

Fighting to protect vital family services



Picture: Thousand Word Media

Mums with their children at the threatened Parliament Children's Centre

The Town Council has objected to proposals to close Stroud's only two children's centres, saying it will leave families at risk without vital support.

Gloucestershire County Council is proposing to redesign family support services in the county, so that money can be reinvested into children's safeguarding and social work.

It wants to reduce the 39 children's centres, which support families with children aged 0-5 years, it pays for across the county to 16.

There would be only two such centres in Stroud district - one in Dursley and one in Stonehouse.

The two children's centres in Stroud - in Old Bisley Road and Fiveways in Caincross - would become community-run and would not be staffed by professional staff.

At present, these two centres provide

a range of services including early years education, health and family support, counselling and a range of groups and courses for parents.

The Town Council has objected to the county council saying it will be a false economy as it will focus only on families with existing problems.

Families using the service agree.

"Many mums in this area do not drive or have access to a car," said mum Jennifer Wright.

"By taking away services here you are expecting the new mum with her newborn baby, who desperately needs some breast feeding advice, to travel the 7/8 miles to Stonehouse on a bus service that is currently being 'slimmed down' to save money. It won't work."

The county council consultation on the proposals ends on April 11.

Decision to shut court is 'loss to town'

Town Councillors are disappointed with the decision to close Stroud's Magistrates' Court.

They objected strongly to the closure stating that the decision would seriously impair Stroud residents' access to justice.

The Ministry of Justice has confirmed that all Stroud hearings will now be moved to Cheltenham Magistrates' Court, 14 miles away.

The closure is expected to take effect between July 16 and September 16.

The Town Council said: *"The original basis of the local magistrates' court was that local JPs reflected local values and knew their patch. This will break that link and further alienate people from the 'establishment'."*

Date set for High Street paving

The final sections of Stroud High Street will be resurfaced this year.

It follows three years of lobbying led by the Town Council.

The cobbles at the top of the High Street were replaced in 2012. There was a public outcry about the standard of the paving and the quality of materials used by the contractors.

The Town Council has contributed £20,000 so far and will contribute a further £9,000 so that higher quality materials can be used. Stroud District Council is also contributing.



Stroud Town Council offices are at Thanet House in London Road

Opening hours: **Mon-Thurs 10am-1.30pm, Fri 9.30am-12.30pm**

Phone: **01453 762817** Fax: **01453 753390**

email: **council@stroudtown.gov.uk** web: **www.stroudtown.gov.uk**

Play Rangers chalk up 100,000 visits

Play Gloucestershire, an award-winning charity whose Play Rangers run free, active outdoor play sessions in Stroud and across the county is celebrating a milestone.

Since it was launched in 2007, 100,000 visits to play sessions around Gloucestershire have been clocked up by almost 11,000 children and young people.

For several years Stroud Town Council has helped fund play sessions at Mason Road and Archway Gardens as part of its commitment to young people in the town.

Easter sessions run from 10-4pm and will be at Mason Road Playing Field on March 29 and April 5 and at Archway Gardens Play Space on March 31 and April 7.

Weekly after school play sessions run from 4-6pm. They resume on April 19 at Mason Road and run every Tuesday of term time. At Archway Gardens it is every Thursday from April 21.

Helping to bridge the gap

The Town Council is calling on people to work together to find a solution for a new bridge at Bowbridge.

Gloucestershire County Council planned to build a new bridge next to the historic brick river bridge with a continuous towpath underneath.

This would have involved replacing the river bridge as well, but that turned out to be too expensive, adding an extra £150,000 more to the £500,000 project.

Following lobbying by the Town Council, the county and district councils are working with the Stroud Valleys Canal Company, to develop a new alternative that is more appropriate.

Councillors say it is important to maintain the use of the towpath and ensure the safety of pedestrians.

Keep in touch

You will soon be able to keep up with Stroud Town Council news on Facebook. Look out for our new Facebook page.

The Town Council website is also getting a tidy up. It will be completed by this summer and we welcome your feedback.

Hall ready to see in next century

The windows in historic Lansdown Hall are ready to see in the next century, thanks to a major refurbishment project.

The existing glass in the large windows can crack and break because of the movement of the building's stone window frames.

Now Nick Hurst of Apple Design has come up with a solution and Dave Lush of DLS Church windows has created and installed bespoke stainless steel window frames.

They sit discreetly within the original stone windows and add strength and stability to the stone surrounds.

Mr Lush, who owns DLS Church Windows Ltd, is an expert in his field and has worked on windows in Gloucester, Lichfield, Derby and Coventry Cathedrals.

The work has been paid for from a £30,000 grant assisted by Gloucestershire Environmental Trust with landfill tax contributions donated by Cory Environmental.

Mr Lush has created new frames and replaced the glass in the five windows facing Bank Gardens. He has also replaced the leaded glass in the circular windows.

"We're using a modern technique to improve both the sound and heat insulation without affecting the



Dave Lush and Tim Clevely from DLS Church Windows at work in Lansdown Hall

character of this historic building," said Mr Lush.

It is part of the ongoing programme of major improvements to the hall, which is owned by Stroud Town Council.

Biffa Awards has contributed over £40,000 to the new extension. The balance of the Gloucestershire Environmental Trust grant, together with an award of £30,000 from the Garfield Weston Foundation has enabled the renovation, cleaning and repair of the stonework.

The Town Council bought Lansdown Hall in 2010 to save it from closure. It is run by a charitable trust and provides a community space for the town.

Find out about upcoming events please visit

www.lansdownhall.org

You can rent out the hall for as little as £22.50 an hour for events and from £12.50 an hour for rehearsals, classes or workshops.

New arts and culture fund launched

From April 2016 the Town Council will have three grant programmes including a new arts and culture fund to promote the arts in Stroud.

The Council has a strong record of supporting festivals and the arts. Last year grants were awarded to Stroud Fringe, Stroud Show, Stroud Film Festival, Hawkwood College's Seed Festival and to the Sacred Music Festival.

The objective of the Small Grants Programme is to support and encourage a diverse range of youth and community activities, initiatives and events that meet the needs of Stroud Parish residents. It provides small grants to organisations of between £50 and £500.

The Community Support Fund offers awards of between £500 and £3,000 to help groups and organisations that work to strengthen Stroud's community.

The new Arts and Culture Fund provides grants of between £500 and £5,000 (normally no more than £3,000) for projects and events that will benefit people in Stroud parish through cultural activity.

The next deadline for all grant applications is May 23. Application forms and further information are available from the town council offices or from www.strouttown.gov.uk

For more information about the arts and culture grants please contact the council by emailing council@strouttown.gov.uk

Helping you make your garden grow



Picture: Thousand Word Media

Amanda Godber, from Down to Earth, with Stroud Town Mayor Kevin Cranston

People struggling to maintain their gardens can get a helping hand from the Town Council.

It has approved an agreement worth up to £3,000 with Down to Earth Stroud for a gardening assistance scheme.

People who are unable to look after their garden due to age or illness are eligible to subsidised gardening support.

Amanda Godber, who runs Down to Earth Stroud, said that it can make a big difference to people's quality of life.

"If they were keen gardeners and now unable to care for their garden, it can be very distressing," said Amanda.

"Having the garden tidied up can make such a difference. This scheme is about supporting the vulnerable in our community."

"Our gardeners go above and beyond

their work - and allocated time - and will always make time to have a cup of tea and talk to someone."

It is open to people living in the Stroud parish and who are in receipt of housing benefit, PIP or higher level disability living allowance and have no able-bodied person living with them who could do the gardening. (A similar scheme for Stroud District Council tenants is also available through Down to Earth.)

They can receive up to 10 hours of gardening maintenance per property per year is available at a cost of £6 per hour per gardener.

For more information and to check eligibility please contact Down to Earth. Telephone **01453 70011** or email info@downtoearthstroud.co.uk Further details on www.downtoearthstroud.co.uk

Development Plan moves forward

The draft of an ambitious plan which will shape the development of Stroud for the next 20 years has been completed.

The Town Council has submitted the Neighbourhood Development Plan to Stroud District Council for examination.

Once that is done residents of Stroud parish on the electoral register will be able to vote on the plan in a referendum in August.

When it is completed and approved by the community, the plan will become a statutory planning document that can be used to support or challenge planning applications.

It is the first Neighbourhood plan to be submitted to the district council.

Over the past year more than 2,500 people were consulted in the creation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan. It was prepared by an independently chaired Steering Group set up by Stroud Town Council.

The plan has been praised by businesses and organisations including Historic England, the Federation of Small Businesses and the County Council.

The draft report focuses on three key themes – making Stroud town centre more welcoming, healthy and thriving.

Your town needs you

You can make a real difference to your community of Stroud by becoming a town councillor.

On May 5, residents will vote for representatives for all 18 seats on the town council.

To stand as a candidate for the town council you must be at least 18 years old, be a British, eligible Commonwealth or EU citizen; and have lived and/or worked in the parish area, or lived within three miles of it, for the previous year.

Nominations for the parish election close on April 7.

If you would like to find out more about becoming a town councillor, please contact town clerk Helen Bojaniwska on **01453 762817** or email council@strouttown.gov.uk

Tell us about wildlife sightings

There's plenty of impressive wildlife to be seen in Stroud, especially in the town's cemeteries.

The old cemetery is a key wildlife site and designated Local Nature Reserve with more than 270 different kinds of plants and animals found there.

The Town Council is interested in hearing about your wildlife sightings at the cemetery or any of the town's Green Spaces.

Email council@strouttown.gov.uk with news of what you saw, where and when. Keep up to date with the wildlife sightings on www.strouttown.gov.uk

Welcome Mike

Mike Dando has been appointed Green Spaces Manager. He will be responsible for the town's cemetery and Green Spaces. He replaces Jim Mathison.

Before joining the Town Council team Mike worked for both the National Trust and the Ministry of Defence and was responsible for looking after Salisbury Plain.

"I am very much looking forward to coming to Stroud, which particularly appeals to me due to its thriving local community and excellent open areas," says Mike.

Residents name new boats

The Town Council is mucking in to keep the Cotswold Canals in top condition and giving parish residents a chance to be involved.

Councillors awarded a £15,000 grant to the Cotswold Canals Trust which has gone towards buying two work boats.

The boats will be used for maintenance of the canal and to prevent the channel from being blocked by silt from the feeder streams.

The Town Council teamed up with Stroud Life and the Trust to run a naming competition. The chosen names will be painted on the boats and the winner will get to officially christen the craft.



Picture: Thousand Word Media

The Trust, which has received Lottery Fund support, has recently applied for £15 million lottery funding.

Ken Burgin, Chief Executive of the Cotswolds Canals Trust, said: "The Trust greatly appreciates the support Stroud Town Council gives to the canal project and the importance with which it is viewed.

"This latest decision supports the volunteers by helping to provide the boats needed to enable them to maintain the restored canal through Stroud."

Committed to the town's services

The Town Council has increased its share of the council tax by just 21p per week for the average Band D payer.

In 2016-2017, an average Band D council tax payer will pay £124.92, an increase of £10.81 per year.

As a result of central government cuts, Stroud District Council has reduced its grant to the town council by £39,000.

Rather than cut services, the Town Council took the unanimous decision to increase its part of the precept by 9.5% to make up for the shortfall with the lost grant.

The Town Council's budget for 2016-17 is £664,705. It is responsible for 20 green spaces and play areas in the town and manages the town cemeteries. It manages five allotment sites, the town clock and floral displays.

Meet your town councillors

Central Ward



Kevin Cranston
01453 755483



Rachel Lyons
07840 549127



Alice Campbell
01453 840245

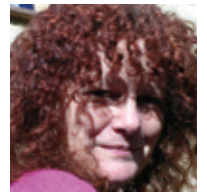
Trinity Ward



Steve Hurrell
01453 767127



John Marjoram
01453 750962



Amanda Moriarty
01453 759102

Uplands Ward



Chas Townley
01453 756547



Simon Arundel
01453 766825



Paul Flinn
07534 967425

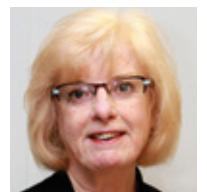
Valley Ward



Steve Naumann
07810 860672



Susie Roberts
01453 763675



Margaret Poulton
07989 361457

Farmhill & Paganhill Ward



Haydn Sutton
01453 763255



Geoffrey Andrews
07899 632307



Vanessa Price
07739 718913

Slade Ward



Val Lock
01453 757475



Mike Lovell
01453 753951



Rob Green
01453 764438