

# Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held virtually on Tuesday 13 October 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 P. Leason in the Chair and  
Councillors: Mrs A. Burgess, M. Green, T. Kelt, R. Kenney and R. Townsend

By Chairman's invitation: Councillors: I. Fordham and Mrs J. Hood

**ABSENT:** Councillors: T. Adamson, K. Argyle, M. Hatton and J. Powell.

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**ENV20/031**    **Apologies**

Councillors: T. Adamson, K. Argyle and J. Powell

**ENV20/032**    **Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

None received

**ENV20/033**    **Representations from Members of the Public**

None

**ENV20/034**    **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

That the minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on the 17 December 2019 (Minute Numbers ENV20/024 – ENV20/030), be approved as a correct record.

**ENV20/035**    **Highways Grounds Maintenance**

The Sub-Committee considered the content of an email received from Staffordshire County Council in response to an enquiry made by the Town Clerk about uncultivated areas of land in Stone. The General Purposes Committee on 2 July 2019 had resolved to request a complete list of highways land/sites held and to seek clarification about the County's plans with regard to commencement of a future maintenance program.

The General Purposes Committee had also resolved that the Environment Sub-Committee be asked to consider the County's response and recommend a course of action to the Town Council.

The Sub-Committee was advised that Staffordshire County Council had supplied

a list of sites currently maintained by County Highways but it did not hold a record of sites that are owned but not maintained as part of the cyclical maintenance program.

It was agreed that Town Councillors be asked to record and forward a list of uncultivated sites (adjoining the public highway) to the Town Council office.

RECOMMENDED: That the Town Council liaises with the County Council to establish whether the uncultivated sites identified in Stone are under County ownership, and if so, request they be added to the database for future maintenance.

## **ENV20/036    Reports of Working Groups**

### a) Plastic Free Community/Single Use Plastics Working Group

The Chairman invited Councillor Townsend to provide a verbal summary of the work of the Single Use Plastics Working Group.

Councillor Townsend confirmed that there was no report of the Single Use Plastics Working Group as the paper produced by the Environmental Issues Working Group (to follow in the next item on the agenda) was proposing that the activities of the two working groups are merged as the causes of both are very closely aligned.

### b) Environmental Issues Working Group

The Sub-Committee considered the content of the Environmental Issues Working Group Progress Report\* produced by Councillor Kelt.

The written report of the Working Group had been issued with the agenda for the meeting.

The Sub-Committee noted the content of the Progress Report and made the following points:

#### **Internal Energy Audit and Action Plan (point 1)**

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-committee that as the properties the Town Council occupies and operates from are not owned by the Town Council, for an energy audit to be a worthwhile exercise there would need to be some confidence that the proposals for the buildings stand a chance of being actioned by the owners.

The Town Clerk informed the Sub-Committee about a previous experience where proposals with regard to fire safety requirements and recommendations of a fire safety audit had not been actioned.

Councillor Townsend suggested the Working Group consider whether the energy audit should be limited to items the Town Council is able to

control and action directly.

**Terms of Reference** (point 2)

Councillor Kelt confirmed that the Working Group recommends the Town Council considers environmental issues in all areas of its activities and the best way of doing this was to write the requirement into the terms of reference which would govern the work of all Committees and Sub-Committees consistently.

**Younger Generation** (point 4)

Councillor Kelt advised that the Working Group recommends that the Town Council engages with the public only when it is allowed to do so as it would not wish to suggest overburdening schools who are already working in very difficult circumstances through the pandemic.

Councillor Kelt said the Working Group would like to establish as a fact finding exercise what initiatives are already underway in order to identify the people to involve in community action groups at a later date.

It was agreed that the Working Group liaise with the Town Clerk in order to obtain costings for some of the proposals made in the report.

**ENV20/037**    **Crown Meadow Improvements**

The Chairman provided an update on the proposed improvements to Crown Meadow. Councillor Leason said that he had spoken to the grounds maintenance contractor who had been unable to carry out work earlier in the year due to the various Covid-19 restrictions. As the nature of the work is seasonal, mainly taking place between October and March, it would begin within the next few weeks.

The Sub-Committee raised questions about the rationale behind the recommendation to remove Willow and Silver Birch trees which had been considered unsuitable for Crown Meadow (reference Minute Number ENV20/029). The Chairman gave reassurances that he would be consulting the Borough Council's Biodiversity Officer again, and would involve Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, in seeking clarification.

The Chairman reminded the Sub-Committee that the proposals for Crown Meadow had included planting new trees to hide the Marks and Spencer Food Hall and entrance.

The Sub-Committee agreed that some elements of the proposal should be revisited due to the time that had lapsed (due to the Covid-19 pandemic) since the site survey had been undertaken. The Chairman said that a report would be given at the next meeting.

**Chairman**