

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held virtually, on Tuesday 22 September 2020

NOTE: Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19) and Government Guidelines on public gatherings, the meeting was held virtually on Zoom. Members of the public were invited to observe the meeting streamed live on YouTube.

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: A. Best, Mrs A. Burgess, Mrs K. Dawson, J. Davies, Mrs L. Davies,
I. Fordham, M. Green, Mrs J. Hood, J. Powell and C. Thornicroft

ABSENT: Councillors: T. Adamson, K. Argyle, M. Hatton, J. Hickling, T. Kelt, P. Leason and
R. Townsend

GP20/247 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors: T. Adamson, K. Argyle, J. Hickling,
T. Kelt, P. Leason and R. Townsend

GP20/248 **Declarations of Interests**

None

GP20/249 **Requests for Dispensations**

None

GP20/250 **To receive the report of the County Councillors**

County Councillor Mrs J. Hood

Covid-19 Testing

Councillor Mrs Hood reminded the Committee that, at the last meeting she had been asked by Councillor Davies to provide the number of Covid-19 tests undertaken as a result of the Crown & Anchor virus outbreak. The answer to this question is just over one thousand.

Flu Vaccinations

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she had been asked (through the County Council) to urge residents to have their flu vaccines, which are available now. This year there are many more groups entitled to a free vaccination including nasal sprays for children. Anyone interested should contact their GP or local pharmacy.

Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that by Monday 17 August more than three million items of PPE had been delivered to Staffordshire County Council to help keep the County safe and moving. Emergency supplies (including gloves, masks, gowns, aprons, safety glasses and visors) were distributed to care homes, care agencies, schools, places of worship and front line council staff.

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The County Council has pledged almost £18 million in support of the care sector and has stepped in with PPE when supplies have been difficult to obtain.

Planning Application submitted by Morrisons

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that Morrisons supermarket had submitted a planning application to increase the capacity of the Christchurch Way/Mill Street junction by adding an additional lane on the Mill Street approach. This will include signals at the cross roads. The County Council has been in negotiations with Morrisons for a number of years after asking them to alleviate the congestion there.

She confirmed her support of the proposal and invited attendees to look at the planning application (planning reference 20/32927/FUL) on Stafford Borough Council's planning portal.

Councillor Mrs Hood advised that a meeting would be arranged with County Highways officers to urge removal of the splitter island which would tie in nicely with the Morrisons planning application in reducing daily traffic queues.

Pedestrianisation of the High Street

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that at Stone Town Council's request, Staffordshire County Council was considering implementing a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order to extent the restriction on vehicles coming in to the High Street. There is much concern about safety in the High Street as people often incorrectly think the area is pedestrianised at all times.

Resurfacing of The Avenue

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that The Avenue had now been resurfaced and residents are very pleased with the work done.

Flooding in Cross Street

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that the Highways Team and Severn Trent have started work to remedy the flooding problem that occurs in Cross Street every time there is heavy rainfall.

Positioning of Telegraph Poles

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee about her contact with a resident who had undertaken a successful one woman protest against the installation of a telegraph pole in an inappropriate position by BT Openreach Telecommunications.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP20/251 Representations from Members of the Public

None

GP20/252 **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 4 August 2020 (Minute No's GP20/223 – GP20/238), be approved as a correct record.
- b) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 11 August 2020 (Minute No's GP20/239 – GP20/242), be approved as a correct record.
- c) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 25 August 2020 (Minute No's GP20/243 – GP20/246), be approved as a correct record.

GP20/253 **Minutes of Sub-Committees**

RESOLVED:

- a) Management Sub-Committee held on 4 August 2020 (Minute Numbers MAN20/028 – MAN20/035), that the draft minutes be noted and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number MAN20/033 be adopted.

GP20/254 **National Pay Awards 2020-21**

The Committee considered the report*of the Town Clerk (which had been circulated with the agenda) on the outcome of the 2020-21 national pay award negotiations for local government staff and its impact on the Council.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accepts the recommendations of the Town Clerk and adopts the new salary levels for staff for 2020-21, as set out in the report.

GP20/255 **Covid-19 Outbreak**

The Committee considered an update following the actions taken after the special meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 11 August 2020, and determined the new actions required as a consequence:

- a) Letter to the Licensing Department at Stafford Borough Council asking for a suspension of late night alcohol and music licences within all Stone public house and entertainment venues for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A copy of an email from the Licensing Manager at Stafford Borough Council had been attached to the agenda.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the request had been made because, prior to the virus outbreak, the Crown & Anchor had been the only venue in Staffordshire open after midnight.

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The Committee agreed that the Government's new ruling forcing pubs, bars and restaurants to close at 10pm from Thursday (24 September) had addressed this risk and concern about the issue.

- b) Letter to Stafford Borough Council calling for a formal review of the Crown & Anchor Premises Licence for consideration of whether the venue continues to meet the licensing objective relating to 'public safety'.

A copy of an email from the Licensing Manager at Stafford Borough Council had been circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council pursues an application for the review of the Crown & Anchor Premises Licence under the Licensing Act 2003.

- c) Letters to Staffordshire Police and Stafford Borough Council's Enforcement team requesting that weekend evening patrols are undertaken in Stone to ensure the laws and guidelines on COVID-19 measures have been respected to help rebuild confidence.

A copy of emails from the Chief Inspector at Staffordshire Police and the Licensing Manager at Stafford Borough Council were circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

The Committee noted the information supplied by the Chief Inspector and the Licensing Manager and agreed that the Government's new ruling forcing pubs, bars and restaurants to close at 10pm, as well as the introduction of COVID-19 Marshals, had addressed this issue.

- d) To appoint a Working Group consisting of Town Councillors, local businesses and other interested parties to consider how the town can be promoted through a confidence building campaign that will encourage a return of consumer footfall to the High Street and spending in Stone.

The Town Clerk provided the Committee with an explanation on the position with regard to membership applications from political groups.

RESOLVED: That the non council membership of the Promotion of Stone Working Group will consist of the following business group representatives:

- Michelle Hughes (representative of Stone Pub Watch)
- Susan Hughes (representative of Stone Traders Group)
- Jamie Richards (representative of Stone Business Network)
- Lee Walker (representative of Walton Businesses)
- Jon Cook (representative of 'A Little Bit of Stone')

- e) Letter to Stafford Borough Council to ask how much it would charge Stone Town Council to provide free Saturday parking in Stone to the end of the year.

A copy of an email from the Head of Operations at Stafford Borough Council had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the Borough Council had advised that it would charge the Town Council £500 for each free Saturday at Crown Street and Christchurch Way car parks.

Following negotiations by the Town Clerk this figure had been reduced to the sum of £5,000 for the 13 weeks to the end of the year.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accepts the Borough Council's proposed charge of £5,000 for 13 free Saturday parking days at Borough Council car parks in Stone.

- f) Letter to the County Highways Department to ask whether there would be a possibility of extending the duration of the High Street pedestrianised zone each day, and that if permitted by the County, the Town Council first undertakes a consultation exercise with businesses to identify the most appropriate times.

The Town Clerk confirmed that an acknowledgement had been received from Staffordshire County Council and a full response was under consideration.

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that the County Council were considering implementing a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order to extend the hours of pedestrianisation of the High Street. The exact times would be determined following the Town Council's consultation with traders.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council moves forward with the project to secure an extension to the pedestrianisation times in the High Street.

- g) Letter to the Licensing Department asking whether Stafford Borough Council would be prepared to suspend the fee for Pavement Licence applications from Stone businesses for the rest of the year.

A copy of an email from the Licensing Manager at Stafford Borough Council had been issued with the agenda.

The Committee noted the Borough Council's decision to decline suspension of the fee to Pavement Licence applicants in Stone.

The Chairman publicly thanked Stone Helpline for the work it had done to support the Stone community during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown.

GP20/256 Members Motion

Councillor Mrs Kerry Dawson

"I have recently been contacted by a resident in my ward who expressed concerns about the speed of traffic using Manor Rise, specifically during school drop off and rush hour. He informed me that there had already been several near misses and a few minor incidents and is worried that it is only a matter of time before a child is hurt, given that Manor Rise is used daily by children who attend Manor Hill First School, Pirehill First School and Walton Priory Middle School as their main walking route.

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I share these concerns, and ask the Committee to agree that the Town Clerk should write to Staffordshire County Council regarding the traffic issues on Manor Rise to ask them to monitor/report on the issue and take action to curb speeding motorists in the area."

Councillor Mrs Dawson informed the Committee that she had consulted her fellow ward Councillors, local residents and parents who had all held the view that the traffic issue in Manor Rise was an accident waiting to happen. She had also sought advice from County Councillor Parry who suggested that some parish councils had invested in solar powered speed indicators.

County Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that the County Council is likely to see this as a Police issue and suggested County Councillor Parry be approached again to ask whether he could fund a 'Slow Your Speed' indicator which, although temporary, would be an effective deterrent.

The Chairman agreed that an item be placed on the next agenda for consideration of Councillor Green's suggestion to ask Staffordshire County Council to introduce a 20mph speed limit on roads serving all schools in Stone.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk is asked to write to Staffordshire County Council about the traffic issues on Manor Rise and to ask them to monitor, report and take action to curb speeding motorists in the area.

GP20/257 Non-Cheque Payments

RESOLVED: To note the list* of non-cheque payments made by the Council during the period 1 to 31 July 2020.

GP20/258 Update from Working Groups:

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

The Chairman of the Steering Group, Councillor Mrs Hood, reported that no meeting had taken place.

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group

The Chairman of the Liaison Group, Councillor Davies, advised that the next meeting would be held virtually in October 2020.

Traffic Management in Stone Working Group

Councillor Kenney advised the Committee that no meeting had taken place.

Promotion of Stone Working Group

Councillor Kenney advised the Committee that a meeting would be held as soon as the paperwork for co-opted working group representatives had been received.

GP20/259 To receive reports from Town Councillors on attendance at meetings of local organisations and outside bodies as a representative of the Town Council

Stone ATC

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that he had no information to share but would provide a report at the next meeting.

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Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that no meeting had taken place.

Stafford & Stone Access Group

As Councillor T. Kelt had given his apologies, no report was available.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Mrs Hood confirmed that a meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday next week.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Mrs Hood confirmed that no meetings of the Hub Liaison Group had taken place.

SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Green advised the Committee that he had been unable to attend the last meeting of the Executive Committee.

CHAIRMAN