

Parish Council Chairman's Report

1. General

- This report covers two financial years owing to the cancellation of the Annual Parish Meeting in 2020.
- The COVID pandemic also forced the postponement of Parish Council elections in 2020 and these will now take place on 6 May 2021.
- Since March 2020 all Parish Council meetings have taken place online but council business has still been conducted successfully, with occasional attendance by members of the public.
- Two councillors have stepped down during the period and one has joined by co-option. My special thanks go to Graham Davies for his long and outstanding service, including spells as Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Graham retired from public service in 2020 and his contributions (and support for me personally) have been greatly missed. Thanks also to John Wace who made a very significant contribution during his relatively brief period on the Council. We have recently welcomed Pamela Fawkes but her tenure will be terminated along with that of the other councillors at the election.
- I am pleased to say that Leonard Stanley Parish Council meetings are generally amicable affairs – unlike those in Handforth, Cheshire which have been relayed worldwide on television, radio and social media and in the press. No doubt many of you have viewed these events with a mixture of disgust and amusement but Leonard Stanley PC can offer no such excitement!

2. Finances

- Owing to the unusual early scheduling of this year's Annual Parish Meeting as a result of the imminent local elections, full results for financial year 2020-2021 are not yet available. However, the Parish Council expects there to be a small surplus of normal recurring income over expenditure again this year.
- Significant additional non-recurring income and expenditure arose during the period as a result of the Council's extensive programme of projects (see below) enabled by the receipt of "Section 106" funds from the Saxon Gate development.
- The Council Tax Precept for both financial years was fixed in order to result in a zero increase in the tax payable by individual households at the benchmark Band D for the Parish portion of the overall tax bill.
- I am delighted to report that it has been possible to fix the precept for the next financial year, 2021-2022, with the same result. This will be the fourth year in succession that the tax relating to the Parish Council's activities has either been reduced or has stayed the same.
- Grants were made to a wide variety of groups, some of whom were regular recipients such as the Toddler Group, Citizens Advice Bureau and St. Swithun's PCC, but a significant number were "first timers".
- The Council has also been able to offer extra support for groups who have suffered a reduction in income or financial loss as a result of the pandemic and who have not been able to obtain support from other sources. This has been made possible by special funding received from the Government (via the District Council) to support our communities while normal activities have been curtailed.

3. Community projects

- Tennis courts refurbishment/upgrade – completed
- Extensive Village Hall refurbishment (substantially funded by the Parish Council) – completed
- Pavilion upgrade to reflect the huge success of the youth football programme and to provide appropriate facilities for the potential future expansion of adult and youth activities – still at the planning stage owing to COVID issues.
- Protection for the war memorial triangle against vehicle damage (carried out by Councillor John Wace) – completed
- Additional playing field fencing – completed
- Renovation and change of use to a book swap of the telephone kiosk at The Old Post Office – completed
- Provision of kissing gates on selected footpaths (carried out by the Cotswold Wardens) – completed.

4. Other specific activities carried out by Council members and the Clerk

- Maintaining the Council's website to provide regular information for residents
- Editing (on an interim basis) the village newsletter
- Consideration of planning applications
- Regular liaison with Gloucestershire Highways on road and related issues
- Regular liaison with Stroud District Council Neighbourhood Wardens
- Liaison with the local Police Community Support Officer
- Attendance at Stroud District Council events connected with the revision to the District Local Plan and significant input on behalf of residents to this revision
- Participation in training events organised by the Gloucestershire Association of Parish and Town Councils (GAPTC), Stroud District Council and other specialist organisations
- Attendance at weekly meetings with the Chair and Clerk of Kings Stanley Parish Council and the two District Councillors, Steve Lydon and Nigel Studdert-Kennedy
- Attendance at meetings and events with other organisations including:
 - Stroud District Council town and parish council liaison sessions
 - Village Hall Management Committee
 - Leonard Stanley Football Club
 - Stroud Parishes Cycling Promotion Group
 - GAPTC Annual General Meeting

5. Exceptional work

Special mention must be made of the exceptional work carried out by our member of staff Irena Litton, the Parish Clerk, on behalf of the Council and all our residents since the start of the current COVID crisis. She immediately took on the task of organising a team of volunteers to provide support for vulnerable people, producing leaflets giving information about the help available, creating hampers and food packages for those in need, organising "pizza parties" for children and their families during the Summer 2020 school holidays, collecting shopping, walking dogs and providing transport to hospitals and doctors. A wonderful example of community spirit in action and our sincere thanks go to Irena for all her efforts.

6. Thanks

- All our “COVID volunteers” who have rallied round and provided great support for those in need of it in these trying times
- Our District Councillors Steve Lydon and Nigel Studdert-Kennedy and our County Councillor Loraine Patrick for their unstinting support
- Our Parish Councillors for their time and effort, given for no financial remuneration
- All our clubs, societies, organisations and individuals who make the village a vibrant, inclusive and thoroughly pleasant place in which to live