



Dear Resident

## **STONY STRATFORD TOWN COUNCIL PRECEPT 2011/12**

On your Council Tax demand, you will almost certainly have noticed a payment to Stony Stratford Town Council. This payment has risen significantly compared to the amount that you paid last year. I am writing to you to explain the background to this payment and to the decision about the precept level for the coming year. I hope that you will find it useful to know what the Town Council does with your money.

The Town Council is the first and most local tier of local government. It comprises 10 councillors, elected every four years to represent the area of Stony Stratford, Galley Hill and Fullers Slade. It employs a Clerk (Charles Brindley) and an Information Officer (Ursula Lewis), both of whom work part-time. It is based in the offices in the Library in Church Street. The opening hours of the Council are advertised widely throughout the town. The Council can be contacted by phone, fax or e-mail: [office@stonystratford.gov.uk](mailto:office@stonystratford.gov.uk). Details of our work can also be found on our website: [www.stonystratford.gov.uk](http://www.stonystratford.gov.uk).

The total expenditure for the Council for the coming year will amount to £196,148. As a result of decisions to increase our expenditure for the coming year, the precept for a Band D property in the town will rise to £67.26, an increase of £19.96 compared to last year.

Setting our precept has not been an easy decision for the Council to take this year. We recognise the difficult circumstances in which people find themselves and the increasing uncertainty about job prospects and wage packets. At the same time, the Town Council has a responsibility to maintain the social and community fabric of the town and to help its residents weather the economic storm.

The Council's current expenditure includes the maintenance of the public toilets in Silver Street, support for Stony in Bloom and the Farmers' Market, the provision and emptying of dog bins in the town and a contribution to Thames Valley Police towards the cost of a Police Community Support Officer. All of these are recognised by residents as helping to improve the quality of life in the area. We have also set aside £13,500 for grants to local organisations wishing to run events or activities to help the community. During the last year, we have supported Stony Live!, the Switch-on of the Christmas Lights and Friends of Stony Library and a number of other groups to organise events.

In November, we agreed a first draft of our budget for the coming year which included money for new projects. These included the regeneration of the Boundary Crescent allotments, litter picking on the Riverside Park and renovation of the War Memorial on Horsefair Green. We thought that these additional items were all that we would need to do during the coming year. Then we suddenly heard about the plan to close the Library.

The Town Council still does not understand the rationale for this proposal by Milton Keynes Council. Even allowing for out of catchment use of the library, ours is the 3<sup>rd</sup> most efficient in the city. It is an important resource that is valued by the local community. Popular opinion within the town has clearly demonstrated a desire to keep both the building and the library service going.

The expenditure on the library divides into three main headings. There is the running costs of the building itself, the staffing of the library and the central costs of the library service. The Town Council has entered into negotiations with Milton Keynes Council about taking over the building and its running costs. That is why the precept has risen as steeply as it has. We believe that the building represents an important resource for the community that should remain open.

We also recognise that this is not the end of the story. During the coming year, we will continue to discuss with MKC and with the community the nature of the library service that should be provided. There is an opportunity here to develop a civic and community resource for the town that we need to consider very carefully indeed.

Our income and expenditure for the coming year are listed below:

Income		Expenditure	
Precept	180,165	Public Toilets	17,885
Reserves	9,583	PCSO	16,532
Other income	6,400	Stony in Bloom	7,700
		Library	35,926
		Grant Funds	13,500
		Other projects	24,376
		Operating costs	71,729
		Publicity	8,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>196,148</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>196,148</b>

The Town Council aims to respond to the needs of local residents and to work in partnership with the community and its organisations. All of the money that we raise is spent directly on services for the town and those who live and work here.

We meet monthly either in full council or in committee meetings at Russell Street School, the Rowans Centre in Fullers Slade, the Watling Way Centre on Galley Hill or the Parish Hall at Church St. All our meetings are open to the public and begin with an Open Session that allows you to question us about our work and contribute your ideas to our thinking. The meetings are advertised around the town, in the Town Crier magazine and on our website. Please do not hesitate to contact us to find out more about the Town Council's activities.

Best wishes

Robert Gifford  
Chair  
Stony Stratford Town Council

