



Stone

Town Council

Town Clerk

Les Trigg

Tel: 01785 619740

Email: clerk@stonetowncouncil.gov.uk

15 Station Road
Stone
ST15 8JP

7 December 2020

Dear Councillor,

A VIRTUAL meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT SUB COMMITTEE** will be held on **TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER 2020** at 7:05pm or on the rising of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee, if later.

The Agenda is set out below, and I trust you will be able to attend.

The meeting will be streamed live on YouTube and members of the public are welcome to observe.

View Meeting: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXHye7pCvT-mVBouN3IUTWQ>

Les Trigg
Town Clerk

Councillors: P Leason (Chair), T. Adamson (Vice Chair), K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess, M. Hatton, T. Kelt, J. Powell and R. Townsend

AGENDA

1. **To receive apologies for absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations Received**
3. **Representations from Members of the Public**

To consider representations from members of the public on items to be considered at this meeting, in accordance with the Council's scheme of public participation

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Sub-Committee held on 13 October 2020, Minute No's ENV20/031 – ENV20/037 (attached)

5. **Budget 2021-22 – 2023-24**

To consider the report of the Town Clerk (attached).

6. **Reports of Working Groups**

- Plastic Free Community/Single Use Plastics Working Group (report attached)
- Environmental Issues Working Group (report attached)

7. **Crown Meadow Improvements**

To receive the report of the Chairman.

Will any Councillors who wish to speak at this meeting, but are not members of the Sub-Committee, please inform the Chairman before the start of the meeting

Members of the public are welcome to attend the Environment Sub-Committee Meeting as observers and/or to make representations to the committee in accordance with the Council's scheme of public participation. Details of this scheme are displayed in the Council's notice boards and website.

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.

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

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to determine the level of budget for services under its control that the Sub-Committee wishes to recommend to the General Purposes Committee meeting on 19th January 2021.

Background

2. The General Purposes Committee on 1st December 2020 considered the standstill budget for 2021-22 and indicative figures for the next two years based on a number of assumptions contained within the report.
3. Due to the uncertainty resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, the standstill budget has been prepared on the following basis:
 - a. Individual budget lines have all been prepared on the basis of a return to pre-lockdown (i.e. October 2020) service levels from December 2020, and a return to full, normal service levels from April 2021.
 - b. A "Coronavirus Contingency" has been provided within the General Purposes Committee budget to cover the ongoing cost of the pandemic above this level. The Sub-Committee is not required to consider this aspect of the budget.
4. The figures for this Sub-Committee on the above basis are:

Actual		Budget	Forecast	Budget	Budget	Budget
2019-20		2020-21	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
£		£	£	£	£	£
15,979	Grounds Maintenance	17,800	17,400	17,700	18,100	18,400
2,893	Crown Meadow Improvements	5,935	6,000	3,400	3,400	3,400
-1,058	Allotments	1,410	-1,700	100	100	100
-	Environmental Initiatives	2,750	2,750	-	-	-
17,814	TOTAL	27,895	24,450	21,200	21,600	21,900

5. In respect of the figures above, Members should note:
 - a. The Grounds Maintenance forecast for the current year includes replanting the Walton roundabout (£600) and the town borders (£600).

- b. The Crown Meadow Improvements current year forecast includes the cost of one-off work on the amphitheatre paths (£1,475), reinstatement of Crown Meadow paths generally (£1,110) and general meadow improvements (£1,400) which were part of the budget approved in February. The ongoing budget includes provision for the maintenance of benches (£500) and the bridge (£600) together with an annual sum for the removal of bulrushes (£500). There is also a general contingency for unforeseen work. Budgets for subsequent years include an additional allowance of £1,300 per annum agreed as part of last year's budget process.
 - c. The Allotments budget for 2021-22 and subsequent years includes provision for the treatment of Japanese Knotweed (£300), water charges (£700), wayleave (£250), hedge cutting (£300) and general maintenance (£1,000) together with a contingency for general grounds maintenance of £1,400. Against this is set estimated annual income of £3,900. Inflation is added to these figures each year.
 - d. The Environmental Initiatives budget is an allowance for agreed spending by the Climate Change and Single Use Plastics working groups. No spending has been undertaken in the year to date, but any remaining allowance as at 31st March 2021 can be rolled forward for spending in 2021-22.
6. As reported to the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 1st December, the standstill budget is just the starting point for the budget process. Members will want to review this standstill budget and the amounts provisionally included. In addition, there are likely to be other areas where Members will want to undertake new developments or stop/change the things that the Council is doing now.
7. The Sub-Committee is asked to consider the standstill budget and any areas of growth or savings which they would want to be taken into account in setting the budget for 2021-22 and future years.

Recommendations

8. Members are asked to recommend their proposed budget for consideration by the General Purposes Committee on 19th January 2021.

**CLIMATE WORKING GROUP PROGRESS REPORT and WORKING
DOCUMENT, 25TH NOVEMBER 2020.**

In February 2020, the Environment Sub Committee (ESC) was allocated a budget of £2750, principally for the purpose of raising public awareness to the Climate Emergency and related issues. Of that £2750, the Climate Working Group (CWG) can apply for up to £2000 and the Single Use Plastics Group (SUGP) can apply for up to £750. The budget should be used before March 2021, but it is hoped that the Council will agree to roll forward any unspent amount to 2021-22. Proposals for use of the budget are made by the CWG to the ESC for approval and then to the General Purposes Committee (GP) for approval.

The COVID pandemic and lock down has made it difficult for the WGs and Stone Town Council (STC) to engage or organise any activity. The CWG is now meeting again and developing a plan that will move the issue forward. The plan will need flexibility in it to deal with the pandemic and whatever new measures are brought in that restrict the activity and the public.

Climate Emergency is a complex issue affecting the local area, the nation and the world. The CWG proposes to stay focussed on the local issues that STC can have some effect on.

This document sets out some initial steps that the CWG believes are necessary to move the project forward. An action plan including costs needs to be developed for consideration at a future ESC and GP.

Three actions have already happened:

RT, TK and LT to discuss actions involving the Stone Town Council Office (STCO) and specifically which actions below require full proposals with costings/quotes.

- This meeting took place 11/11/20. Notes and actions are set out in this document.

RT and TK have an informal catchup meeting with Tracey Lindop, (Plastic Free Stone) to assess possibilities of working together.

– This occurred on 16/11/20. Separate notes were made from this meeting.

This progress report will be submitted to the next scheduled ESC on 15/12/20 to ratify the actions.

1. Put our own house in order:

1.1 An internal energy audit and action plan. This action will need a brief, a tender process and supplier quotes which will then need approval by ESC and GP

Action: Cllr Townsend to ask Cllr Hatton if he can carry out an energy-use audit, i.e. a survey of issues that do not require building alterations to rectify or improve such energy use, light bulbs, draft proofing, TRVs etc. CWG needs a detailed quote (even if it is FOC) by 30/11/20 along with a commitment to complete the survey and produce the report by 28/2/21

- We have been unable to get such a commitment from Cllr Hatton and so will have to proceed as below

Action: CWG is seeking approval to brief LT to commission energy usage audits of the buildings we operate from. This audit will be limited to the aspects of energy usage that STC can affect in day to day running, given that we do not own the buildings.

Action: CWG are seeking approval to instruct LT to write to building owners asking them to provide a full energy audit of the buildings that STC operates from. (there is a need to investigate the implications of the fact that STC have a financial interest in FJC. LT will be asked to review the terms of the lease of the station and council offices with regards to responsibility for upkeep of the buildings.

2. Consider merging the CWG with the SUPG to create a single working group with a combined budget and strategy.

Action: On consideration of the implications on both groups it was decided not to proceed with this action and to keep the two groups separate.

3. Incorporate environmental considerations into the Terms of Reference that govern all STC activities.

Action: Following discussion with LT, it was agreed that an Environmental Policy document would satisfy the requirement, which LT would formally draft. CWG would need to brief LT as to the headline content to enable him to submit a draft to ESC to be ratified at the first meeting in 2021. If ratified, it will influence all STC activities going forward.

- Preliminary work on this action has started. A skeleton draft of the document prepared by CWG is in Appendix A.

Action: CWG to seek approval for this approach.

4. Review copies of minutes of SBC and SCC meetings to date to gain an understanding of their plans for the climate emergency so that the town, borough and county can work in the same direction and not duplicate activities.

Action: CWG to carry out initial desk research.

CWG has made a preliminary review of SBC's draft Climate Strategy and Green Recovery document. It appears to represent a comprehensive strategy for the whole borough, which includes sections on climate, energy usage, pollution etc. SBC are already implementing some aspects of the plan and will expanding it over the coming months and years. CWG believes that STC should be fully involved with the SBC plan so that Stone gets the full benefit of their actions and does not duplicate or contradict any strategies established for the borough.

5. LT confirmed that the CWG cannot communicate with SBC or SCC on behalf of STC as any contact would need to be formally from the Council. CWG can invite a representative of other organisations as an occasional guest to CWG meetings to provide expertise, for instance. CWG to consider this at next stage. SBC have suggested waiting a few months until their policy is clearer.

Action: CWG is seeking approval to invite a representative of the SBC Climate and Green Recovery Plan to a CWG meeting to open the lines of communication and discuss ways of working together.

6. As the climate emergency will affect the younger generation most, CWG propose a council supported project in which we ask our local schools to feedback on pupil ideas for a greener Stone. This exact nature needs to be decided. Various options include: artwork, poems, short stories or other creative ideas. These entries could be displayed in the library, Frank Jordan Centre, website or other suitable venues around the town.

Action: Send a letter from STC to the head teachers of every school in the town (8 schools we believe) requesting information; appendix B is a proposed format. No other action is proposed until we are out of lockdown after which we will liaise with schools over their environmental initiatives.

7. Research: Review other websites regarding of interest (on climate emergency etc.). Look at other council websites.

Action: Assign CWG members to action this and report back to each meeting.

8. Investigate possible sources of finance (grants).

Action: STCO could review all grant opportunities to filter out ones appropriate to environmental activities. Many grants are not available to local councils for various reasons.

Action: STC could invite outside organisations to apply for STC grants to support targeted environmental activities.

Action: STC could approach local businesses to become environmental champions and possibly for financial support.

9. Publicity: Consult with the LT regarding future marketing and public engagement to develop a media strategy for the campaign. Options envisaged include a Stone Climate Action website to provide a starting point for community groups and social network page to provide a means to feedback ideas. We believe this needs to be independent of the STC website to avoid the restrictions governing this site and so will involve both a development and operating cost. Ownership and responsibility for the site will need to be determined. Action CWG, LT.

Action: Review this alongside the developing overall strategy.

10. Develop an agreed plan of public engagement. Public meetings are currently not an option but we can consider a digital platform for an invited group of interested community members. We should use the next three to six months to get our house in order whilst also developing a strategy for public engagement.

Action: CWG to develop a plan for how public engagement can work and what the objectives are. Present this plan to ESC.

11. Research and identify existing local community action groups (CAGs) regarding climate, environment and plastics. Consider invite to CWG meeting. Subsequently make proposals to ESC regarding any collaborations or support of CAGs

Action: RT to ask specific council members for their knowledge of existing groups.

12. Crown Meadows

Action: At next ESC meeting discuss linking more closely the management of Crown Meadows and the climate campaign, e.g. tree planting, hedgerows, biodiversity, green corridor, with the objective of increasing public awareness to this important green space as well as the planned improvements that STC is doing.

13. Budget

Action: Request an further budget for 2021-22 of £3k to cover an external energy audit, web page development and public engagement in addition to requesting that the current year's unspent budget of £2k for raising public awareness be rolled forward to next year.

Appendix A: Skeleton draft of an Environment Policy

ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Introduction

Council policies on environmental issues.

Principles

Reduce negative impact on environment.

Scope

Work at local town level, contribute to borough, county, national, global action.
Council – all council activity and responsibilities, community, community groups.
Climate, pollution, waste, green spaces, bio-diversity, flooding.

Objectives

To improve the environment in Stone – to contribute to environmental improvement externally.

Carbon neutrality. Energy use, energy supply, heating, lighting, transport.

Zero pollution.

Zero landfill.

100% recycling of reusable waste.

Maintain and improve green space.

Mitigate flooding impact.

Increase bio diversity.

Process (possibly an appendix or separate document)

Get own house in order – current operation.

Future activities – projects, budgets.

Influence suppliers and clients to reduce their impact. Check list. Direct business to greenest.

Support community groups – grants, advice, education, facilitation.

Work with borough and county councils. Their climate proposals. Planning departments. Highways. Streetscene.

Measurement

Council energy use, energy bills, procurement levels - costs.

Waste collection?

Streetscene workload.

Public transport usage (tickets).

Planning applications.

Responsibilities

Councillors, Council office.

Appendix B: Draft letter to head teachers

Dear

Stone Town Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 in response to the global movement initiated by Greta Thornberg. As a small town in a small country our opportunity to have a global impact is limited, however as the United Kingdom is a major energy user and carbon dioxide producer, if all the towns, boroughs and counties in the country act together, it will reduce our adverse impact on the climate and it will influence other countries to show that we are doing our bit.

In this period of restrictions due to COVID 19 it is difficult to initiate any action. However, the council are interested in whether there are any groups in the schools who are already active or are considering action in this area, recognising that it is this age group who initiated the school strikes and showed that they are aware of the danger to their future. When the current restrictions are lifted, we intend to contact existing community groups or to help the formation of new groups and to assist them in any way we can to achieve their objectives.

There are other areas of environmental improvement that the council is working on where the schools may already be active or considering future involvement, like plastic pollution, waste disposal, protecting green spaces, bio-diversity. Can you please let us know if there are any such groups in your school or whether you would be interested in working with us, when the pandemic is out of the way?

Yours

Stone Town Council

Report and proposals to the Environment Sub Committee from the Single Use Plastics Working Group. 29.11.2020

1. The Single Use Plastics working group (PWG) will not be proposing to merge with the Climate working group (CWG). Each group has important issues to deal with and the PWG can target its campaign more effectively if kept separate.
2. The PWG has preliminary reviewed SBC's draft Climate Strategy and Green Recovery Document. It appears to represent a comprehensive strategy for the whole Borough, which includes sections on the use of plastics and recycling. They are already implementing some aspects of the plan and will be implementing it over the coming months and years. The PWG believes that STC should be fully involved with the SBC plan so that Stone gets the full benefit of their actions and so that STC does not duplicate or contradict any strategies established for the Borough.
3. The PWG is seeking approval to ask STC office to carry out an internal audit of its use of plastic and paper. This will include reviewing alternatives to plastic and paper as well as disposal and recycling of any plastics used. The first steps towards the audit will be to ask SBC how they have implemented their audit and if STC can use the same model or guidance.
4. The PWG is seeking outline approval to work towards introducing a new Terms of Reference and Policy Document for all STC activities which sets standards and guidelines on the use of plastics as well as disposal and recycling. With outline approval the WG can move forward to develop a proposal for Council to consider.
5. The PWG is seeking approval to invite the author(s) of the SBC's draft Climate Strategy and Green Recovery Document to meet with the PWG. This will be to establish links and to begin the conversation on how we work together across Council on these issues. This will apply to the Climate Working Group too.
6. The PWG will be looking at ways that the Council can liaise with Stone businesses to encourage the reduction in use of plastics, especially single use. For example, this could involve collaboration with the Tourism Town Promotion Sub-Committee which has relationships with traders' associations and business groups.
7. The PWG is researching the potential for STC to support a recycling initiative for single use plastics and plastic waste that cannot go in the blue bin. This is an opportunity for STC to lead and support in this important aspect of environmental best practice. Research will include understanding SBC's plans and ambitions for the Borough as well as liaising with local groups such as Plastic Free Stone.
8. As the single use plastic initiative develops the PWG advocates that the Council contacts Stone schools to offer support and look for opportunities to collaborate and promote the reduction in use of plastic.
9. The WG has briefly discussed the opportunity and need for litter picking in Stone. The main purpose of the WG is to promote the reduction in use of plastics and to encourage recycling. This in itself reduces the amount of plastic pollution. Litter picking will not be part of the remit of this WG but Councillors will bring it to the Environment Committee for broader discussion.
10. A publicity and information strategy will be needed using the proposed STC 'Environment' web page, social media and local news organisations.