

# Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held virtually, on Tuesday 19 January 2021

**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, J. Davies, Mrs K. Dawson, M. Green,  
Mrs J. Hood, T. Kelt, P. Leason, J. Powell, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

**ABSENT:** Councillors: K. Argyle, Mrs L. Davies, I. Fordham, M. Hatton and J. Hickling

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**GP20/312**    **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors: K. Argyle, Mrs L. Davies, I. Fordham and J. Hickling

**GP20/313**    **Declarations of Interests**

None

**GP20/314**    **Requests for Dispensations**

None

**GP20/315**    **To receive the report of the County Councillors**

**County Councillor Mrs J. Hood**

Splitter Island

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that the planned meeting with County Highways officers to discuss the splitter island had needed to be cancelled due to sickness. The meeting has been rearranged to take place on 2 February 2021 and she will keep Town Councillors updated on the outcome.

Covid-19 Vaccination Program

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she had visited the County Showground today where the Covid-19 vaccinations are taking place. Her observations were that the program was running like clockwork and people were being treated with the upmost respect. She said that it had been very easy to park and to negotiate the vaccination point with so many very kind volunteers offering their support and promoting a relaxed atmosphere. She said we all owe our sincere thanks to them.

Vandalism in Town

Councillor Mrs Hood said that in her role as County Councillor she had met with Chief Inspector Giles Parsons twice over the last few weeks. He had answered her questions about local policing, openly and honestly. She said that Stone had been going through a bad time with what appears to be three individuals vandalising the town. This has included damage to phone shops.

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\* 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.

Councillor Mrs Hood said that it was clear the Police were on top of their game. They know who the culprits are and have arrested them countless times. The Police however have to work within the constraints of the law and asked that residents support officers who are doing all they can. Residents are offering their support by passing on CCTV footage and intelligence.

**County Councillor I. Parry**

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

**GP20/316 To receive the report of Borough Councillors**

No Borough Councillor report was made on this occasion.

**GP20/317 Representations from Members of the Public**

None

**GP20/318 Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 1 December 2020 (Minute No's GP20/295 – GP20/311), be approved as a correct record.

**GP20/319 Minutes of Sub-Committees**

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 15 December 2020, (Minute Numbers TTP20/047 – TTP20/057), that the draft minutes be noted and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number TTP20/052 be adopted. The recommendations contained in Minute Number TTP20/054 were considered under Minute Number GP20/320, as part of the Council's budget recommendations.
- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 15 December 2020, (Minute Numbers ENV20/038 – ENV20/044), that the draft minutes be noted and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number ENV20/043 be adopted. The recommendations contained in Minute Number ENV20/042 were considered under Minute Number GP20/320, as part of the Council's budget recommendations.
- c) Estates Sub-Committee held on 5 January 2021, (Minute Numbers EST20/030 – EST20/040), that the draft minutes be noted and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers EST20/034 and EST20/035 be adopted. The recommendations contained in Minute Number EST20/037 were considered under Minute Number GP20/320, as part of the Council's budget recommendations.
- d) Management Sub-Committee held on 5 January 2021, (Minute Numbers MAN20/041 – MAN20/052), that the draft minutes be noted and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers MAN20/045, MAN20/046, MAN20/047 and MAN20/048 be adopted. The recommendations contained in Minute Numbers MAN20/049 and

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MAN20/052 were considered under Minute Number GP20/320, as part of the Council's budget recommendations.

**GP20/320**     **2021-22 Budget Recommendation to the Council**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk\* (which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting) examining the budget and precept level for the financial year 2021-22 for recommendation to the Council.

Councillor Mrs Hood asked that the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee's recommendation for £3,250 to go into the budget for a community celebration in honour of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in 2022 be withdrawn due to the pressures the ongoing pandemic is causing. The Committee agreed that the 2021-22 budget for Town Council events should not be increased by £3,250 (Reference: Minute Number TTP20/054).

RESOLVED: To recommend to the Council that:

1. The Town Council budget for 2021-22 to 2023-24 should be as set out in the Clerk's report supplemented by the following additions:
  - a. Inclusion of the Estates Sub-Committee recommendation from minute EST20/037 to make provision for installation of a new dog bin in Priory Road at a cost of £100 in 2021-22 for installation and £250 annually for its regular emptying.
  - b. Inclusion of the Environment Sub-Committee recommendation from minute ENV20/042 to provide an additional Climate Change budget of £3,000 in 2021-22 for an external energy audit, web page development and public engagement work. This will add to any unspent balances from the current year's budget which will be rolled over.
  - c. Inclusion of the Tourism and Town Promotion Sub-Committee's recommendation from minute TTP20/054 for additional budgetary provision of £250 per annum for the Stone Remembrance Plaques Project.
  - d. Inclusion of the Management Sub-Committee recommendation from minute MAN20/052 of an additional £500 per annum towards a replacement telephone system.
  - e. The provision of a £5,000 budget in 2021-22 for Town Promotion to support the work of the Promotion of Stone Working Group.
  - f. In view of the potential uncertainty of the current situation, and how long it may continue, the provision a general contingency of £10,000 in 2021-22 to meet costs which may arise during the year but are not specifically included in the approved budget. Use of this budget will require specific approval by the General Purposes Committee and any amount remaining unused will be returned to the Council's reserves for use in future years.

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2. A precept of £319,818 is requested from Stafford Borough Council, exclusive of Local Council Tax Support Grant (£340,327 inclusive).
3. The Council Tax for 2021-22 is set at £51.61 for a Band D property, an increase of 96 pence per annum (1.9%) over the current year, with indicative increases of 1.9% in each of the following two years.

The Town Council and Town Clerk were congratulated and thanked for their work on the budget recommendations which had resulted in a recommended Council Tax increase of just 96 pence per annum for a Band D property.

**GP20/321 Annual Review of Risk Management**

The Committee received the report\* of the Town Clerk, and considered the annual review of the Council's Risk Management Policy, Strategy and Risk Register.

The Town Clerk confirmed that there were very few changes required as a result of the review except for additions relating to the risks presented by Covid-19.

RESOLVED: To accept the Annual Review of Risk Management.

**GP20/322 Stafford Borough Council Election Costs**

The Committee considered a letter from the Returning Officer at Stafford Borough Council which had been sent to the Town Council in response to the Town Clerk's request for a breakdown of the 2019 election costs for the Stonefield & Christchurch town ward.

A copy of the letter had been issued with the agenda for the meeting.

The Committee had raised questions about the value of the invoice for the Stonefield & Christchurch ward (totalling £8,497.13), at its meeting on 3 November 2020. See Minute Number GP20/291.

The Committee noted the information received from the Returning Officer.

**GP20/323 Non-Cheque Payments**

RESOLVED: To note the list\* of non-cheque payments made by the Council during the period 1 to 30 November 2020.

**GP20/324 Update from Working Groups:**

**Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

Councillor Mrs Hood confirmed that there was no change to the progress of the Draft Stone Neighbourhood Plan and there had been no meeting.

**Stone Area Parish Liaison Group**

The Chairman of the Liaison Group, Councillor Davies, advised the Committee that the next meeting of the Group would take place tomorrow (20 January 2021) and Chief Inspector Parsons would be in attendance.

**Traffic Management in Stone Working Group**

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

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**Promotion of Stone Working Group**

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

**GP20/325 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 no meeting had taken place.

**Age Concern Stone & District**

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

**Stafford & Stone Access Group**

Councillor T. Kelt advised the Committee that a meeting had been held on 18 January 2021 and the next meeting would be held in April.

**Stone Common Plot Trustees**

Councillor Mrs Hood confirmed that no meeting had taken place.

**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 attended the AGM and the meeting of the Executive Committee on 7 December 2020. He said the normal monthly meeting which had been scheduled to follow was not quorate.

**GP20/326 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**To resolve, 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.**

RESOLVED: To exclude the Press and Public from the next item of business.

**GP20/327 Confidential Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 1 December 2020 (Minute Numbers GP20/295 and GP20/311), be approved as a correct record.

**CHAIRMAN**