

## **FINANCE UPDATE**

At January's meeting, the Parish Council agreed its Precept for the coming financial year. The Precept is the "proportion" of your Council Tax Bill managed by your PC and represents a small proportion of your overall Council Tax charge (typically about 5%). It was agreed that a 7% increase in the Band D equivalent was necessary this year to rise from £79.09 to £84.63 i.e. an increase of £5.54 a year. The Precept will increase from £55,172 to £61,135 which is necessary to meet the cost of services needed in our village. Our Tax Base figure increases from 697.56 to 722.38 meaning we have more "taxable" properties in the Parish. This is a direct result of recent building but is also affected by the amount of properties that are either exempt of council tax or those that get a discount. The Tax Base multiplied by the changes made on that Tax Base (expressed as Band D equivalents) gives us our Precept figure.

Why the increase this year? As we know, County Council has made a huge £15m cut in its own budget affecting many of the services they provide; and the Support Grant that the District Council used to give us has been phased out by the Government. All of this means that parish councils in South Somerset may well have to face paying for the services no longer funded e.g. the provision of the Winter's Rock Salt. Although our own budgeted costs for next year have risen by an inescapable 10.8%, we are limiting the increase to 7% for residents by "cutting our cloth" wherever we can and looking for further efficiencies.

This financial year (2018/19), after nearly 2 years negotiation we finally managed to complete the purchase of the Methodist Church for our new community Youth Centre. Prudently we have been putting money aside since 2016 for the purchase and refurbishment work due to begin very soon.

We were able to increase grants to some community groups – an increase of £2,000 to £4,000 p.a. to the Sports and Recreation Trust for the management of the Recreation Ground to help cover costs, £500 to the Hamdon Community Arts Project towards legal fees, and £3,040 to the Hamdon Youth Group towards the cost of an extra Support Worker as the numbers attending have risen. In the next budget we are setting aside £1,000 towards a potential befriending scheme for older people in the village in partnership with Age UK. Councillors are keen to see the support this investment will give.

In the next financial year, we face potential local government election costs, and also a short-term major project in the purchase of a piece of land for an extension of St Mary's cemetery which is nearly full and about to be closed. In response we have had to take a cautious approach to finance, keeping money aside for this project but the impact has meant we were unable to undertake improvements to Whirligig, Tunwell and Sea Wall; this will be reviewed as soon as we can.

In summary, this year may be tough, councillors have tried to be sensitive to the likely impact of rising Council Tax costs particularly with the unknowns of Brexit – realistically we have to be cautious about what we can do until all the changes settle down.

**Hugh Donovan – Chair of the Finance Working Group**

## **PLEASE PICK UP!**

Now that it gets dark earlier, there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of dog poo not picked up on the Recreation Ground. Leaving dog mess (and the bags) is dirty, unsociable and a health risk. If you let your dog off lead when it's dark, you are not going to be able to see when they do their business. So please, keep them on the lead when it's dark, pick up any soiling and put it in one of the 3 dog bins provided round the edge of the Rec. The Sports & Recreation Trust and the Parish Council work very hard to provide a nice place for families to chill out in the village. Let's keep it that way.

It has also been reported that some dog owners are leaving their full dog poo bags at the gateway of Shelves and in the farmer's crate at the entrance of the blackcurrant field at the end of Matts Lane. This is totally unacceptable! It's great that you are picking up your dog's mess, but it needs to be disposed of in a responsible way by depositing it in the nearby dog bins or by taking it home and putting it with the general waste. Leaving your dog waste and bags lying around is not only a danger to wildlife but to livestock as well and, it is not the job

of the farmer to clear up after you. The crate at the entrance of the blackcurrant field is there to stop motor vehicles going into the field and onto the bridle path; it is not a dog bin!  
Please clear up after your dogs responsibly.

### **ROAD CLOSURES**

**TAKE NOTICE** that in pursuance of Section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984, as amended by the Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Act 1991, the County Council of Somerset propose to make an Order PROHIBITING ALL TRAFFIC from proceeding along Greatfield Lane from 40m south west of the junction with Glovers Close, south-westwards for a distance of 250 metres.

This order will enable Taylor Plant Ltd to carry out highway works and installation of utility services in this road.

The Order becomes effective on 18 February 2019 and will remain in force for eighteen months. The works are expected to last for 117 days.

The planned road closure for North Street and Cole Lane to the junction with Castle Street on 4<sup>th</sup> February has now been postponed until further notice.

**TAKE NOTICE** that in pursuance of Section 14(1) of the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984, as amended by the Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Act 1991, the County Council of Somerset propose to make an Order PROHIBITING ALL TRAFFIC from proceeding along Ham Hill Road from the junction with Street Lane to the junction with Old Road a distance of 335 metres.

This order will enable Somerset Highways to carry out drainage works in this road.

The Order becomes effective on 18 February 2019 and will remain in force for eighteen months. The works are expected to last for 26 days.

More information and maps are available on the parish noticeboard outside the Memorial Hall.

### **STOKE ACTIVE WALKERS**

*Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019*

Today we will begin our walk by going along East Stoke and up Wambry Lane and across the field to follow the track to Fairy Land, through Fairy Land and across the ridge which will bring us to Batemore Barn. From there we will follow the footpath down towards Montacute to the back of Abbey Farm, along the footpath which will take us around Montacute Tower and then back along the top of Hatchcroft Woods to The Prince of Wales for lunch.

We meet at 10.30am at Sea Wall, about 50 yards on the Montacute side of Bonnies Lane. Please wear suitable boots or shoes and clothing according to the weather. All our walks are free, and we welcome new walkers to our friendly group. Well behaved dogs are also welcome. ALL WALKS ARE UNDERTAKEN AT THE WALKERS OWN RISK. For more information please contact Norman on 01935 822792.

### **RUBY AND THE ROCKETS**

Ruby and the Rockets are playing on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February at 7.30pm in The Memorial Hall, Stoke sub Hamdon. Rock and Roll to raise money for the Hamdon Community Arts Project. Tickets £14 to include a two-course fresh baked pizza supper (early bird, before the 9<sup>th</sup> of February - £13). Box office 01935 824064, answer phone weekdays 9-5, leave your number and we will get back to you. Bring your Valentine - a rose for every lady. Please feel free to dress on 60s style - a bottle of Prosecco for the best outfit.

### **VILLAGE ARTIST GROUP**

The Village Artists are hosting a workshop with Alison Mitchell on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> February between 10am to 3pm in the Memorial Hall, Stoke-sub-Hamdon. Alison Mitchell is an illustrator of children's books, poetry and much more, and she will be tutoring in drawing using pencil and ink pen. The cost for the day's workshop is £20 for Village Artist Group members

and £25 for non-members. Come along and join us for an exciting back to basics drawing day and don't forget to bring a packed lunch. For more details and booking please contact Diana on 01935 881647

The Village Artist Group hold several workshop days and demonstration evenings throughout the year so if you would like to join us, are interested in Art or just want to take up a relaxing hobby please feel free to drop in for a chat and a coffee to see what we are all about. We are a small friendly informal group who meet in the Memorial Hall on Monday and Friday mornings between 10am – 12pm, and on Thursday evenings between 7.30 – 9.30pm during term time. You can attend any number of sessions for just £25 per term. Why not call in? We start back after Christmas break on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2019, new members are always welcome

If you are interested you can find out more by visiting our website or visit our new Facebook page - The Village Artists Group Stoke-sub-Hamdon or just come along for a trial session. For more information please contact Diana on 01935 881647.

## **STOKE SUB HAMDON SPORTS AND RECREATION TRUST**

### May Fayre

This year's May Fayre will take place on Monday, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2019 and planning is now underway.

We are so pleased that our regular stallholders look on the May Fayre as one of the most enjoyable events they attend, and we are now ready to take applications from stallholders - charges are really reasonable.

This event would not be possible without the amazing contribution from our volunteer helpers both on the day and in all the preparation beforehand. Additional volunteers are always needed and if you are able to give a few hours either before or on the day, please contact Denise on 01935 827793 or at [denisesburton@btinternet.com](mailto:denisesburton@btinternet.com).

### Stoke Performing Arts Group

Stoke Performing Arts Group's production for the winter of 2018 was 'The Memory Stone', an original play penned by Angela Hodges, which once again placed our village of Stoke Sub Hamdon, Ham Hill and its unique hamstone architecture at the heart of its story. Performed at the Memorial Hall over three evenings at the end of November, it proved to be a great success and was very positively received by everyone who came along to see the show.

SPAG is blessed with the wonderful support the group receives from the Stoke sub Hamdon Sports and Recreation Trust and would also like to thank the individuals, volunteers, village groups and businesses in our community who have contributed to our ongoing success.

If you would like to know more about SPAG or to get involved please email: Moira at [stokeperformingartsgroup.co.uk](mailto:stokeperformingartsgroup.co.uk), or phone Jeanie on 01935 823012.

### Charity Shop

The Charity Shop achieved its best ever financial result in 2018 with a gross total of £29,797.64, used to support local projects that directly benefit our village. This was made possible through the generous donations received, the strong support of our customers, the hard work of our dedicated volunteers and innovative fundraising events. With this income we were able to support grant applications from local students involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, HCAP, local football, Brownies and Guides and the Stoke Youth Band, as well as contribute to larger projects managed by the Stoke Sub Hamdon Sports and Recreation Trust.

The number of volunteers has increased by 20% this year. But there are still opportunities to help in the shop or at our fundraising events. Contact Penny Trapnell – 01935 822208 or [pennyatrapnell@aol.com](mailto:pennyatrapnell@aol.com).

If you're looking for extra funding towards a local sports, recreation or educational project, we might be able to help. Contact Jane Baker - 01935 825585 / [jeb3101@aol.com](mailto:jeb3101@aol.com) - for more information and a grant application form.

### **EVERY STEP COUNTS AND HEALTH WALKS**

Why not come along and join us on our led walks and enjoy seeing the lovely, everchanging countryside around Stoke. You will receive a warm welcome, lively conversation and the opportunity for a cup of tea or lunch at the Lighthouse Café after the walks.

We meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays of each month and both walks start and end at the Lighthouse Café opposite the Fleur de Lis pub.

'Every Step Counts' walks begin at 9.30am and last approx. 30 to 40 mins, walking on pavements or paths around the village.

Health Walks start at 10.30am and last approx. 90 minutes, walking along tracks, footpaths and occasionally ascending Ham Hill and visiting neighbouring villages.

Just turn up, wearing suitable clothing and shoes for the weather.

If you would like more information, please contact any one of the four trained walk leaders: Mark & Jane 07496148756 Penny 822208 or Anne 826256

### **SOMERSET SIGHT**

Happily, the Somerset Sight van is calling at the Memorial Hall car park on the following days in 2019 between 1pm – 3.30pm: 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019, 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019, 11<sup>th</sup> September 2019 and 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019,

### **STOKE BAND NEWS**

The band would like to thank everyone for their generosity over the Christmas period, at the Christmas concert and on Christmas Eve. Your donations will keep the band in a good position for the up-coming year. We would especially like to thank those stoic souls who joined us at the Prince of Wales during storm Dierdre to sing the carols. We wish you all a happy and prosperous 2019.

### **TABLETOP SALE**

Pre-loved/New/nearly new Tabletop Sale on Sunday February 10<sup>th</sup> at Norton Village Hall between 11am - 1pm. Bargains galore. Teas and cake. Everyone welcome. Free entry. Proceeds to Norton Hall Funds. Contact for enquiries Jennie Harris. 01935 881718.

### **POP IN**

Pop In meet at the Oak Tree House on Thursday afternoons at 2.30pm.

We like to chat over tea and cake and join in games such as board games and Boccia or listen to a speaker from a variety of backgrounds.

We realise that many people are missing out on socialising with us because they need transport. Is there anyone in Stoke sub Hamdon who would have a few hours free on Thursday afternoon to pick up a few older people from the Stoke sub Hamdon area and drive them to and from the group? We will pay 45p a mile for petrol.

If you would be interested, please contact Paul on 07770348767 or Cath on 07968521746.

### **HAMDON YOUTH GROUP**

The Hamdon Youth Group has a full programme for February in both Stoke and Norton. The Monday Youth Club in the Lighthouse in Stoke welcomes young people in Yr. 7 and older between 7pm and 9pm with these topics:

- 4<sup>th</sup> Pizza Making
- 11<sup>th</sup> Valentine's Day/Relationships
- 18<sup>th</sup> Games/Mug Cakes
- 25<sup>th</sup> Wear Something Red Day

On Wednesdays from 7pm in Norton Village Hall Meeting Room of Norton Village Hall.  
Check our Facebook page for latest info: <https://www.facebook.com/hamdonsyouthgroup>  
For more information please contact Lou Chant on 07402987921 or email [lou.chant@cyp.me](mailto:lou.chant@cyp.me)

### **ST MARYS NEWS**

Peter Thomas, our Rector has retired to Taunton after 13 years serving this area and had an affectionate send off on January 6th. The re-appointment process often takes about a year. Meanwhile all church activities and services continue in Stoke unchanged. As Associate Vicar, I continue to be based at The Parish Office at 1, Castle street, and am available there 4 days a week. Revd Gary Edmunds, our curate will shortly be confirmed as an Associate priest, mainly helping on weekends.

We are delighted that the church youth minister trainee, Abbi, is now supporting Lou at the Hamdon Youth Group every week, and Christine and I have taken over from John to support the Baby and Toddler group. I look forward to more involvement too with Castle school this year and the wonderful Open the Book team still visits there every fortnight. The Lighthouse Coffee shop in All saints Hall is open again after the Christmas break.

Everyone who lives in Stoke is welcome to arrange a wedding, baptism or funeral (crem or church-based) with me. Do be in touch to discuss these, request a home visit, or to discuss any matter of faith. Every Blessing, Annie *Revd Annie Gurner 824167*

### **DIARY OF EVENTS:**

#### **FEBRUARY**

2 <sup>nd</sup>	Village Artist Group Workshop
5 <sup>th</sup>	Stoke Active Walkers
10 <sup>th</sup>	Tabletop Sale
11 <sup>th</sup>	Every Step Counts
16 <sup>th</sup>	Ruby & the Rockets – Memorial Hall
25 <sup>th</sup>	Somerset Sight
25 <sup>th</sup>	Every Step Counts

#### **MARCH**

23 <sup>rd</sup>	Young People's Music Festival
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