

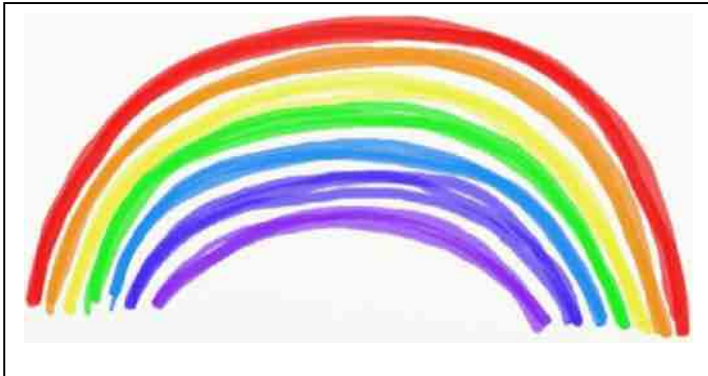
All items for the  
Autumn edition by  
Friday 21<sup>st</sup> August  
2020

# Stoke News

Summer 2020

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Thank you to all our contributors and distributors of the Stoke News during this time of the Covid 19 outbreak. Best wishes to everyone who often help out, but are being shielded, or are self-isolating, at this time. It is good to keep things going as well as we can. Care has been taken to distance and keep everyone safe whilst delivering.



## HOTV Report

During the time since the last report to the Stoke News two pivotal events have occurred. Firstly, we succeeded in reaching our goal for the community share subscription by exceeding £200,000. An amazing effort and thanks are due to all who contributed. This in turn released grants and loans from donor organisations such that our funding requirement as outlined in the Business Plan is now complete.

Secondly and perhaps more significantly the community benefit society that is Heart of the Village purchased the shop business which had been relocated to a 'shop in a box' in the grounds of the village hall. Trading started as planned on April 1<sup>st</sup>, coincident with the initial wave of uncertainties around the lockdown. A robust covid policy was devised and operations have functioned smoothly. Our major challenge centred upon the sudden evaporation of our pool of volunteers. This necessitated the short-term employment of local assistant shop managers. This was an unanticipated cost but necessary to ensure continuity.

Despite all these challenges, operations have run smoothly with robust sales across all lines. There are many thanks due, but especially to Ian Upshall for his guidance and flexibility particularly when the transition has not been as smooth as should have been. To Jo and Carolyn for grasping the opportunity and providing outstanding customer service. And not least to David Crabbe who with Sophie Harris has overseen the bookkeeping and treasury functions.

The next significant event will be the creation of an elected management committee. Under the current circumstances a postal ballot was the only practical option. At the time of going to press candidate nominations have been received; ballot papers will be circulated, and a result is anticipated by the first week of June.

In the light of this election it was agreed at the last meeting of the interim committee that all notable decisions that need to be taken in regard to next steps in the project, will be deferred until this elected committee is in place.

## Parish Council Report

March now seems like a long time ago. Much has changed, but in many ways very little has changed. Life goes on, despite Covid 19 disrupting so many lives since the middle of March. A description of action the village is taking is outlined more fully elsewhere in this newsletter. But it is important to say on behalf of the Parish Council, a **heartfelt thank you** to all in the village who have done that bit extra to support neighbours and friends during this period of considerable disruption and uncertainty. In particular it is appropriate to mention the work of Kelly de Silva, the Parish Clerk, in responding to requests for assistance. Also, to Rachel Parrish for leading an initiative to supply meals. Overall, the response to this crisis has been positive and measured; all that one would expect from a community such as ours.

Much of what was discussed at the March PC meeting has subsequently taken a back seat, having been overtaken by more pressing priorities. There were however three items worthy of note. Firstly, after many years of service Cecil Boobyer was succeeded as **footpaths officer** by Charlotte Sundquist. We welcome the energy and enthusiasm that Charlotte will bring, while thanking Cecil for his efforts during the considerable time he occupied the role. Secondly it was confirmed that all **CIL monies** due to the Parish Council arising from the housing development in Willey Road, will be retained by the Parish Council with no further obligation to support the infrastructure required for the new pavilion. Finally, it was agreed that the PC will take a more active role in supporting the activity of **Climate Action Athelney** (formerly Transition Athelney).

Shortly after the March meeting the lockdown guidance was issued, causing an extraordinary meeting to be called, on March 19<sup>th</sup> in order to delegate the conduct of essential PC business to The Parish Clerk. Needless to say, this was passed unanimously. In the absence of guidance on how best to manage **PC meetings**, there was no meeting in April, but subsequently SALC (Somerset Association of Local Councils) sanctioned the use of virtual meetings, subject to certain protocols.

On May 11<sup>th</sup> we held our first **virtual meeting**. Members of the public were offered to opportunity to participate however no one took-up this option. The meeting was successful with no unanticipated disruptions due to the technology.

Two **planning applications** are noteworthy. Plans have been submitted to convert the current visitor carpark at the Willows and Wetlands centre to a pedestrian plaza with additional amenities. An application was also received for change of use of the Royal Oak from a public house, to a public house with a shop. Both of these were fully supported.

It was reported that an advisory 20 miles per hour **speed limit** would be implemented outside schools in the County. This includes Stoke St Gregory Primary School which has been assessed and prioritised for implementation. Our thanks to David Fothergill for putting our case forward.

The **next PC meeting** will be held as per the normal calendar and will be a virtual meeting. Notification of the agenda and meeting details will be made in the usual way.