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STOKE ST GREGORY COMMUNITY PLAN 2023

OUR VILLAGE. OUR VISION.

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THANK YOU

We want to start with a huge thank you to all of you who have engaged with the Community Plan process and to the 385 people who took the time to complete the survey. An extra special thank you to the children of The Willow Set for their fantastic art work, which features in this Plan and to the children of Stoke St Gregory Primary School for providing both their views and their own brilliant art work.

We hope you will enjoy reading the Plan and will feel energised to help deliver some of its actions over the next two years.

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OUR COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT

Working together as a collective whole for the benefit of everyone

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

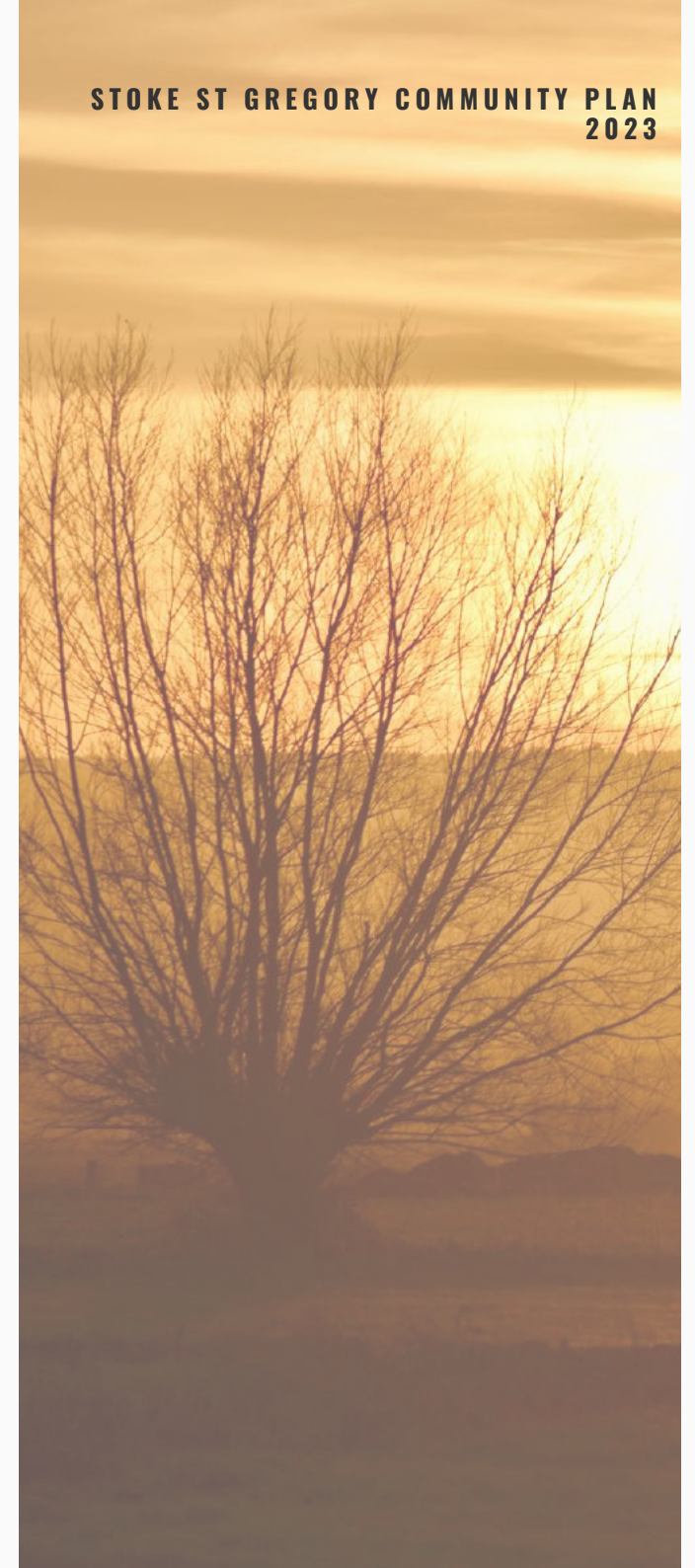
Our environment, The climate crisis, Health and wellbeing, Traffic and travel, Engagement

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INTRODUCTION

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STOKE ST GREGORY COMMUNITY PLAN 2023



WHY DO A PLAN?

A lot has changed since the first Village Plan was published in 2003. These changes bring both challenges and opportunities. Now it is time to recognise those changes, to embrace the challenges and to make the most of the opportunities. To do that, it is essential to have a plan of action we can all get behind.

Our community has been given the opportunity and support to create a plan fit for the 21st century. Over a period of six months, a team of volunteers consulted with residents and village groups to seek their views on what is great about Stoke St Gregory and what we can all work on to make it an even better place to live, work and visit. The findings of the consultation process and survey have led to the production of this document: **The Stoke St Gregory Community Plan 2023**.

Through the consultation process, a strong message has been heard. Far from it being a 'Village Plan', which is what the team originally set out to deliver, what is actually needed is a 'Community Plan'. This will bring together all elements of our community, including those beyond the boundary of the village.



For that reason, some of the themes resulting from the consultation process and survey have been grouped together so that the actions planned can be delivered across all sectors of the community. The sense of togetherness and cooperation is central to the vision of this Community Plan.

This Community Plan sets out where we are now as a community; where we want to be and how we plan to get there. To achieve these ambitions, the community will need support, both financial and non-financial. This Community Plan, and the research and survey results that back it up, can be used as evidence to show external funders what we as a community want to do, and why.

The Community Plan Steering Group is grateful to Smart Communities Ltd (SCL), part of the Community Council for Somerset group (CCS), for their time, expertise and guidance. The Steering Group is also grateful to all of the organisations within the community that provided support and feedback throughout the consultation process.





The Community Plan is a statement of intent. We hope you agree that Stoke St Gregory deserves a bright future. If we all work together, we can get there.

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**OUR COLLECTIVE
COMMITMENT**

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OUR COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT

This is our village and right now this is our opportunity to help shape its future, not just for us but for future generations.

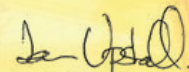
This Community Plan cannot succeed if we are not all committed to working hard to deliver it. This means working together as a collective whole for the benefit of everyone.

We hope you agree that Stoke St Gregory deserves a bright future. The following key organisations and groups within the village have all pledged to make this commitment to work together and we urge you to do the same.


On behalf of Stoke St Gregory Parish Council


JANICE PEARCE
CHAIR

On behalf of Stoke Environment Group


Lead-Coordinator for SEG
November 2022

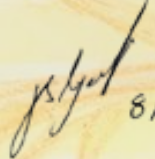
On behalf of the Playing Fields Committee


NEIL SCOUS

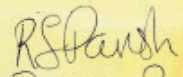
On behalf of Heart of the Village

M W Blair

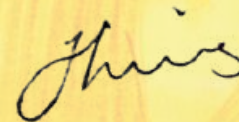
On behalf of Stoke St Gregory Primary School


8/12/2022

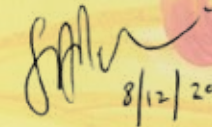
On behalf of The Willow Set Pre-School


RACHEL PARISH
6/12/2022

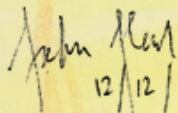
On behalf of Friends of the School (FOS)



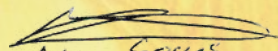
On behalf of Stoke St Gregory Primary School
Governors


8/12/2022

On behalf of the Williams Hall


12/12/2022


On behalf of the Cricket Club


NEIL SCOUS

On behalf of the Tennis Club

Stuart Monk

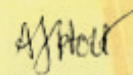
On behalf of Stoke St Gregory Parish Church


Lead Dr Simon
Bale

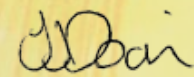
On behalf of Stoke St Gregory Baptist Church

SC Satchell
Rev Sonya Satchell

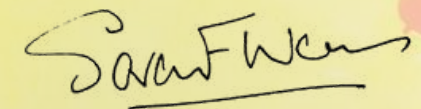
On behalf of Stoke St Gregory Women's Institute


AMELIA HOLT
PRESIDENT

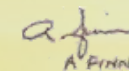
On behalf of Stoke St Gregory Beavers, Cubs and
Scouts


CUAMAN

On behalf of Stoke St Gregory Footpath Group



On behalf of Stoke St Gregory Players


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OUR PLAN OF ACTION

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THEME 1: OUR ENVIRONMENT

It is vital that the community of Stoke St Gregory takes care of our environment, takes positive steps to protect it, makes informed and responsible decisions both individually and collectively and encourages its friends, neighbours and visitors to do the same. To protect both the current community and future generations it is necessary to act now to protect our planet and way of life.



OUR ENVIRONMENT

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- In the survey results, 347 respondents indicated that ‘the countryside and landscape’ was the most valued aspect of living in Stoke St Gregory. The cultural heritage of our community and its surrounding environment are important to people and, of those who completed the survey, 275 were strongly of the view that the wetlands were important.
- The results of the survey also suggest that many, but not all, respondents felt that pollution is an issue. Comments included concerns about pollution as a result of farming activities; coal, wood and oil burners; littering; dog fouling; bonfires; and idling vehicles.
- Some of the key issues arising from the survey and the supporting comments were that more needs to be done to maintain roadside drains and verges, footpaths, stiles and signage.
- The survey revealed a general desire on behalf of the respondents to ‘do more’ to help towards a reduction of our impact on the environment through the use of ‘green initiatives’. There was a desire to gain a greater understanding about what steps we are already taking and what more we can do.

OUR ENVIRONMENT

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

- We want Stoke St Gregory to be a beautiful rural community.
- We want a network of well-maintained, accessible public footpaths and bridleways, with clear and appropriate signage.
- We want to work together as a community to support on-going projects which are already delivering these goals and we want to do more to improve all aspects of our environment to protect it, both now and for the future.
- We want to gain a deeper understanding of the root causes of pollution and work together to make our community a clean and environmentally friendly place.
- We want to create greater awareness throughout the community of what 'green initiatives' are already happening, encourage new ideas and initiatives and publicise successes.
- We want to create a positive and proactive line of communication with the farming community to better understand the impact of farming on our environment.
- We want Stoke St Gregory to be a place to be proud of.

OUR ENVIRONMENT

HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

- a. We would like to see the Parish Council, Footpath Officer and Stoke Environment Group work collaboratively with members of the community who feel passionately about our environment.
- b. We will prepare an inventory of the works required to our footpaths and bridleways. This inventory will inform the preparation of a Footpath Improvement Plan. The plan will detail the works required and their costs.
- c. A record of key 'problem areas' will be created relating to road-side drains and verges. This will be reported to the Parish Council, who will in turn consult with Somerset Council Highways regarding any necessary improvement works.
- d. We will identify those areas that are suitable for improvement with initiatives such as wildflower or bulb planting.
- e. We will undertake a review and report on the causes and impacts of pollution in our community and set up a Pollution Reduction Plan. This plan will ensure we as a community have a greater understanding of the causes of pollution and an improved ability to determine if action can be taken to tackle the causes of pollution.
- f. Some of the above will require either professional advice from external sources or a degree of funding.

THEME 2: TACKLING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Following a declaration of Parliament, all five Somerset Councils which, as of April 2023, make up the new Somerset Council, declared a climate emergency. There is already a lot going on within our community to help tackle our impact on the climate crisis but more needs to be done.

TACKLING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- 348 respondents chose to answer a question about what they think would help them to reduce their own carbon footprint and restore the area's natural biodiversity. This suggests that the majority of respondents want to make changes and would be open to ideas about how to do that.
- The survey revealed that respondents would welcome increased options for reducing, reusing and recycling; improved cycle and pedestrian walkways; support and guidance on making homes more energy efficient and a community compost scheme, amongst other things.
- Many of the comments from the survey focussed on reducing car journeys, creating more community green spaces and making environmentally friendly home improvements.

TACKLING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

- We must recognise the fragility of the environment and the threats arising from the climate crisis. We need to reduce our community's carbon footprint.
- We want to create a holistic community plan following on from work already underway by the Parish Council to produce a Green Charter.
- We want to share knowledge and come up with new ideas and initiatives.
- We want the community to have the knowledge and confidence to make changes.
- We want the climate crisis to be central to community decision making processes.
- We want, in time, to become a net-zero community.

TACKLING THE CLIMATE CRISIS

HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

- a.** We recognise that this is a complex area. In the initial stages, members of the community will be invited to come together to create a 'Climate Emergency Working Group', which would most likely report to the Parish Council. The remit of the Climate Emergency Working Group will be set out at a later stage.
- b.** The Parish Council will publish and formally adopt a Green Charter, inviting community groups and residents to 'sign-up' to it. The Parish Council will be asked to formally adopt it. The aim of the Green Charter will be to ensure that the climate crisis becomes central to all community decision making processes.
- c.** We will agree and publish a Community Climate Crisis Action Plan (to include climate adaptation initiatives).
- d.** We will invite Stoke St Gregory Parish Council to declare a climate emergency.

THEME 3: HEALTH & WELLBEING

Health and wellbeing is a big topic that can cover many things. It is appreciated that health and wellbeing can mean different things to different people. Using the survey results to identify the topics that were most important to respondents, it has been decided that this Community Plan will address:

- the need to improve existing facilities;
- the need to provide new facilities;
- village life;
- support for older and retired people; and
- support for the younger generations.





HEALTH & WELLBEING

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- In the survey results, 338 respondents selected that ‘the local facilities such as the shop, café and pub’ was the most valued aspect of living in Stoke St Gregory. We are lucky to have such fantastic existing facilities in Stoke St Gregory, but feedback from the survey also emphasised a real need to work on and improve the facilities we have already and to ensure we work towards providing new facilities for the future.
- When asked which facilities respondents would use if they were available, 118 said ‘outdoor gym equipment’, 96 said ‘multi-use games area’, 88 said ‘health hub’, and 88 said ‘community orchard’, all of which centre around the theme of health and wellbeing.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

- It is important that existing and new facilities are welcoming; accessible and utilised.
- We want a forum where we, as a community, can come together and identify what we want to deliver and how we are going to get there.
- We want to be better at sharing ideas and working together to deliver events and activities for the benefit of our community.
- We want new facilities and activities for children and young people for which we can be proud, giving Stoke St Gregory a 'point of difference'. We want to put our play facilities on the map so people feel compelled to visit our community, which we hope will have a positive knock-on effect for other facilities, such as the Heart of the Village shop, café and pub.
- We want to ensure that older and retired people feel supported and engaged in village life.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE? (CONTINUED)

- We want to encourage and support multigenerational interaction.
- We want to deliver a new health and wellbeing facility that is accessible to everyone from within the community and beyond.
- We want to tackle rural isolation.
- We want to create an environment where everyone feels they can make a valuable contribution to community 'wellness'.
- We want people to feel connected through the use of appropriate and reliable technology, including internet access.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

- a.** We will set up a suitable forum to discuss existing and proposed events and consider how best to take these forward.
- b.** We will work collaboratively and collectively to undertake a review of existing facilities.
- c.** We will produce an action plan for each facility and source funding where appropriate to deliver the required improvements.
- d.** We already have £30,000 of funding to go towards delivering new facilities for young people and children. We will seek further funding. Work is already underway to assess the various options and liaise with suitable contractors.
- e.** We will run events for the younger people and children to ensure they are part of the decision making process.
- f.** Funding has already been allocated for the provision of multi-generational activities in the village.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE? (CONTINUED)

g. Funding has been secured to go towards a new Petanque Court on land at the Village Hall. Discussions have been held with a number of potential contractors and a planning application will be made in Quarter 2 of 2023.

h. Work is underway to find a suitable site and assess options for a new flexible and inclusive health hub for the community. Once agreement has been reached on the preferred location, additional funds will be applied for so the facility can be delivered as quickly as possible.

i. We will consider initiatives that could help tackle the issue of rural isolation and work with the community to deliver these. We will also do more work on the existing 'Warm Hub' scheme to ensure there is an opportunity for people to meet, chat, get advice and discuss local issues.

j. We will identify whether there are any opportunities to improve access to local medical services through prescription delivery or volunteer car schemes.

THEME 4: TRAFFIC & TRAVEL

Stoke St Gregory is a small, rural community. Some of the roads are narrow and were not originally designed to cope with the levels and types of modern day traffic. We need strategies to deal with these issues, whilst also appreciating the nature of where we live. Rather than focussing on the traffic itself, we want to focus instead on those who are most vulnerable on our roads. We want to create a safe highway network for all road users, pedestrians and cyclists.



TRAFFIC & TRAVEL

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- The survey revealed that, of those respondents who felt that they had concerns about traffic, the issues which affected them most were HGV/farm traffic (192 responses); the speed of traffic (171 responses); and verge damage (143 responses).
- There was a concern about the parking provision in the centre of the village with dangerous parking and poor lighting raising potential safety concerns. 116 responses flagged concerns about safe walking or cycling routes.
- Living in a rural community also means that access to public transport is not always easy, particularly for more vulnerable groups.



TRAFFIC & TRAVEL

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

- Cars are essential for many people in rural areas, but to address the challenges of car usage and the climate crisis, movement can be managed by improving the provision of public transport and encouraging walking and cycling so as to reduce car journeys.
- Parents should not have to use a car to take their young children to school simply because they feel unsafe to walk or cycle.
- We want to create a safe highway network for all road users, pedestrians and cyclists.
- We want the Parish Council to put road safety high on their agenda.

TRAFFIC & TRAVEL

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE? (CONTINUED)

- We don't want to be anti-car, anti-bus, anti-tractor or anti-HGV, but we want a community where everyone knows where it is safe to park and where it is not, where larger vehicles and smaller vehicles can use the roads together in a safe way and where the roads are used at safe speeds.
- We want to create a positive and proactive line of communication with the farming community to better understand the relationship between farming and the use of our roads.
- We want to improve, where possible, access to public or community transport, particularly for vulnerable groups and to consider alternative options where that may not be possible.

TRAFFIC & TRAVEL

HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

a. Controlling traffic can feel like an impossible task. It can be expensive and it can be controversial. Rather than continuing to focus on the traffic itself, we want to change direction and focus instead on those who are most vulnerable on our roads. We want to create an integrated plan for road use that covers matters such as speed control, safety and signage.

b. Over time we will seek to reverse the current priority for road layout, which values free movement of traffic first, and pedestrians second. We will need expert help to do this.

c. We would like to see the Parish Council work collaboratively with members of the community to understand the impacts of HGV/farm traffic on our roads.

d. We would like to implement a voluntary scheme that encourages vehicle users to become aware of the hazards to other road users when parking their vehicle.

THEME 5: ENGAGEMENT

One of the main reasons for producing this Community Plan was to give our community a collective voice and an opportunity to have a say in the future of our village. As a plan by the community and for the community, we want to ensure that the actions we take forward truly reflect local wants and needs. Engagement is essential if we want to ensure that the ideas in this Plan and beyond are successful.



ENGAGEMENT

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- In reviewing the results of the survey, it was clear that some of the feedback was about a general lack of communication and coordination across the community resulting in some facilities and events not being fully supported and, in some cases causing division.
- The survey results also highlighted that the 'sense of community' was important to people, with 254 respondents selecting that as one of the most valued things about Stoke St Gregory.
- It was also very clear from the survey of the Stoke St Gregory Primary School children that 'knowing everyone' was something the children valued really highly. Their comments on what they like about Stoke St Gregory included: 'everyone respects each other'; 'people always have a smile'; 'the people are kind and helpful'; and 'the serene surroundings'.
- The survey revealed that 155 respondents felt 'moderately well informed' but only 16 felt 'extremely well informed'. 47 people felt they were either 'not very well informed' or 'not at all informed' about the activities and events in the local area.



ENGAGEMENT

WHERE ARE WE NOW? (CONTINUED)

- Of the respondents to the survey, 213 confirmed that they use the village newsletter, 'Stoke News', to find out about what's going on locally, with friends/work of mouth following closely with 201 responses.
- It was also clear from the survey that online media is an effective communications tool with 291 responses confirming that websites were useful to find out what was going on.
- A lack of engagement from the younger generation was clear from the survey results. The overwhelming majority of the respondents (284) were aged 45 or over, with only 15 respondents aged under 18. As set out in the methodology, a separate consultation exercise was carried out with the children of Stoke St Gregory Primary School (aged 4-11).

ENGAGEMENT

WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE?

- Communication is a vital part of delivering the aims of this Community Plan and maintaining a strong sense of community.
- We want to be able to give out and receive regular information from a range of stakeholders in our community in a way which is clear, relevant, engaging and positive.
- We want to understand how we should communicate, when we should communicate and to whom we should communicate to be most effective and engaging.
- We want to have a clear direction on the use of online, print and any other forms of communication.
- We want to ensure that our community knows what we have to offer and that they feel engaged with village life in Stoke St Gregory.
- Where communication technology is poor, we want to make it better.
- We want to give future generations in our community the freedom, opportunity and platform to be heard and to influence the future of our community.
- We want to be truly inclusive.

ENGAGEMENT

HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

- a.** We will identify key influencers to discuss and agree on the most effective way to properly engage with the younger generation and children in the community so they can feel empowered to influence the future of their community.
- b.** We will set up a suitable forum to discuss the future direction of Stoke News in terms of content, format and frequency.
- c.** We will seek support from the community for the current editors of Stoke News.
- d.** Good, regular content is the lynchpin of any website. We will set up a simple weekly protocol for all key organisations in the community to provide relevant updates to the editor of the village website.
- e.** We will encourage the Parish Council to proactively engage with the community whether through regular 'drop-ins' and open meetings where anything and everything about community life can be discussed.

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WHAT NEXT?

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WHAT NEXT?

REVIEW & HOW TO GET INVOLVED

The Stoke St Gregory Parish Council has committed to review this Community Plan every two years to make sure the issues raised in this Community Plan are still relevant, that steps are being taken to achieve key milestones and that the Parish Council are delivering what the community has asked.

There is a clear need to set up several residents' groups to take things forward. These will be promoted locally, on relevant websites such as the Stoke St Gregory village website and relevant social media sites. If there is a particular topic or issue that you feel passionately about and feel you can make a positive contribution towards (no matter how small), please make yourself known to the Stoke St Gregory Parish Council via ssgparishclerk@hotmail.co.uk.

MONITORING PROGRESS

It is vital that the community and the various organisations within Stoke St Gregory take ownership of this Community Plan if we want to see tangible results in the short term.

The Steering Group that was formed to produce this Community Plan will be disbanded soon after publication. A new, small Community Plan Group will be set up that will be tasked with monitoring the progress of the various actions set out in this Plan. An action tracker will be completed and made available to the village, every three months. The action tracker will be made available on the village website; the various village noticeboards (where agreed with the owners) and in key village venues such as Heart of the Village (shop, café and pub); the Village Hall, the Parish Church, the Baptist Church and the Memorial Playing Fields Pavilion.

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Changes will only happen if we, as a community, make them happen. That means we all need to pull together and to offer help and support. No single community group is responsible for making these changes – it is a collective responsibility. Time, effort, a collective will, and a clear vision is needed.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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FURTHER INFORMATION

DOCUMENT LIBRARY

This document has been kept short to make it easy to read and digest. Details of the evidence, and more information about how the Community Plan was put together can be found on the village website (www.stokestgregory.org) under the 'Community Plan' tab. The following documents are available:

- The results of the survey theme consultation;
- A copy of the Community Plan Survey; and
- The Survey Data Analysis Report, including methodology.

PHOTO CREDITS

Front cover - Sophia, Aged 3 (The Willow Set)

Back cover - Trinity, Aged 4 (The Willow Set)

Our Collective Commitment - The children of Stoke St Gregory Primary School

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Heart of the Village

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Jason Pook

Canva.com

Hatch

WE ARE PROUD THAT THIS PLAN HAS BEEN PRINTED BY HATCH USING VEGAN INKS ON RECYCLED AND SUSTAINABLE PAPER.

Community Review
Your future plan

Approved by
smart communities
Your future plan



smart communities
part of the CCS group



Smart Communities Review, Tackling Tax 2018. The Council of the City of Bristol is a registered charity. Somerset is a registered charity. Race Equality Matters is a registered charity. The City of Bristol is a registered charity.