeting, and 1 public meeting to address matters on the Bath and North East Somerset Council's Core Strategy and the Sulis Down Masterplan, 6 planning meetings and the Annual Parish Meeting. In addition to responding extensively to the Core Strategy and Masterplan 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 only comment on purely 'Planning' grounds, using Local and National planning policies for guidance which still supports the purposes of Green Belts and AONBs. On occasions where works have started before an application has been received we have contacted the Planning Enforcement Team. We have again been represented during the year at several Public Inquiries, as well as at Development Control Committee Meetings. The Parish Council appeared in May at 6 days of the Examination in Public of the draft BANES Core Strategy. We tried hard to defend this precious open space for future generations but were ultimately overwhelmed by Central Government's National Planning Policy, which is based on a presumption in favour of development.

South Stoke Conservation Area Appraisal. The Parish Council has worked tirelessly, committing significant resource and eventually achieved the adoption of this document by BANES. It was taken into account in the Core Strategy hearings and will carry significant weight in all future planning issues.

The Odd Down/South Stoke Plateau. The proposed urban extension to Bath at "Sulis Down" is the most important Planning issue dealt with by the Parish Council this year.

The Inquiry Inspector's report published during the summer recommended allowing approximately 300 houses on this Plateau land but set out a number of key constraints to minimise the damage to the Green Belt, the AONB, the Wansdyke and the Conservation Village of South Stoke.

In July BANES CORE STRATEGY was adopted by the full Council and is now the definitive planning document guiding all development on the South Stoke Plateau and elsewhere in the Authority. This new "Local Plan" contains the following important constraints, as proposed by the Planning Inspector:-

- No access to the new development from South Stoke Lane, nor from the Cross Keys junction.
- No built development in the fields next to the Wansdyke.
- Development should be kept back from the Southern edge of the Plateau.
- The height and style of all new homes to be appropriate to the setting of the World Heritage City.
- The Developers must, together, produce a Master plan for the entire proposed development, in consultation with all interested parties, which must be approved before any planning application.

The Parish Council held a public meeting in November attended by representatives of the Developers, their Agents and Architects and BANES Planning Policy Team. Many Parishioners attended to ask detailed questions about the proposed new development and to support the Parish Council's actions to date. The Landowners and Developers have now held a series of Consultation Workshops at St Gregory's School. These were attended by Parish Council representatives and other invited participants. It was clear from this Public Meeting and the Workshops that followed, that the Development Team were intent on stretching the limits of the constraints contained in the definitive BANES Core Strategy. Indeed they seem, erroneously, to consider that the new Local Plan is for 'guidance only'!

The Former Fullers Earth Works. Despite careful representation from the Parish Council, Bath Preservation Trust and others, BANES Development Control Committee have allowed a planning application from Gazelle Properties for a new Residual Waste processing plant on Green Belt land at this site. Protect Bath sought Judicial Review of this decision but this was rejected in February, so now the whole site will be developed, though some current uses are the subject of Planning Enforcement Action.

The Packhorse Inn; a Community Asset. - The Parish Council has continued to support attempts to re-open the Packhorse as the Village Pub and is disappointed to note that several offers to buy it as a Community Asset have been rejected by the owners. It remains classified as a Public House and would require planning permission for any change of use to a private dwelling, or for office use. The Parish Council will continue to monitor its physical condition, as an important Listed Building.

Hosting of the Beau Street Hoard Road show – The Parish Council arranged for the Beau Street Hoard Roadshow to come to South Stoke. This was a successful and enjoyable event with 142 people attending.

Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator – Councillor Tom Geake has co-ordinated the Neighbourhood Watch throughout the year and maintained liaison with the Police.

Parish Sweepers - Our sweepers, Martin Bambury for South Stoke and David Brown for Midford both retired from service this year and we thank them wholeheartedly for the excellent work they have done. Grant Davis is our new sweeper doing both South Stoke and Midford and is doing a fine job throughout the Parish, so a huge vote of thanks is due. The sweepers clearly make a very noticeable difference to the villages and surrounding roads and are one of the most important services we provide.

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 additional maintenance works have also been carried out within the village.

Allotments - Most of the 16 allotments are under cultivation, and well tended. One is available for rent.

Highways Maintenance - The Chairman is the current liaison with B&NES Highways over general repair works. Height restriction signage is due to be installed imminently for the Midford Viaduct.

Village Hall Management Committee - During the course of the year the Parish Council has supported the ongoing maintenance and refurbishment of the Village Hall and will do so again next financial year.

Parish Council Finances - For the year to 31st March 2015 we expect to record a small deficit of about £200. Further significant expenditure is expected to continue into next year obtaining professional advice and support to respond to the Sulis Down Development Masterplan. The Parish Council has now used its reserves from previous years and in order to maintain reserves at a safe level going forward the Parish precept for 2015/16 was set at £7,680, an increase of £1,000 on the current year. We will also receive a Local Council Tax Support Grant of £180.

Millennium Wood - The Council has installed a four seated wooden bench in the middle of the wood.

B&NES Ward Councillor support - Finally, we thank Neil Butters our Ward Councillor and recent 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 13th April.

This is the yearly opportunity for all residents of the Parish to attend a meeting with the Parish Council. It allows us to hear your views on important matters. Please try to support your Council by attending.

Michael Devenish. Chairman, South Stoke Parish Council.