# Stratton Parish Serving the Community





## **PARISH ASSEMBLY 2017 REPORTS**

## What is a Parish **Assembly?**

The Stratton St Margaret Parish Council Annual Assembly is the opportunity for residents of the Council has achieved during the Council welcomed the audience to the 2017 Annual Assembly on Tuesday 25 April at Grange from the event.

Sam Walker's low impact class knits for dementia patients.

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**GRANGE LEISURE ZUMBATHON PAGE 11** 



**COMMUNITY GRANTS 2016 PAGE 6 & 7** 

## **Chairman's Annual Message**

## Councillor Joe Tray

Since the last Annual Assembly the Council has welcomed new Councillors to Stratton St Margaret Parish Council. Barrie Jennings and Steve Benson joined the Council to represent the community in Lower Coleview.



Councillor Joe Tray, Chairman of the Parish Council

## **Open Spaces Management**

Significant changes have taken place to the management of open spaces in the Parish this year as the Council has taken over the management of this service from Swindon Borough Council on 1st April 2017. The Parish Council openly opposed to having these services forced upon them from the Borough Council, having conducted a Parish Poll back in February 2016 where the voters, albeit a small turnout out of just 7.8%, sent a clear message to reject the proposal.

Swindon Borough Council made it very clear they would no longer provide this service. The Council was faced with the possibility that the Parish would soon become a place where grass would not be cut, paths would be littered, hedges and trees overgrown and waste bins not emptied. The Council and its Councillors who live and take pride in the Parish were faced with a difficult decision and the decision was made in the best interest for the local area - but of course this decision comes at a cost to the precept.

However, in just a few weeks of overseeing these services improvements across the Parish can already be seen. The feedback has been positive, on both improvement to the quality and the frequency of grounds maintenance. Residents are working together with the Council to tell them about the areas they are proud of in the Parish of and those that need extra attention.

"The Parish Council is urging residents to communicate with the Stratton Open Spaces Management Team so that we can work together to make the Parish a better place to live, work and visit."

## **Beechcroft Library Closure**

The Parish is also faced with the closure of Beechcroft Library again due to Borough Council cuts in services. This is an important part of our community used by many, from the very young to the more senior, not only book borrowing but use of the computers, help and advice and even fitness classes in the building.

The Council is looking at ways to support the Library service and enhance the experience at Beechcroft, such as with a drop in Advice Centre, Age UK Information Point and a Coffee Shop. Obviously these ideas come at a cost and the Council will be looking at sponsors and fundraising projects.

## **Community Engagement**

The Parish Council is very proud to be developing partnerships with local businesses and community groups. Such as Arkells, B&Q, Stratton Community Art Group, Stratton Juniors and many more who help the Parish Council to help serve the community of Stratton. Over the years the Parish Council has awarded grants to many organisations to help them with start-up and running costs.

Additionally over the past year we have organised a number of events that have brought our community together. These include the annual Zumbathon raising over £1,200 for CALM. As well as an Easter event, Stratton Festival, Stratton Stroll and Christmas Extravaganza all of which bring thousands of visitors to the Parish every year and help showcase what a fantastic place Stratton is to live in and enjoy.

There were record numbers turning out for the annual Remembrance Sunday service and Community Carols both of which are held at the Peace Memorial. Also at the Peace Memorial site the Council has installed a new flag pole which had its inaugural flag hoist in March this year on the Commonwealth Day where the Council was one of 900 communities flying a flag that day.

## **Parish Council Staffing**

Staffing changes has seen new faces join the democratic team and include Louise Skittrall who joins the Council as an HR Advisor. We also said a very fond and sad farewell to Mark Beazley who left the business in January.

The democratic team continues to develop professionally with several of its Officers embarking on qualifications ranging from accounting, masters in business administration, degree in community governance, chain saw, cellar management, security and safety management.

Thanks to all the staff at the Parish past and present who work hard to make Stratton St Margaret Parish a special place to live and enjoy.

## **Open Spaces Committee**

## (Chair: Councillor Teresa Page)

### **Allotments**

Some of the larger plots at our allotments in St Philip's and White Hart will be divided and where we have neglected plots, they will be reclaimed by the Council and re-let. The current waiting list is very low. Unfortunately, vandalism may raise its head now and again at our sites. Other developments included the installation of bee hives on the White Hart Allotment and the return of the allotment competition this year. More details to follow soon but the winners will be announced at a new event for the Parish Council - our very first Autumn Fayre to be held on Saturday 16 September at Meadowcroft Community Centre.

## **Burial Grounds**

In Lower Stratton we have places for burials and cremated remains. The Council will run out of places within the next few years and we of course continue to look for land. Our policy on burials and cremation plots remain the same - first generation only.

## Claridge's Pond

There have been meetings with Swindon Borough Council and the Environment Agency to learn more about the area and its history. The lease for the land at Claridges from the Borough Council to the Parish Council is not affected by the new lease for the fishing rights to a fishing club. The lease for the land remains the same and unchanged. The new lease will govern fishing rights, once implemented, it will formalise and help to manage fishing and prevent illegal fishing. It will also help to manage the site it self. There are three fishing clubs currently interested in the pond.

## Play areas

The Council has a great team who is very active in putting things right and it relies on local residents to keep them updated if something goes wrong.

## **Fly Tipping**

The Council's Open Spaces Team is deemed capable of clearing fly tipping as soon as possible. The Team is educated to the precise obligations and do not clear anything toxic and will only deal with cases up to the equivalent of up to an estate car boot. However the Council can report all fly tipping to the Borough Council when we are too busy or it is toxic or too large. Fly tipping is illegal and comes with a fine.

### Staff

The Parish Council has employed another full time member of the team and a seasonal worker. Thanks to Lee Plank and his team for their work. Also thanks to Mr Saunders who is Acting Manager for Open Spaces and the Parish Council Office Team for all their background work.

## Fly tipping blights our landscape

When rubbish is illegally dumped in quantity it is known as fly tipping. It tends to occur on public land areas such as road verges where people can easily

stop, deposit the rubbish and then make a speedy exit without being seen. When this occurs the council will usually come and clear it up as soon as they can but would obviously rather not have the problem. Fly

tipping does happen on private land sometimes too and where this occurs it is the responsibility of the unfortunate landowner to clear it or cover the costs to have it cleared. Farms and farmers are particularly vulnerable to this.

Fly tipping can be very expensive and time consuming to clear. If toxic material is present such as chemicals or asbestos then a specialist team of trained people is required to remove it. Building waste is a very common type of fly tipping as is vehicles or vehicle parts, such as tyres. Dumped garden waste is classed as fly

tipping too and is extremely common. This can also be heavy and difficult to remove.

Fly tipping is unfortunately a common problem in Stratton St Margaret and it blights our landscape. On average our

> Open Spaces Management Team collects two incidences each week. It has been estimated by the British Government that fly tipping

costs the British tax payer more than £50 million each year. We urge

people not to do it and to report any incidence of it to us as soon as they see it. Where possible photograph the items and car reg at the scene, make a note of the location, time and date and call the Stratton Open Spaces (SOS) Management Team on 01793 833432 or email sosquery@ strattonstmargaret.gov.uk.

Residents of Swindon can take their household waste to the recycling centre at Cheney Manor Industrial Site but are advised to check regulations first on the Swindon.gov.uk website.

For more details about SOS Management see our dedicated web pages.



## **Property Management Committee**

## (Chair: Councillor Tim Page)

## **Chapel at Green Road**

After a very successful clean up job by local volunteers the Chapel is looking shinier than its done for many years. The Council is also looking at the future of this iconic Stratton building. Suggestions so far have been an intimate space for weddings, a film location and exhibition space for artists. In the meantime the Parish Council will be ensuring that the building is made safe and water tight until future decisions are made.

## **Dorcan Recreation Ground** & Sports Pavilion

The Parish Council has taken back the sports pavilion and recreation ground from Swindon Rugby and is looking at future ideas for this unit and how the area could be best utilised in the future. Any ideas are welcomed.

## **Meadowcroft Community Centre**

The Council continues to let the Community Centre and offices to Swindon Youth for Christ, who in turn manage the Centre's bookings. Regular user groups include Pilates, child minders, Slimming World Stratton Camera Cub and more. These groups are regular block bookers who return to the centre every year. The current leases arrangement with the Parish Council will cease next year when we will be reviewing the future management of the Centre.

Consultations continue for the refurbishment of the playing fields, sports and pavilion and community centre. These plans are dependent upon a number of grants and third party stakeholders who could become partners with the Council. One such partnership is with Stratton Juniors, who currently rent the Parish Council's playing fields to enable hundreds of children to play football every week. The Parish Council awarded a grant to Stratton Juniors to help toward the cost of a defibrillator and

> paid for all the installation costs. The unit is now installed and available during football matches in the event of an emergency.

## Grange Leisure



## **Sports & Fitness**

Grange Leisure Sports and Fitness has had a fantastic year with lots of successful projects going on, as well as an increase in income and memberships.

They have extended the gym team with two new part time fitness instructors. The Parish Council has also invested in new equipment including state of the art treadmills, and improved the fitness timetable adding new classes to meet customer demands for more weekend classes. Existing community partnerships such as Swindon MIND, Parkinsons, Uplands School, Stratton Education remain solid and the artificial grass pitch is more popular than ever, being fully booked almost every night of the week.

## **Bar & Catering**

The Leisure Centre's catering income has increased to almost 45% from two years ago. However with the school dinner contract sadly coming to an end in July this year we are expecting to see this fall.

Whilst Grange Bar has recently undergone a restructure within its team and the bar is also having a bit of a facelift and a new deal with Heineken, which has opened the doors for new products and sponsorship opportunities.

## **Events & Functions**

Our community event bookings remain steady, with more and more groups approaching the Centre for regular block bookings.

Throughout 2016 we had (almost!) one of the venue rooms booked every weekend for parties and functions. Our wedding and party packages continue to be very popular with bookings being taken for summer 2018. The Centre's new premises licence is now in place which enables the Centre to put on community film, clubs and outdoor theatre.

> Contact the Parish Council on 823761 or email info@strattonstmargaret.gov.uk

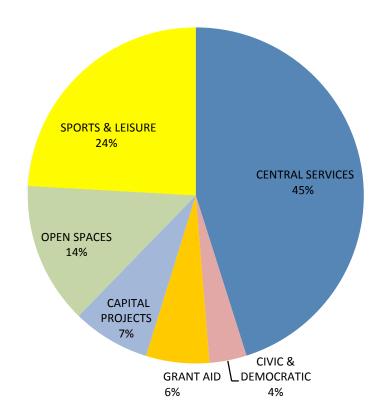
## **Finance & General Purpose Committee**

## (Chair: Councillor Joe Tray)

The pie chart on the right shows an indication on what the Parish Precept is spent on.

- **1.** The Parish Council is having to take on Street Smart services from Swindon Borough Council in 2017 - 2018
- **2.** A reduction in our Council Tax support grant by 13% in 2017 - 2018
- **3.** Major work on the Grange Leisure centre building that included vital electrical works, plumbing work and roof repairs.

The increase of 27% is an annual increase to each household of £35.74 per annum or £2.98 per month or 10p per day. This is compared to some Parishes that have had to make 100% increases to enable them to take on some of the services from the Borough Council.



## **Planning and Highways Committee**

(Chair: Councillor Stuart Leach)

Although not a decision-making body, this committee meets regularly, twice a month, to look at planning applications within the parish and comment on developments in our neighbouring parishes.

Parishioners are always welcome, to air their views and to observe our workings. The committee can 'call-in' to the Borough Council those plans it believes to be contentious. Committee members are kept informed concerning roadworks as it affects, or might affect, roads locally. As part of our remit, singly or together, we make site visits to see proposed buildings, extensions, alterations and developments in person to back up interpretations of plans filed at Swindon Borough Council.

Over the last year this committee has been involved with the proposed waste gasification plant at Keypoint. Members made two fact finding visits to similar establishments to inform their decision making. The electrification of the railway has meant plans have been considered by us for the Ermin Street Roman bridge. Considerations on the installation of masts to carry 4G computer signals have met with lively debate, as has proposals for wood fired power on two of our industrial estates.

Latterly this committee is considering a neighbourhood plan, to set out a proposed strategy for all of Stratton St Margaret for the future. We hope to give some definition to housing, leisure retail, industrial, burial and green areas, to attempt to safeguard the Parish against unplanned or indiscriminate developments. The impact of the Eastern Villages around Kingsdown, South Marston and towards Wanborough will be monitored closely. Thanks are due to the committee members for their diligence all year.

## **Community Grants 2016**

Every year the Parish Council awards grants to community groups across Stratton St Margaret to help with start up and running costs to benefit the wider community. Nearly £10,000 was awarded in 2016 and here are a few articles from some of the recipients.

## **Stratton Advice Point**

Stratton Advice Point (SAP) is located in Upper Stratton Library Beechcroft Road. It was set up in 1985 to address a need identified in the local community and has been running continuously ever since. Indeed, research by AdviceUK indicates that SAP is the longest running, volunteer-led, independent advice agency in the UK.

SAP's aim is to help disadvantaged clients receive the welfare benefits that they are entitled to. This helps them to lead fuller lives, offsetting some of the isolation and health problems associated with poverty.

This service to the community is provided by SAP on an annual income of only £1000, which is very generously provided by Stratton Parish Council.

They estimate that they have helped clients to claim over £85,000 in benefits during the last 12 months alone. There has been a 25% increase in enquiries this year, particularly those relating to disability benefits such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Analysis of the enquiries shows that 48% of our clients are sick or disabled and 34% of our clients are over the age of 65.

The following examples illustrate the various ways that SAP can help:

- Drop-in benefit advice sessions in Upper Stratton Library every Thursday between 1.30 pm and 3.30 pm
- Benefit checks and advice on the welfare benefits that people may be entitled to
- Help with completing the relevant benefit claim forms
- Help with appeals when a welfare benefit claim is unsuccessful
- A website with access to a welfare benefits calculator so people can check their own entitlement to benefits.

For more information contact enquiries@strattonadvicepoint.co.uk or visit

www.strattonadvicepoint.co.uk



Willows Counselling in Old Town provides counselling for adults and trains new professional counsellors.

Willow is extremely grateful for the grant received last year from Stratton St Margaret Parish Council to support counselling for local clients.

When Willows was set up no counselling was available within the NHS. Their vision to provide this remains strong, as affordable counselling is increasingly difficult to access. Last year the service provided 2,500 counselling sessions to around 200 new clients living in Swindon and within 20 miles - counselling with many issues, including relationships, work stress, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, neglect and abuse.

The service has a small team of eight part-time staff and relies on around 80 amazing volunteers who provide professional counselling and supervision,

raise funds, maintain the centre and give their time on reception and as trustees. They are a friendly bunch, so if anyone is looking for a chance to volunteer or gain skills in counselling please give them a call.

Willows is unusual due to their commitment to work with a client for as long as this is



beneficial to them. This enables issues to be more fully worked through and for changes to 'stick' in daily life in a way that lasts. A client's ability to pay is never a factor in offering counselling. As many of the clients have limited income, the service will seek grants and fundraise to subsidise the cost of counselling - on average around £30 per session.

01793-426650 / www.willowscounselling.org.uk / Facebook WillowsSwindon

## **Stratton Community Art Group**

The idea for an Art Group at the Grange started many months ago when Marilyn Trew and Ruth Wintle were working on the Parish Council's artist calendar. The art group was given a grant of £700 from Stratton St Margaret Parish Council to start the Stratton Community Art Group with the idea that it would be self funded in the future through member's small subs each week.

The group started in January this year and was an instant success with about 10 members. Since then it has grown to almost 20 members. Marilyn Trew, Ruth Wintle and Lisa Lane are the Volunteer Tutors and each week there is a tutorial covering varied aspects of

The group will exhibit the work of the members around the Leisure Centre. For most of their artists this will be the first time they will have publicly exhibited their work - something many of them probably never thought they would do, so please pop in and have a look.

painting and drawing.

Every one of the members will get something different from being included in the group and feedback so far has been that:

- It stops loneliness and gives something for people to look forward to each week
- It helps members to relax and lose themselves in something creative
- It keeps their minds active and so keeps them mentally well
- The members are able to make new local friends.

Part of their promise was to organise trips out and so they are going to Nature in Art in June this year and the trip will be paid for by some of the Parish Council grant.

> The members are also working on a Joint Project with the Wilts and Berks Canal Trust. They have asked to submit designs for a Calendar and Notelets to be produced by the Trust. Many members have been inspired by this and are working hard at researching and painting canal pictures.

"The group would like to thank the generosity of the Parish Council and staff at the Grange Leisure Centre who help set up the club each Monday morning, it's lovely to see a dream come true and be sustained for the good of the community. Thank you."

For more information about the class please call 0776 8440 2393.

## **Stratton Camera** Club

Camera Club first birthday. The Club now

has a healthy membership of 36 and is growing. This year will see another varied and interesting programme with two meetings per month. Stratton Camera Club is pleased to welcome new members and meets at Meadowcroft Community Centre. Refreshments are provided to encourage the social aspect of the club and encourage on their web page: www.strattoncamerclub.com.

clubs in the local area.

The Camera Club has built up an excellent working relationship with the Parish Council and local charities in the area by grant contributes to room rental and equipment, allowing the club to keep membership subscriptions to a minimum.

## Swindon 105.5

During the past year SWINDON 105.5 has carried out dedicated training sessions with young people with Aspergers, supported by Stratton St Margaret Parish Council's grant.

The grant helps people like Nathan and Lewis (pictured) who have teamed up and worked on a couple of projects. Nathan has produced features on Open Door, Music Alive and two fundraising concerts. Lewis is overcoming issues after bullying, finding a voice and confidence and is keen to spread understanding about autism. Both are also learning to work with their dyslexia. Nathan (left) sent his first email last month.

Other autistic young participants have recorded documentaries, one is currently working on a documentary about Daniel Gooch and helps new Station volunteers. Another lad, who also has a stammer and a confidence issue, has continued to develop and will be leaving for university in September. Matt, a Stratton college student, has developed audio and video production skills, which is also helping his college course.

"On behalf of all at SWINDON



## Grange Leisure going from STRENGTH TO STRENGTH





The Grange Fitness Team, would like to thank everyone who took part or donated in the Zumbathon 2017.

The instructors and everyone who came along to take part in our three hour long marathon of Zumba were all amazing! This year we raised £1,214.32 for CALM. It was a fantastic event & great to see the community come together for such a great cause.

The Tuesday Walking Football has grown into a huge success, mainly down to our dedicated football coach Ashley Green. Through his hard work we have been able to give football players over the age of 50 a second chance to participate in the slower yet competitive game of walking football. Join in every Tuesday from 2pm for £3 per session.

New treadmills have been installed in the gym and offer some exciting add-ons such as Spotify, YouTube and a handy bulletin board to see what classes are on and any events coming up. More exciting apps coming in September....

The Ben Nevis Fundraiser challenge for Swindon MIND & CALM is getting close. On Friday 16 June a team of 50 plus intrepid fitness fanatics go head to head with the highest point in the UK raising lots of money for two very worthy charities. If anyone would like to join the group, please contact Gary Turland on 01793 825525. Donations are coming in thick and fast – see Gary T or visit http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/ GrangeLeisureBenNevis2017 if you'd like to make a donation.

Family HIIT is a high intensity training session we run on Thursdays 5.15pm-6pm. This to is a brilliant fitness session brought to you by John Newman and designed for children and adults to train together at a challenging rate. Ages range from 10 years and up. Cost is inclusive with the Grange Gym membership or £3 per child and £5 per adult.

STUDENT MEMBERSHIPS FOR 3 MONTHS

Includes classes

For more information give us a call or check out our website.





Sam Walker's Low Impact Class knits for dementia patients

Friends and fitness fanatics who attend Sam Walker's Low Impact class at Grange Leisure Centre have joined forces and are putting their knitting needles to good use knitting Twiddlemuffs for patients with dementia.

Twiddlemuffs are knitted woollen muffs with items such as ribbons, large buttons or textured fabrics attached that patients with dementia can twiddle in their hands whilst on the wards at the Great Western Hospital in Swindon. Twiddlemuffs provide dementia sufferers a source of visual. tactile and sensory stimulation at the same time as keeping hands snug and warm.

The idea for the project came after Wendy Brown obtained a dementia muff pattern and brought it to Sam Walker's Low Impact Class at Grange Leisure. From that day on the knitting circle started. The group is now taking muffs to the GW

Hospital, local care homes and dementia clubs. "We are hoping that more friends will come forward to put their knitting skills to good use and make more Twiddlemuffs. They are an excellent way of helping to combat the restlessness and agitation that may be experienced by patients with dementia".

The group would like to thank the many ladies who knit, supply wool and all the goodies that go into the dementia muffs. A final word of thanks must go to Sam Walker who has enabled the fitness class to bring their knitting project to life.

If anyone would like to contribute to the project with donations of wool, oddments or full balls, plus decorations - large buttons or beads, ribbons, squishy things etc... will also be gratefully received. Simply leave donations at Grange Leisure on Grange Drive, Swindon, SN3 4JY.





## **Summer Football Sessions**

Grass Pitches every day during the whole of August.

Contact Reception 825525 for more information.



# WHAT'S ON

9th Beep Machines 80's

24th Quiz night

30th Karoke/Disco Night With DJ Rich

15th Quiz night

22nd Stratton Festival

22nd Stratton Stroll Darren Hunt Headlining

th The 58 Shakes 60s Rock 'n' Roll band

> Are you in a local band or a comedian? We want to hear from you... Please email chris.matthews@strattonstmargaret.gov.uk

## **AUTUMN FAYRE**

Meadowcroft **Community Centre** 

Saturday 16 September • Plant Sale • Fair Ground Midday - 5pm • Craft Stalls • Re-enactments





· Allotment Prize Giving

· Children's activities

## Stratton Stroll 29 July 2017

## Raising funds for our Chairman's Charity

Now in it's fifth year the infamous Stratton Stroll taking in live music, great company and great beer as you go!

We've got some fantastic bands lined up to play already. Stroll from pub to pub from midday until late. The route is:

2pm - 6pm

Kingsdown 12pm - 4pm 1pm - 5pm Crown

Grange Bar 3pm - 10pm Wheatsheaf 4pm – 8pm 7pm - 11pm **Rat Trap** 

**Blind Lemon Blues** Josie & The Outlaw Jenny Bracey **Newquay Times Waiting For Jack** 

**Darren Hunt** 

lan O'Regan

**Casual Ties Emily-Jane** The Laylow Band **Drew Bryant Get Carter** Zing



**New Inn** 

WWW.STRATTONSTMARGARET.GOV.UK



@SSMPCSwindon

**Fall from Ruin** 



LIVE MUSIC FROM:

**Find us on Facebook** 

## **Council Meetings**

Stratton St Margaret Parish Council is committed to making local government open and accessible. All of our meetings are open to the public and press and are held in the Stratton Suite, Grange Leisure, Grange Drive, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon, SN3 4JY. Before every meeting the Agenda can be viewed on noticeboards throughout the Parish and on our website. All minutes are uploaded on the website. Here is the current calendar until the end of 2017.

Date	Council/Committee	Start
May 2017		
23 May	Open Spaces	7pm
30 May	Planning & Highways	7pm
June 2017		
6 June	Property Management	7pm
13 June	Finance & General Purpose	7pm
20 June	Council	7pm
27 June	Planning & Highways	7pm
July 2017		
4 July	Open Spaces	7pm
11 July	Planning & Highways	7pm
18 July	Finance & General Purpose	7pm
25 July	Planning & Highway	7pm
August 2017		
8 August	Planning & Highways	7pm
22 August	Planning & Highways	7pm

Date	Council/Committee	Start	
September 2017			
5 September	Planning & Highways	7pm	
12 September	Property Management	7pm	
26 September	Planning & Highways	7pm	
October 2017			
3 October	Open Spaces	7pm	
10 October	Planning & Highways	7pm	
17 October	Property Management	7pm	
24 October	Planning & Highways	7pm	
November 2017			
7 November	Planning & Highways	7pm	
14 November	Finance & General Purpose	7pm	
28 November	Council	7pm	
28 November	Planning & Highways	7.15pm	
December 2017			
5 December	Open Spaces	7pm	
12 December	Planning & Highways	7pm	



## CONTACT INFORMATION

## **Parish Councillors**

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### **Area Sergeant:** PS 1989 COPELAND

**Community Police:** Stratton Neighbourhood Police Team PC Jack NEWMAN 1966 – Beat manager PCSO Stuart BIRD 6100

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