

Stroud District Councillors' Report



July 2020

All SDC meetings are now being shared on You Tube - [link](#)

SDC business.

Business support discretionary grants.

As mentioned last month, eligible businesses have been able to apply to the new discretionary business support grant scheme, which offers priority to businesses who were not eligible for support in the previous schemes. 133 businesses have been granted £1.325m, out of the fund 'pot' of £1.417m.

Business support based on 'business rates'.

The earlier scheme which offered either £10k or £20k to zero or low rated businesses has been concluded with over 2260 grants being made available. The total government funding for this scheme was £25.210m.

Your local District Councillors have been contacting local businesses who have not applied for a grant and 8 have since been successful.

Reopening of public conveniences

Access for the disabled cubicle at the Rope Walk toilets in Wotton has been changed from radar key entry only, to open use as a unisex / disabled cubicle. Use is expected to be low and will be monitored over the coming weeks to ascertain the sufficiency of this more limited facility.

Tackling racism

As mentioned in last month's report, there had been complaints against a case of a SDC Councillor's activities on Twitter. The Monitoring Officer and subsequently our 'Independent Person' has determined that the postings of Cllr Young had not significantly breached the Council's Code of Conduct ([link](#)).

However, as a result of complaints from the public, SDC have sought to update members understanding of Diversity, Equality, Anti-racism, Discrimination etc. The current SDC Code of Conduct is also being reviewed by a cross-party member's group, who will review the exiting Code and report back to Council with suggestions.

Members have and continue recently undertaken a series of training programmes to update and to hopefully address any shortcomings of member's understanding of the wide-ranging and moving topics of bias, diversity and equality etc.

SDC Full Council (Cllrs Braun, James and Tucker) - 16th July 2020.

This meeting discussed and agreed to support further budget for the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme, which is likely to increase due to COVID-19.

The budgets for the two Water Source Heat Pump schemes, as reported below, were finally approved.

Jon Beckett, a senior officer, was delegated to attend the Gloucestershire Engagement Board, who will now administer future COVID-19 related activities, rather than other bodies and authorities as has happened over the last 5 months.

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/meetings/council/council-16-july-2020>

SDC Covid-19 updates for members.

These updates are still being distributed to local Clerks and Chairs of our local Town and Parish Councils by Cllr Tucker. They are now only issued when significant data/information/comment need to be made.

SDC Strategy & Resources Committee (Cllr Tucker) - 9th July 2020.

This meeting was held mainly to discuss the business case for installing water source heat pumps at both SDC's premises at Brimscombe Port and at Ebley Mill. The heating system at Brimscombe needs to be moved due to the redevelopment there. The costs for doing this is about the same as installing heat pumps, which take heat from the adjacent River Frome. Questions were raised as to whether they could be installed at Ebley Mill, as the boilers there only have a few years life in them. Members were told that they would need to be supplemented with other forms of heating and as the Council has declared a 'Climate Emergency' and has an aim for the district to be 'Carbon Neutral' by 2030, it was agreed that the new installations should go ahead and funding was consequently approved. There are significant government grants to cover the installations, which last 30 years and the running and maintenance costs relatively low.

Each year SDC produce a rolling 4-year Corporate Delivery Plan. A revision to that agreed earlier in the year was necessary due to the effects of the COVID-10 pandemic and was presented by senior officers and agreed by members.

SDC Strategy & Resources Committee (Cllr Tucker) - 30th July 2020.

An Extraordinary Meeting was held to discuss the financial position of our sport centre operators, Sports Leisure Management (SLM). During COVID-19, leisure centres have suffered badly, and income is extremely low, too low to support such facilities. To help with the necessary maintenance of Stratford Park, SDC have paid SLM their management fee for 2020-2021 upfront, rather than monthly. Also, a previously agreed budget to pay Leisure Centre employees the 'Living Wage' (as for SDC employees), rather than the 'Minimum Wage', was also paid in advance. After much discussion and deliberation of the various options for further funding, members agreed to offer SLM a loan of up to £170k. This loan is subject to a number of member-imposed 'terms and conditions' and has yet to be accepted or rejected by SLM. The consequences of SLM non-acceptance, options and the future running of the Centre were also disclosed in a 'closed session'.

SDC Housing Committee (Cllr Braun) – no meeting in July.

SDC Community Services & Licensing Committee (Cllr Tucker) – no meeting in July.

SDC Environment Committee (Cllr James) – no meeting in July.