

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held virtually, on Tuesday 24 March 2020

NOTE: Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19) and Prime Minister’s instructions on 23rd March 2020 to avoid public gatherings of more than two people, the physical meeting was cancelled. The meeting was held virtually, with voting by email.

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: K. Argyle, A. Best, Mrs A. Burgess, J. Davies, Mrs K. Dawson,
I. Fordham, M. Green, J. Hickling, Mrs J. Hood, T. Kelt, P. Leason, C. Thornicroft and
R. Townsend.

ABSENT: Councillors: T. Adamson, Mrs L. Davies, M. Hatton and J. Powell.

GP20/200 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors: T. Adamson and Mrs L. Davies

GP20/201 **Declarations of Interests**

None

GP20/202 **Requests for Dispensations**

None

GP20/203 **Minutes**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on the 3rd March (Minute Numbers GP20/185 – GP20/199), be approved as a correct record.

GP20/204 **Minutes of Sub-Committees**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Tourism Sub-Committee held on 17 March 2020 (Minute Numbers TTP20/037 – TTP20/046) be noted.

GP20/205 **Local Plan for Stafford Borough**

The Committee considered the following Stafford Borough Council consultations inviting views on:

- a) A new Stafford Borough Local Plan 2020-2040: Issues & Options Consultation – seeking views on the approach to future development of Stafford Borough over the next 20 years.

A copy of an email from Stafford Borough Council had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting along with a link to a range of documentation and information supporting the consultation.

* Items marked with an asterisk refer to reports or papers circulated with the agenda or distributed at the meeting. They are attached as an appendix to the signed copy of the Council minutes.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk be delegated to submit a response in consultation with the Committee Chairman.

GP20/206 COVID-19 – Helpline Proposal

The Committee considered investigating the viability of creating a telephone helpline for people requiring support due to the COVID-19 outbreak, with a view to help coordinating volunteers and local residents groups with their support efforts in Stone and surrounding areas. This work would be undertaken alongside Age Concern and A Little Bit of Stone, who have already started work in this area.

The support offered would relate to activities such as collection of shopping for people unable to leave home.

RESOLVED:

1. A viability investigation be undertaken into providing a helpline to support people affected by COVID-19.
2. The Town Clerk be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee, to determine the viability of the scheme and, if considered viable, to implement a helpline and support scheme for the duration of the current crisis.
3. A budget of £10,000 be made available from reserves to meet the cost of this project.
4. That, due to the urgency of this issue, the requirements of Financial Regulation 10.9 regarding the seeking of competitive quotations shall not apply to this project.

GP20/207 COVID-19 - Council Actions

The Committee considered the temporary changes to Council services and meeting schedules implemented as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the flexibilities required to continue to operate the Council during the current crisis.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the actions taken to date by the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, and that these actions will be regularly reviewed and updated, if necessary, as the situation develops.
2. For the purposes of Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, to approve the absence of any Councillor unable to attend meetings due to issues related to COVID-19.
3. To amend Standing Order 10.9 on a temporary basis as follows, to allow the Town Clerk to exercise existing delegations in a situation where it is not reasonable to call a Council/Committee meeting (as opposed to the current delegation which is restricted to when it is not possible to call a meeting):

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“Where any matter is urgent and cannot reasonably be dealt with in a meeting of the appropriate Council/Committee, the Council’s Proper Officer is authorised to take any decision on behalf of the Council which can legally be delegated by the Council to an officer. Before taking such a decision, the Proper Officer shall take reasonable steps to consult with Council Members, and shall report the decision and the reason for its urgency at the next ordinary meeting of the Council or one of its committees if the decision would normally have been taken there. The Assistant Town Clerk (Business) may deputise in the absence of the Proper Officer in respect of this delegation.”

GP20/208 **Members Motions**

Councillor R Townsend

“I am asking the Council to submit a letter to Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Planning in relation to the redetermination hearing for the planning appeal on the Blackies Lane site off Sadler Avenue, Stone.

The letter should state that Stone Town Council believes that the intention of Rural Exception Policy C5A in the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031) is clear and that it is inappropriate to try to apply it to Stone which is designated a Tier 2 Town in the settlement hierarchy and not a rural community. It is the Town Council’s view that Stafford Borough Council’s decision to deny planning permission for up to 20 affordable homes on the site is in compliance with their stated policy.

The deadline to submit is 31st March and the Inspectorate have proposed 1st & 2nd July for the hearing. Support from the Council would add additional weight.”

RESOLVED: To support the motion.

GP20/209 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED: Pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that the Public and Press be excluded from the meeting whilst the next items of business are discussed on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the debate.

GP20/210 **Confidential Minutes**

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee Meeting held on 17 March 2020, Minute Number TTP20/046.

RESOLVED:

- i. To note the draft minutes.
- ii. To approve the recommendations contained in Minute Number TTP20/046.

CHAIRMAN