

Stewkley Parish Council

Stewkley Village in Buckinghamshire has pioneered a new way of delivering community services by entering into an agreement with Buckinghamshire County Council to undertake a number of village maintenance services including:

- Urban grass cutting
- Grass trimming
- Minor footways clearance
- Fly poster removal
- Public rights of way clearance
- Verge maintenance
- Serving Hedge Cutting Notices
- Weed spraying
- Minor hedge trimming
- Drain rodding
- Road sign clearing



Stewkley residents responsible for mowing the designated highway verges

The service is now delivered by the Stewkley Community Enterprise Agency, which is a not-for-profit social enterprise launched in October 2012.

What are the benefits for the community?

Under the agreement, the Stewkley Enterprise Agency in partnership with Stewkley Parish Council and Buckinghamshire County Council employs six part-time staff to undertake a range of village maintenance tasks. Team members complete between 80 – 90 hours per year.

This approach means that local residents have the opportunity to earn a small income within the village. This reduces the need for transport and helps strengthen the residents' ties with their community.

Most of the staff are young men and women who gain valuable work experience while also contributing to their local community. They also benefit from learning new skills such as how to invoice, schedule their work and manage their time, collect customer feedback, work on the road side, conduct health and safety risk assessments, use and maintain tools and to work as a team.

One of the members of the team has been suffering from the medical condition ME for the past few years and wished to work because he felt that it would help him with his rehabilitation. Another older person joined because he was new to the village and felt this would help him meet other people and provides a way to supplement his income.

The younger members of the team, some as young as 16 and 17-years old, further benefit by being able to include their participation in an innovative community service in their educational personal statements. They also acquired an appreciation of the opportunity and value of part-time work, which can be difficult to find when living in a village away from traditional urban part-time roles.

Other key benefits include:

- Higher quality standards and an improved environment for all residents to enjoy;
- Close, positive and proactive working relationships between the parish council and other neighbouring parishes, local authorities and community groups;
- More people volunteering because a greater number of opportunities are available.



Image by: Visual Minutes

What is a community enterprise?

A community enterprise is an organisation trading for social purposes with profits reinvested rather than going to shareholders. A community enterprise provides benefits to a particular local neighbourhood or community of identity. It is owned and managed by members of that community, and it is usually managed by a volunteer coordinator.

Community enterprises come in all shapes and forms and range from resident-run shops to pop-up broadband schemes and community woodlands that sell products and provide training and employment to local people.

They share the following characteristics:

- The enterprise is community-led, meaning it is endorsed by, or engaging directly with, local people;
- The enterprise is locally based, benefiting a specific geographical place, and is inclusive of all in the community;
- The aims and objectives of the enterprise are a direct response to local social and economic need or opportunity;
- The enterprise has a sustainable business plan and aims to become viable beyond grants or public funding;

Useful tips on setting up and running a community enterprise are available at: www.locality.org.uk/projects/power-change/community-enterprise-checker/.