

# STONE PARISH COUNCIL

## Annual Report 2013 – 2014

### Introduction

I am pleased to be able to send you Stone Parish Council's Annual Report for the last financial year, which sets out to tell you what we have achieved for the good of the parish in the last year, and how the money raised by the Parish Precept was spent.

### Parish Precept

Worcestershire County Council and Wyre Forest District Council raised their precept on your Council Tax bill by 1.9%. However, we were able to lower the parish precept by 3.4%. We were the only parish in the district that actually managed to lower their precept. We are fortunate in having Sue Bamford, a most efficient and frugal clerk, who is constantly looking for ways to make sensible economies and also to endeavour to discover grant money for our capital projects such as the permanent bend sign at the bottom of Stone Hill.

The main areas of expenditure and income are set out below:-

<b>Expenditure</b>	£
Clerk Salary	3,723.24
PAYE Tax	71.80
Clerk's Expenses	777.83
Lengthsman	2225.34
CALC Subscription	192.22
CALC Book	63.75
Auditing Fees	185.00
Insurance	310.28
Stationery/Printing	72.60
VAT Payments	489.96
Bank Charges	12.10
Advertising (Lengthsman)	198.65
Wreath (Gould)	22.50
Bus Shelter Repairs	138.30
WCC Sign Contribution	1,312.50
Bend Sign	555.00
Battery for sign	80.00
Churchyard Grant	<u>555.00</u>
	<b>£10,986.07</b>
<b>Income</b>	
Precept	6,850.00
Churchyard Grant	555.00
Lengthsman	2,168.57
VAT Refund	470.28
Sale of Projector	94.00
	<b>£10,137.85</b>

### Road Safety

We acquired a solar powered permanent Bend Warning sign, positioned as a warning to traffic coming from Kidderminster before entering the bend at the bottom of Stone Hill on the A449. We were fortunate to acquire a grant of £550 through Cllr. S. Williams of District Council funds. County Cllr. S Clee also gave funding of £1,900. The positioning of this warning sign has already had a dramatic effect, and we have gone from about six accidents a year, at this dangerous bend, to virtually nil. Long may it last!

The acquisition of this sign has freed up our own vehicle activated sign for use throughout the parish, and you may well have seen it in action on the A450 through Shenstone and at the Summerfield and Stone ends of Stanklyn Lane, where we hope it has influenced drivers to be more aware of the safety of those who live in these parts of the parish.

We are most grateful to our Vice Chairman, John Jordan, for all the work he has put in supervising the effectiveness of these signs., and their maintenance.

### **Application for site on Heath Lane for Travelling Show People**

This application was resubmitted during the year and aroused total opposition from members of the parish. This manifested itself in over eighty letters being sent to Wyre Forest Planning Department and an excellent turn out at the Parish Council planning meeting held at Stone Manor Hotel, who generously donated their large room free of charge for this.

Many eloquent speeches were made in the public part of the meeting before the Parish Council unanimously recommended Refusal. We were not able to give our reasons for our decision at the time so here is an opportunity for you to see our reasons against this case for development.

1. The location of the proposed development is within the green belt, as shown on the Wyre Forest District Council core strategy key diagram. Land within the green belt should be safeguarded from inappropriate development. The development of this land as a site for travelling show people with the stationing of four permanent park homes is clearly against green field site policy. Moreover, in addition to this, the application asks for the storage facilities for one static caravan, six touring caravans, ten HGVs and eight cars, plus a multitude of fairground equipment. This would be a complete violation of the act and spirit of the green belt, and cause serious damage to the parish environment, setting a very bad precedent.

2. The chosen route for movement to the main road from this site takes vehicles north west along Heath Lane to the junction with Stanklyn Lane. The applicant's Highways Consultants put the width of this lane at approx. 4.1 metres. Our own measurements show the width, in places, to be as narrow as 2.9 metres. They use in their survey, an example of their ten HGVs as being 2.55 metres wide. It does not take much imagination to realise the outcome of local traffic meeting an HGV at this point on the narrow lane which is entirely unsuited for the use of HGVs. They propose that their HGVs turn right at Stanklyn Lane to join the A448 at the bottom of Stone Hill. Here there is virtually no splay visibility, the turning is very tight, and on turning left, an HGV would have to occupy the other side of this very busy main road for a time. The 300 metre stretch of the A448 towards Kidderminster has already been the site of many traffic accidents in the last few years. An HGV would completely block this junction whilst it was attempting to join the main road. Records show that in 2012, at least one of the applicant's ten HGVs were entering or leaving their site on no less than 54 different days. All this would be an appalling imposition on our narrow lanes and a very serious traffic hazard.

3. The site would, particularly in the winter, be full of vehicles and the hub of noisy repairs and maintenance, all adjacent to the Muslim College, would be an act of severe aggravation to the staff and students.

The site is very exposed to view from many parts of the parish, particularly from Vicarage Road and Stone Manor Hotel, and would be a complete eyesore. Any of the recommended hedging would take years to provide visual protection.

4. There are several other problems with this site, including its effect on wildlife, the environment, potential water drainage problems, and the absence of sewage connections.

5. The application is massively opposed by the inhabitants of Stone. No less than 89 letters of objection have been lodged with Wyre Forest District Council Planning Department, and considering the size of the parish this is a very high figure. The decision of the Parish Council, which was unanimous, was preceded by a public session attended by about sixty members of the parish, several of whom spoke eloquently and forcefully against this application.

6. Five years ago an application to use the old Stone Depot Site for travelling showmen was turned down by Wyre Forest District Council. We maintain that the Heath Lane site is doubly unsuited.

7. We feel very strongly that this application should be turned down as totally unsuitable in every way.

### **Grant for upkeep of Stone Church Graveyards**

In the past the District Council have made an annual grant for this maintenance, which the Parish Council has passed on directly to the Stone Parochial Council. This grant is now gradually being phased out, and the Parish Council have been asked to make up some of the shortfall. To this end we have granted £450 for the year 2014/2015 for use on the graveyard off Butts Lane where so many relations of members of the parish are buried.

### **Stone Parochial Charity**

Whilst this is totally separate from the Parish Council, we thought this was a good opportunity to remind everyone that the Parish Room has now been totally refurbished and is available to hire for parties up to 20. There are catering facilities and a toilet. Bookings should be made through Denys Fordham on 01562 777660 and the charge is £20 per session.

### **St. Mary's Church, Stone**

This again is totally separate from the Parish Council but we thought it was a good opportunity for our new vicar, the Rev. Robert Legge to explain the position of the church in our parish and also to explain the new parking arrangements particularly for weddings and funerals.

My name is Robert Legge and I have the pleasure of being Team Vicar for the Kidderminster East Parish, which includes the Parish Church of Saint Marys Stone.

### **Church Parking**

As I'm sure you will have noticed, parking around the church has become a bit of an issue over the last few months especially during periods of funerals and weddings at the church.

Following discussions at the District Church Council, it has been decided that we will open the bottom part of the cemetery at Butts Lane for weddings and funerals in order to facilitate parking. This will of course mean a slightly longer walk to and from the Church, however the safety aspect should more than make up for the inconvenience. At the time of writing we are looking at purchasing signs to direct motorists to the field.

Thank you all for your co-operation, patience and understanding in this matter. Please feel free to contact me on 01562 827214

### **Public Footpaths**

We have some lovely footpaths in the parish, and although they are ultimately the responsibility of Worcestershire County Council, we are fortunate to have our own Footpath Officer, Glyn Walters, who monitors their condition, and we are also grateful for further input on their state from parishioners who use them.

### **Lengthsman Scheme**

The parish has, for the last few years, had the services of a most excellent Lengthsman, Bill Waldron whom you may have seen very early in the morning clearing ditches and, in the worst of the winter, clearing snow away from the pavements in front of the bungalows on Butts lane. He has been a great asset to the parish and he has left us to go into retirement from Stone, with our grateful thanks and very best wishes.

We are fortunate to have as his replacement David Siresuk, who is a qualified Lengthsman and also looks after Elmley Lovett parish.

### **Meetings**

The Council will continue to represent residents of the Parish in the best way possible and you are always most welcome to come to our meetings and give us your views and comments on what we are doing. Meetings take place at 7.30 pm on the following dates:

Tuesday 8 <sup>th</sup> July 2014	Parish Room, Stone
Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup> September 2014	Parish Room, Stone
Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> November 2014	Wing Room, Stone Manor Hotel
Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2015	Wing Room, Stone Manor Hotel

Tuesday 11 <sup>th</sup> March 2015	Wing Room, Stone Manor Hotel <b>Annual Parish Meeting</b>
Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup> May 2015	Parish Room, Stone <b>Annual Meeting of the Parish Council</b>

### Communication

Agendas and Minutes of Council meetings can be found on the Parish Council web site: <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/MyParish>, together with local information. We have the ability to upload photographs and also announce any events that are taking place. Please send your details to the Parish Clerk if you would like to announce an event. Please contact the Parish Clerk if you would like to receive this Annual Report and Minutes of Council meetings electronically. Information is also placed on the five Notice boards around the Parish.

### Conclusion

We have tried during the past twelve months to advance the welfare of our parish, and I am most grateful for the wholehearted efforts of my fellow Parish Councillors, who are always available if there is anything that you wish to bring up about matters in the Parish. Several members of the public have attended our Parish Council meetings and we are most grateful for their most helpful contributions. Incidentally, we still have a vacancy for a Parish Councillor so if anyone would like to represent their Parish in this way please contact the Clerk for details..

James Arbuthnott  
Chairman 2013 - 2014

### Stone Parish Councillor Contact Details

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