

# Stowe Nine Churches Parish Council

## Annual Report 2017/8

The Council met regularly throughout the year with Ordinary meetings being held six-weekly along with a number of Interim meetings to discuss matters with more pressing deadlines. Most of these meetings had an audience of interested Parishioners who have been able to raise questions and make comments on the business transacted.

Stowe Nine Churches Parish Council encourages such participation and transacts business in an informal style, which allows comments and queries to be raised from the floor. Matters raised are investigated by the clerk and put on the next meeting's agenda for discussion. This style of meeting is not deemed to be best practice and is unusual amongst parish councils, therefore the council reserves the right to change the style of meetings going forward, particularly if the informality is being abused.

Staffing over the past two years has been unusually turbulent and there were three changes of clerk during the year.

The number of staffing changes significantly impacted on costs, because each new member of the team required training necessary to carry out their roles. In addition, during the change of clerks, salary costs were increased to allow for handovers.

The clerk's role has becoming much more labour intensive in recent years due to changes in legislation and regulation. The changes incurred this year have resulted in a backlog of admin tasks, which Julie has tried to redeem over the past few months, however there is still some way to go. The clerk is contracted to 4.5 hours per week and it is apparent that this is no longer sufficient to carry out the necessary work.

Most of the years business has been fairly routine, although some planning applications have caused concern and have been the subject of lengthy debates.

Councillor Teague led the council and a team of volunteers from the Parish to embark upon the writing of a Village Design Statement. On behalf of the council and parishioners, I would like to thank Councillor Teague for his ongoing efforts and also to thank the team of volunteers for the amount of time and effort they have spent on this project so far.

Many discussions took place throughout the year regarding the Birth of the Radar memorial in an attempt to get a brown road sign installed. On behalf of the council, I would like to thank Councillor Amos and Dr Judkins for their help during the year. Due to concerns regarding potential ongoing costs, the council have decided not to pursue this matter; however, the clerk and Councillor Sanderson will work together to promote this iconic memorial using other means.

The need for fibre broadband and issues regarding the A5 drainage and potholes were regular agenda items throughout the year. Efforts have been made to lobby for these, however the results of our efforts have been varied, with works being carried out on the A5 to improve drainage, however works to install broadband have been pushed back and are now expected to start in late 2018.

Overall, I think it is fair to say that it has been one of the most challenging years in the councils recent history but I feel that we now have an excellent team in place. Our aim for the next year is to "steady the ship" through a review of all policies and procedures along with increased scrutiny of the

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councils finances to ensure budget is available to run the council properly and to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of this Parish.

I would like to thank my fellow councillors for their support and hard work throughout the year and I look forward to working will you all in the coming months.

Chairman S Henley  
21 May 2018