



Stratton Parish News

Published by, Stratton St Margaret Parish Council

Autumn in Stratton

Welcome to the budget-focused fourth issue of Stratton Parish News.

As we all prepare to switch on the heating as the nights draw in and the evenings become colder, the Parish Council turns its mind to all things financial.

This quarter the newsletter will be focusing on the financial machinations of the Parish Council. Autumn sees the Council and its committees focusing on the preparation of the annual budget for 2010/2011. The challenge is to ensure value for money, a reduction in operating costs, increased transparency and a focused eye on both monitoring expenditure and ensuring that any expenditure demonstrates good value.

To keep abreast of Council discussions why not log onto its website. All Council and Committee meeting agendas and minutes are published there and you can see how the budget is developed.

Is it too soon to wish everyone a very happy Christmas, Festive season and New Year? Probably not! We should all be able to purchase our Easter Eggs to enjoy on the 25th December.



Outdoor fun at the open day.



Stratton Open Day goes European

Saturday 5th September saw the second Stratton Community Leisure Centre Open Day. The weather was kind and the day was enjoyed by all those who attended. 30 helium filled balloons were released in aid of Prospect Hospice with one being found as far a field as Chalmazel France by Miss Michele Barre and she kindly got in touch. The balloon had travelled over 1,000 kilometres and Michele found it whilst looking for mushrooms in the local forest.

Wild Flowers in Stratton

By John Ball, founder of 'FAB' (wild Flowers And Butterflies)

Decades ago, all parkland was manicured and very nature "un-friendly", but people now expect wildlife; birds, animals, flowers and butterflies, to be there too.

It is not as easy as it seems, because ground still has to be economical to manage, and not too untidy or dangerous for public use. And it is surprisingly difficult to get wildflowers established. As a result, few councils have achieved very much.

I have been privileged to have had warm support from Stratton St Margaret Parish Council over many years, while I worked out how to fit wildflowers into your parkland, especially at Merton Fields and Church Park.

The trick, you see, is to get the fertility down. Rich ground makes grass, nettles and other 'bad guys' take over, leaving no room for the wildflowers. But once you get the phosphate level down, suddenly something miraculous happens, the weeds stop growing and the wildflowers bloom!

So come and take a look next spring and summer at all the wildflowers we now have growing abundantly.

Primroses and cowslips in April. The deep blue Aquilegia and yellow rattle in June. The wonderful yellow birds foot trefoil (feeding the common blue butterfly) and the deep red 'black' knapweed in the meadows in July, and the final August

climax of wetland plants such as the vivid Purple loosestrife alongside clumps of the bright yellow fleabane.

In October we cut it all down, taking away the material, and the cycle starts again. Simple.

The wildflowers didn't just appear of their own accord, nor will they survive if put under stress, but with some sympathetic management by council staff and public support (don't let dog poo enrich the soil – use the bins!), you should have better and better displays of 'FAB' (wild Flowers And Butterflies) to brighten up your day and make everyone proud of the environment we live in.



Flea Bane



Bettony



Blue Bells

Parish Updates

Corporate Strategy

As part of the Audit Report, the Parish Council is in the early stages of developing a three year Corporate Strategy to help identify future investment, service delivery, strategic priorities and revenue expenditure. Through this document it proposes to clarify how it intends to go forward in the next few years. It is hoped that this will be launched at the Annual Parish Assembly in April 2010.

Quality Council

Progress on Stratton St Margaret Parish Council's application to achieve Quality Status and become a Quality Council is progressing very well. The Council is hoping it will be able to inform parishioners as to whether or not it has been successful very soon so look out for the next edition of Stratton Parish News for more information.

Fun Running

Lee Plank, one of Stratton St Margaret Parish Council's grounds team is entering the London Marathon (25th April 2010) to help raise money for The Anthony Nolan Trust. If you would like to know more about the trust information is available on their website www.anthonynolan.org.uk and if you would like to sponsor Lee please contact the office (01793) 823761.

Focus On... The Finance Committee

The Finance Committee meets bi-monthly on the last Tuesday of the relevant month. It is chaired by Cllr Martyn Cook and the Vice Chair is Cllr Gerry Lawson. The Committee monitors expenditure, ensuring that value for money is achieved and oversees the annual budgeting process.

Other responsibilities include the annual review of Standing Orders, Financial

Regulations, Human Resources and risk assessments.

The Finance Committee is charged with developing the strategic role of the Council and is open to new ideas such as Participatory Budgeting. Over the next few months the Committee will discuss this opportunity and, if adopted, it will probably be launched at the Annual Parish

Assembly which will be held on Tuesday 20th April 2010.

The Staff Sub-Committee is a sub-committee of the Finance Committee and is directly responsible for all staffing matters. It meets as and when required and the business normally considered is of a confidential nature as it deals directly with staffing issues.

Budget Time

This year it will be a particularly difficult task bearing in mind the current economic climate and the focus on trying to reduce operating costs across Council services.

The budget is split into two distinct areas; Capital and Revenue expenditure.

Revenue expenditure relates to the day to day costs of the Council and covers elements such as utility bills, staff wages, machinery repairs, leases, rents, rates, insurance and other general expenditure that enables the Council to function.

Many of the revenue expenses are out of the normal control of the Council, and above-inflation hikes in gas and electricity prices over the last few years have hit Council costs hard. Fuel costs have also affected operational costs.

Capital expenditure is aimed at continual investment into items such as new play equipment for the recreation areas, replacement machinery to enable Council services to maintain efficiency and the various rolling programmes in operation.

Unfortunately, whilst costs have risen quite dramatically over the past few years, income has been on a steady decline, especially at the Stratton Community Leisure Centre. Income at this venue has reduced by £42,000 over the past three years and Council, through the Community

Centre Committee, is endeavouring to tackle this decline in income. A focus has been placed on improving health and fitness income through increased use of the newly improved gym. To this end, Council has entered into an agreement with Alliance Leisure to train, market and advise Council on strategic improvements.

Going hand in hand with this is a recently commissioned feasibility study of the centre to try to determine which areas are losing money and what Council can do to address that issue. This study, being undertaken by S&P Architects and Sports Solutions GB, is progressing well and opportunities to help realise proposals such as an all weather playing surface at the Leisure Centre are being actively pursued.

The Parish Council is committed to attaining best value for money and will be identifying cost savings where it can. The final budget will be adopted by Full Council at its meeting on Tuesday 26th January 2010 when it will set the precept for 2010/2011. That meeting is open to the public and if you wish to see how Stratton St Margaret Parish Council intends to deliver its services and how much it will cost, please come along. You would be most welcome.

Annual Audit

The Parish Council was once again given an unqualified Audit opinion regarding its financial recording.

At the Full Council meeting in September, Mr Peter Smith from the Audit Commission presented Stratton St Margaret Parish Council's Annual Governance Statement for the year 2008/2009.

There were no material errors in the financial statement. However, the Audit Commission did issue a qualified "except for" conclusion on the Council's arrangements to secure value for money. Following the agreement of an action plan to address this qualification, Council is working extremely hard to improve its delivery of strategic priorities, secure sound financial health and improve its financial reporting to make it more transparent.

A full copy of the Annual Governance Report and the Annual Statement of Accounts can be downloaded from the Parish Council's website.

Local Democracy Day

As part of its Community Engagement and Democracy and Citizenship policies, the Council held a Local Democracy event on Thursday 15th October 2009 at the Meadowcroft Community Rooms. The day was aimed at providing

information on Stratton St Margaret Parish Council and local government in general. There was an opportunity to meet local councillors, discuss future projects, view the Open Spaces Master Plan draft proposals and meet staff.

The Parish Council has two vacancies for councillors within the Coleview Ward if you would like to get involved in the work of the parish council or learn more about role of councillors please contact the Clerk.

Grant Awards

Over the past few months Stratton St Margaret Parish Council has made a number of grant awards to various local organisations to help to fund their work.

The Crocodile Lunch Club

In April 2009 the Parish Council awarded the Crocodile Lunch Club £7,360 to help towards the cost of hiring the Meadowcroft Community Centre to enable the Club to meet on a weekly basis. The Club is a community lunch club for the over 60's within the Parish. A hot meal with pudding and a hot drink is provided for a £2 fee. It provides a much needed social resource, especially for those living alone.

Caring Matters Now

In April 2009 the Parish Council awarded a grant of £180 to help finance a fundraising event on the Meadowcroft playing field. The day was a success and will help fund research into Congenital Melanocytic Naevi (CMN) Research. A CMN is a mole that a baby is born with and it can be any size and on any part of the skin.

Coleview Community Lunch Club Over 60s

A grant of £250 was awarded to this community lunch club for the over 60's which provides a hot meal with pudding, tea and biscuits for a £3 fee. It provides a much needed social resource, particularly for those living in Lower Stratton, Coleview and Nythe.

Beechcroft Thursday Group

A grant of £600 was awarded to the Beechcroft Thursday Group. The group meets once a fortnight at the Meadowcroft Community Centre and enjoys talks, demonstrations and quizzes.

Upper Stratton Baptist Church Youth Project

At the beginning of summer the Parish Council was approached by Chris Priddy, Youth Minister of the USBC, requesting financial support for a project that the youth team was going to carry out. A grant of £90 was awarded by the Council at its meeting in July 2009 to provide refreshments to the young people with whom the project was aiming to engage. Following the success of this, a further grant of £450 has been awarded to help fund further work with young people in the Upper Stratton area.

The Limbless Society

A grant of £500 was awarded to this self help group for amputees and their partners in the local area. It offers visiting and counselling services as well as social activities and outings.

Swindon Rugby Club

A grant of £800 was given to the Swindon Rugby Club to help provide a full rugby kit for the junior members of the Club. The Club has over fifty coaches and two hundred junior/mini players up to the age of seventeen.

If you wish to make a grant application to Stratton St Margaret Parish Council, please contact the Member Services Officer, Deborah Lawrence, to obtain a grant application form.

debbie.lawrence@strattonstmargaret.gov.uk

Football Pitch Hire

The council has football pitches which are available to hire out. 2 pitches for adults on a Saturday PM, juniors on Sunday AM and 2 for under 10's are available at Meadowcroft plus 2 junior pitches at Greenbridge recreation area. Pitches are available to clubs who play on a regular basis. If you would like more information or prices please contact Carol Sandry at the parish office **carol@strattonstmargaret.gov.uk**



Footpaths

The Recreation Committee at a recent meeting discussed the problems caused by overhanging hedges and branches along footpaths especially for partially sighted people. The parish council would like households to consider if their hedges are causing obstructions to footpaths users.



Council Meetings

Stratton St Margaret Parish Council is committed to making local government open and accessible. All meetings are open to the public and press and are held on Tuesdays.

Date (2009)	Council/Committee	Time	Chair
24th November	Council	7.30pm	Cllr Owen
1st December	Quality Council	6.30pm	Cllr Cook
1st December	Planning	7.30pm	Cllr Mrs Day
8th December	Allotments & Cemeteries	7.30pm	Cllr Mrs Spry
15th December	Planning	6.30pm	Cllr Mrs Day
15th December	Finance	7.30pm	Cllr Cook
Date (2010)	Council/Committee	Time	Chair
5th January	Planning	7.30pm	Cllr Mrs Day
12th January	Community Centre	7.30pm	Cllr Lawson
19th January	Planning (if required)	6.30pm	Cllr Mrs Day
19th January	Quality Council	7.30pm	Cllr Cook
26th January	Full Council (Precept meeting)	7.30pm	Cllr Owen
2nd February	Planning	7.30pm	Cllr Mrs Day
9th February	Recreation & Highways	7.30pm	Cllr Roberts
16th February	Planning (if required)	7.30pm	Cllr Mrs Day
23rd February	Finance	7.30pm	Cllr Cook

The meetings listed are scheduled to take place during November 2009 and the end of February 2010.

Please note that sometimes additional meetings are called depending on the level of business requiring Council consideration. Prior to the meetings all agendas are placed on parish notice boards and the website and following each meeting the minutes are uploaded and can be viewed at

www.strattonstmargaret.gov.uk

Please note that some items of business have to be discussed in confidence when the public and press are excluded from the meeting. The reasons are:

- (a) engagement, terms of service, conduct and dismissal of employees;
- (b) terms of tenders, and proposals and counter proposals in negotiation of contracts;
- (c) preparation of cases in legal proceedings; and
- (d) the early stages of any dispute

Open Spaces Master Plan

As many of our regular readers will know, this particular project is nearing completion following six months of development and consultation.

At the "Your Stratton" Open Day, the Parish Council had a very successful public consultation on the draft proposals. Of particular interest to residents were the initial proposals for Melford Walk which did attract a number of negative comments. Also quite controversial was the proposal to provide additional allotments at Meadowcroft which also seemed to galvanise the local residents.

The main theme of the comments regarding Melford Walk was to retain the area as it is, with no additional seating or play equipment.

There have been some issues in the past regarding seating and gathering of young people. Many long term residents, do not want to revisit those issues.

All of these comments will be taken on board and will help to mould the final proposals which will be available on the Council's website when completed.

When draft proposals are put forward it is normally assumed that they will be implemented. This will not necessarily be the case with the Master Plan. The aim is to identify and address the following:

- The current provision of play equipment and open space within the Parish
- How that current provision meets local, regional and national requirements
- What improvements could take place to help meet the above requirements
- How the implementation of those improvements could be carried out
- How much any implementation would cost

The findings should help to inform future investment programming by Stratton St Margaret Parish Council. What the Plan will not do is require the Parish Council to carry out any of the suggestions contained therein.

Stratton Community Leisure Centre

News and information from the Stratton Community Leisure Centre and Health and Fitness studio



Stratton Community Leisure Centre



Wayne and Anne in the Fitness Suite

Welcome to our team

Sarah Little, Operations Manager Sports and Fitness, joined initially as a centre assistant and has worked throughout the centre gaining an understanding of the industry and, the needs of the community within the Fitness field. Sarah believes "that access to a good quality fitness facility with motivational staff and the ability to progress and enhance your wellbeing should be available to all at a price and level of comfort that suits everyone".

Anne Harris, Fitness Instructor, has worked hard to bring fitness to the community through new motivational classes, and an enthusiasm to promote a healthier life style to all and partnerships with health organisations.

Wayne Proberts, Fitness Instructor, Wayne enjoys the challenges and demands that modern day living has on the body. Creative programs and an ability to work with people who are training for specific projects with high level competitiveness has added to Wayne's portfolio of expertise.

Your Gym

"We are not just a gym but a fitness solution..."

Stratton Fitness Studio offers a range of membership packages to address all your health and fitness needs without putting a strain on your pocket. For as little as 62p per day you can change your life for the better.

Our direct debit and annual payment membership packages provides you with an opportunity to join the fitness

studio and exercise classes as well as benefiting from the use of all the sports facilities at a more attractive rate. You can also book sports activities up to six days in advance.

Our prices are as follows:

Committed Membership

Only £18.50 per month by direct debit with a minimum sign up of 6 months

Non committed Membership

£25.00 per month by direct debit with the right to cancel with one calendar months notice.

Annual Membership

A "one off" payment of £222.00, your "commitment" is rewarded by the gaining of an extra month's membership – 13 months for the price of 12

New Spinning Classes

January 2010 will see the introduction of spinning classes up to four times a week. Each class has ten spaces. Please contact the centre on 07193 825525 to find out more and book a place.

Fitness Classes Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Aerobics 10.00-11.00 am	Young at Heart 9.30-12.00 noon	Dancercise 10.00-11.00am	Young at Heart 9.30-12.00 noon	Tai Chi 9.30-10.30am	Teen Gym 9.30-10.30am
Circuits 1.45-2.30pm	Body Conditioning 6.00-7.00pm	Walking Club 11.45-1.30pm	Legs, Tums & Bums 6.15-7.00pm		Teen Gym 10.30-11.30am
Body Tone 6.00-7.00pm		Teen Gym 6.00-7.00pm	Pilates 8.30-9.30pm		
Fitness Yoga 7.40-8.20pm		Stretch n Flex 6.30-7.30pm			
Teen Gym 5.00-6.00pm					

Your Stratton Horticultural Show

The Sixth Horticultural and Craft Show was held on Saturday 5th September as part of the Community Leisure Centre Open Day.

Our sixth Horticultural and Craft Show took place within the main hall with displays of vegetables, fruit, flowers, children's pictures and adult handcraft and of course the scrummy cookery section with sponge & fruit cakes and an array of various preserves. The adult categories were awarded a certificate and a prize whilst the children were awarded a certificate and a rosette.

The Arkells Cup for the "Best In Show" was awarded to **Mr Bolton** for his mixed vegetable selection.



Mr Bolton's winning display

Following the successful Stratton in Bloom competition this year, the winners were as follows

Gardens Without Lawns

- 1st Place** Mr and Mrs Reeve,
2nd Place Mr & Mrs Glastonbury,
3rd Place Mr & Mrs Churches,

Gardens With Lawns

- 1st Place** Mr Herbert,
2nd Place Mrs Simpkins and Mr Ackrill,
3rd Place Mrs Sabin,

Hanging Baskets / Troughs / Containers

- 1st Place** Mrs Daville,
2nd Place Mrs Woolford,
3rd Place Mrs Lipska,

Overall Winner of Stratton in Bloom

Mr and Mrs Reeve,

Jingle bells, jingle bells

Shops are stacking their shelves with goodies and music is starting to resemble the sounds of Christmas. Come along with your friends and work colleagues for a fun night filled with the sounds of Manhattan Nights Disco and a scrum-diddley-umptious traditional three course menu.

Dates available:

12th, 18th and 19th December 2009

For more information a booking form and a chat call our team on **01793 825525** or at leisureinfo@strattonstmargaret.gov.uk

New Years Eve

Send out the old year with a "Bop" and bring in the New Year in with a "Bang"

Family fun filled night, children welcome when accompanied by an adult. 7 o'clock until Midnight.

Decorated tables, good food and beverages and childrens entertainer

Tickets available from 19th Oct 2009

Prices: £9.55 members, £10.55 non members, child/senior members £5.45 and child/senior non members £6.45

Dance the Night Away

Saturday 19th December

7pm in the Main Hall –
Mainstreamers Dance Band

Tickets: £5.00 members
£7.00 non members

Saturday 13th February 2010

Jubilee Dance Band

Tickets: £5.00 members
£7.00 non members

Congratulations

The last edition of the Stratton Parish News offered free entry into the draw to win a

"Free Childs Bouncy Castle Party At The Centre"

The lucky winner was Jordan Taylor of Stratton. **Here's to a truly bouncing time!**

Win! This issue you have the chance of winning one of five 2 month gym passes for Stratton Health and Fitness Studio

Simply enter your details below and return this form to the address at the bottom to have a chance of being one of our lucky winners

Name: Tel:

Address:

Email:

Return To: Council Offices, Addison Crescent, Upper Stratton, Swindon SN2 7JX
All entries must be in by 21st December 2009

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

We at Wiltshire Wildlife Trust are also very keen on composting as it is a great way to help reduce climate change, currently the greatest threat to wildlife.

Composting is a natural process, allowing food and garden waste to break down into a useful product for the garden. Conversely, when things rot in landfill, the lack of air causes the production of methane gas, which is 21 times more powerful as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Also the more people who compost at home, the fewer lorry journeys will be needed to transport waste on the roads.

There are many other advantages too – it's good for the soil, encourages insects and worms which in turn provide food for

birds, hedgehogs and other wild animals.

About half the contents of the average wheelie bin could be composted. You can put in all your small boxes. Don't worry about chemicals in the dyes – they are all vegetable dyes nowadays and the shiny surfaces are a natural clay glaze. Also compostable are paper bags (e.g. sugar, flour bags), shredded paper, used pet bedding (but not cat or dog litter) as well as Christmas wrapping paper – even the cellotape which is made of natural cellulose. These dry items provide ideal 'browns' for the compost mix, soaking up liquids and keeping the compost fresh and healthy.

Put your boxes in whole, they trap air pockets.

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust work closely with garden centres and many other organisations in the town. We've even worked out special methods of composting for people in flats and for businesses such as pubs and work's canteens. So, if you're not part of the great composting movement yet, hesitate no longer! Please feel free to give me a call if you would like further information.

Kate Robinson,
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Swindon
Tel: 01793 814823
Email: kater@wiltshirewildlife.org

Contact information

Parish Councillors Ward Key: **C** Coleview, **SM** Stratton St Margaret, **SP** St Philips, **LCN** Lower Coleview & Nythe

SM - Mrs B Archer

15 Bourton Avenue, Stratton St Margaret, SWINDON, SN3 4LY
822263

SP - Mr M R Cook

26 St Philips Road, Upper Stratton, SWINDON, SN2 7QH
825535

SM - Mrs C A Day

125 Grange Drive, Stratton St Margaret, SWINDON, SN3 4JY
823943

SM - Mrs C Ennis

Seagulls, 6 Crispin Cl, Stratone Village, SWINDON, SN3 4XH
Contact via office

LCN - Mr P J B Eyre

40 Trajan Road, Stratton St Margaret, SWINDON, SN3 4BS
Contact via office

SP - Mrs E A Foley

7 Dockle Way, Upper Stratton, SWINDON, SN2 7LQ
822110

SP - Mr J Foley

7 Dockle Way, Upper Stratton, SWINDON, SN2 7LQ
822110

LCN - Mr D K Holmes

89 Wheeler Avenue, Upper Stratton, SWINDON, SN2 7HL
520017

SP - Mr G Lawson

24 Bradley Road, Upper Stratton, SWINDON, SN2 7QB
704063

SP - Mrs A L Murphy

2 Orchard Grove, Upper Stratton, SWINDON, SN2 7QR
337144

SP - Mr P Owen BEM

192 Meadowcroft, Upper Stratton, SWINDON, SN2 7LH
822164

SP - Mrs T Page

13 Haig Close, Upper Stratton, SWINDON, SN2 7QN
825481

C - Mr D R Roberts

27 Sand Hill, Shrivenham, Nr SWINDON, SN6 8BQ
782144

SM - Mrs P M Roberts

27 Sand Hill, Shrivenham, Nr SWINDON, SN6 8BQ
782144

SM - Mr R A Smith

39 Watermead, Stratton St Margaret, SWINDON, SN3 4WE
831190

LCN - Mrs P Spry

1 Mayfield Close, Nythe, SWINDON, SN3 3NH
485528

SM - Mr M Spry

1 Mayfield Close, Nythe, SWINDON, SN3 3NH
485528

SP - Mr P A Steele

25 Okus Grove, Upper Stratton, SWINDON, SN2 7QA
723744

C - Mrs R Tran

44 Burden Close, Stratton St Margaret, SWINDON, SN3 4HE
826283

LCN - Mr J Tray

3 Cairndow Way, Stratton St Margaret, SWINDON
07813170202

C - Mr W Young-Powell

59 Nythe Road, Coleview, SWINDON, SN3 4AW
825703

Clerk of The Council

Mr P Russell, Council Offices, Addison Crescent, Upper Stratton SWINDON, Wiltshire, SN2 7JX
clerk@strattonstmargaret.gov.uk

Local Member of Parliament

Michael Wills, MP - 01793 481016

Stratton Community Leisure Centre

Grange Drive, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 4JY
Tel : 01793 825525 Fax : 01793 832201
E: leisureinfo@strattonstmargaret.gov.uk

Swindon Borough Council Ward Members

David Sammels, 337477 St Philips Ward
Paul Findlow, 879959 St Philips Ward

Russell Holland, 07999566623 St Margaret Ward

Mark Edwards 709834 St Margaret Ward

Ray Fisher 07791500164 St Margaret Ward

Glenn Smith 725649 Covingham & Nythe

Dale Heenan 480099 Covingham & Nythe

Phil Young 729732 Covingham & Nythe

Sinead Darker 337591 St Philips Ward