



Town Mayor's Report 2019

In Stone we are privileged to live in a community that has a long history where it's residents are proud to belong. We have a great variety of voluntary community led groups working for the good of Stone and its residents. Too many for me to name as the list is so long. We are lucky to boast about our very good schools here in Stone and also our nurseries and play groups. Those are the places where our children begin their journey through education and learn respect for each other.

This year I have been privileged to be able to meet some of the young people in Stone. I have also seen some of the work done by volunteers for the older generation and have been part of that work. Meeting people working to make a difference to Stone has been an eye opener and very enjoyable. With the 100th anniversary of the ending of World War One in Stone we saw one of the largest crowds ever recorded attending the Remembrance Day service at the war memorial. It was very humbling to see and I felt proud to be there.

It's been a good year for me as well as Stone and I will detail some main points later.

In the High Street we have seen the opening of the Post Office, and B&M taking over the old Co-op. In May we will also see the opening of Specsavers in Baileys old High Street shop which means we can boast that most of our shops are taken.

At the Crown Wharf development, building has now started and in 2020 Joules will deliver a Canal side pub and theatre with the old fire station becoming a Council run heritage centre. **All very exciting.**

The Neighbourhood Plan is close to completion and is currently with the planning inspector for examination.

On Westbridge Park we have seen the opening of M&S, a new girl guide facility and last week the new leisure centre with swimming pool opened. Hopefully plans will soon be announced for play facilities .

HS2 Has proposed a number of changes to its Stone Railhead project in Stone and the Stone Railhead Group will petition on behalf of our council objecting to many of the changes. Worryingly proposals are that they start construction next year bringing the date forward.

The immediate impact will be an increase in traffic volumes with many HGV's travelling down Yarnfield Lane on to the A34, increasing pollution and damage to the environment and making it very difficult to travel anywhere easily in the town.

Turning to finance, the Council's budget for the last financial year was £303,800. This was arrived at after carefully considering the Council's financial plans and setting a budget which reflected a good balance between the needs of the town and what would be reasonable to charge as a Council Tax to residents.

Major items of expenditure are staff (salaries etc), estates (principally the Railway Station Community Centre and the Frank Jordan Centre), town promotion (events such as the Christmas Lights switch-on) and environment (primarily grounds maintenance). It should be noted that elected members of the Council do not receive any remuneration, expenses or allowances.

The Town Council's share of the Council tax paid by Stone residents was £49.55 for the year for a Band D property. This was less than 3% of the total Council Tax bill paid by Stone residents. It was also almost 25% lower than the average town/parish Council Tax for the whole of England.

Stone Town Council provides services for the people of Stone.

These services include the provision of community facilities, such as the Frank Jordon and Stone Station community centres, allotment sites at Newcastle Road and Mount Road, and the Crown Meadow Nature Reserve and the Amphitheatre.

One of the Town Council's priorities is Investing and working to promote a vibrant town, and encouraging visitors to Stone is a key Town Council priority. In order to support this, the Council organises a number of regular events such as the summer Music Festival, Town and Craft Markets and a number of late night shopping events. Last year we also added new events which were, St Georges Day, Stone by the Sea, and the Classic Car show. Which were all very successful and are planned again for this year.

Each year the Christmas lights show in the High Street and at Walton is provided by Town Council. It is the Highlight (please excuse the pun!) of our year and I really enjoyed switching on the lights with Father Christmas and winners of our annual Schools Design a Christmas Card competition.

The hanging baskets in Stone High Street which always look so beautiful are funded by Stone Town Council who have also arranged the provision of our very smart information boards and fingerposts throughout the town.

The Council also provides bus shelters, benches and dog bins throughout the area and takes responsibility for the upkeep of many of the local amenities and planted areas. It also provides grants to help charitable and community organisations such as Age Concern Stone and District and the Stone Community Hub to name but a few.

Daily support and advice to local residents is given by our staff from our council offices in Station Road.

We also consider the impact on the town of every planning application, but during that process always seek to develop and conserve the area. This is currently being done through the formation of our Neighbourhood Plan to help shape and protect the future of Stone for years to come.

The Council is also looking forward to the development of the new Heritage Centre as part of the Crown Wharf re-development, as I previously mentioned

In conclusion may I thank my fellow councillors for their work and support throughout the last year.

ALSO a huge thank you to the Council Staff who have kept me on the straight and narrow during my time as your Town Mayor. I've tried not to be difficult .

And finally to my husband Mark, my consort who has driven me everywhere even when I sent him to the wrong place when I put in the wrong post code!

Councillor Kristan Green
Town Mayor
Stone Town Council