

# Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held virtually on Tuesday 15 December 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: M. Green, T. Kelt, R. Kenney, J. Powell and R. Townsend

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

**ABSENT:** Councillors: T. Adamson, K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess and M. Hatton

---

**ENV20/038** **Apologies**

Councillors: T. Adamson, K. Argyle and Mrs A. Burgess

**ENV20/039** **Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

None received

**ENV20/040** **Representations from Members of the Public**

None

**ENV20/041** **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on the 13 October 2020 (Minute Numbers ENV20/031 – ENV20/037), were approved as a correct record.

**ENV20/042** **Budget 2021-22 – 2023-24**

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Town Clerk\* which considered the level of budget that the Sub-Committee may wish to recommend to the General Purposes Committee meeting on 19 January 2021 for services under its control.

The Sub-Committee considered the need for future expenditure on Crown Meadow and agreed that many of the proposals from last year had been carried forward because of constraints on the works that could be undertaken due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chairman confirmed that he was awaiting a report on the need to remove and possibly relocate inappropriate species of trees on Crown Meadow and no specific provision had been made for this expenditure in the budget, though

unallocated sums previously agreed still remain unspent.

The Sub-Committee considered budgetary provision for the promotion of Crown Meadow and explored the possibility of doing this through A Little Bit of Stone, the Stone & Eccleshall Gazette, a promotional video, social media/website and enhancements to signage/information boards on the nature reserve. It was agreed that the Town Council should avoid the use of paper publicity (such as information leaflets).

RECOMMENDED: That the budget figures included in the Clerk's report are accepted, with the addition of an additional Climate Change budget of £3,000 for an external energy audit, web page development and public engagement work. This request is based on the assumption that the current year's unspent budgets of £2,750 for single use plastics and environmental issues engagement work will be rolled over into 2021-22.

### **ENV20/043    Reports of Working Groups**

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

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

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

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that the Single Use Plastics Working Group had met on several occasions and had made progress in defining its purpose and objectives. Several proposals for action had been put forward in the report which included:

- Liaising with Stafford Borough Council on its Climate Strategy and Green Recovery Plan. The Plan represents a comprehensive strategy for the whole Borough including Stone.
- Undertaking a Single Use Plastics audit on all Town Council activities to identify ways of reducing its use and recycling.
- Liaising with Stone businesses to discourage single use plastic use and to formulate an integrated single policy throughout the town.
- Supporting and promoting recycling initiatives and the reduction in single use plastics.
- Liaising and supporting students at schools with environmental activities relating to single use plastics and recycling.

A report was given on a young man who is undertaking a recycling

survey across Aston Lodge as part of his A-Level studies. He has circulated a survey with 690 respondents so far and the results will be shared in due course.

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that the Working Group had agreed it would not get directly involved with litter picking but would suggest Stone Town Council act as co-ordinator for litter picking services. It was suggested the item be discussed at a future Environmental Sub-Committee meeting.

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that the Working Group had proposed a review of the terms of reference for single use plastics so that all related activities are guided and supported.

The Sub-Committee expressed concern about the form of words in the proposed letter to schools (Appendix B of the Climate Working Group Progress Report) which it was agreed should be amended in part.

Councillor Townsend informed the Sub-Committee that the Single Use Plastics and Climate Working Groups would be kept separate for membership and budgetary purposes but the issues considered in each would be closely aligned. The appendices cover both working groups to streamline the process.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the proposals stated in the Working Group report are moved forward.

b) Environmental Issues Working Group

The Chairman invited Councillor Kelt to provide a verbal report on the work of the Environmental Issues Working Group.

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

Councillor Kelt confirmed that he would be concentrating on points one to six of the report which is where the budgetary requirements come from.

**Energy Audit and Action Plan (Point 1)**

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the items considered in both working groups were similar and the Climate Group had recommended undertaking an external energy audit. The Working Group would like the Town Clerk to investigate bringing in an external resource after liaison with the building owners of 15 Station Road, the Frank Jordan Centre and Stone Station.

**Merger of Climate Working Group and Single Use Plastics Group (Point 2)**

Councillor Kelt confirmed that this item had been considered above.

**Terms of Reference (Point 3)**

Councillor Kelt said the Working Group recommended the Town Council considers producing an Environmental Policy which will go in the handbook.

**County and Borough Council Plans (Point 4)**

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the Working Group recommends the Town Council fully understand the County and Borough Councils plans for climate emergency so that its activities are not duplicated.

**How the Approach is made (Point 5)**

The advice of the Town Clerk and County and Borough Councillors would be taken on how the County and Borough Councils should be approached.

**The Younger Generation (Point 6)**

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the Working Group would like to establish whether there is already work being undertaken in schools on the subject of environmental issues. A letter from the Town Council would be a starting point for making the approach.

Councillor Kelt offered to liaise with Councillor Mrs Hood and anyone else who would like to give their opinion on the content of the letter.

Councillor Mrs Hood advised that the Town Council does not contact schools before the spring/summer because of the tremendous strain they are under following the loss of teaching time caused by the pandemic. Making contact now would be adding to their pressure.

The Sub-Committee agreed that the letter would be refined and a timescale for its issue determined at the next Sub-Committee.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the working group would be involved in points 7 (Research) and 8 (Finance) at a later date as they were not current priorities. The Working group does however need to look at Point 9 (Publicity). Points 10 (Plan of Public Engagement) and 11 (to Identify existing Community Action Groups) cannot be dealt with at the present time.

Councillor Townsend was invited to speak about Crown Meadow. He said the nature reserve is a flagship environmental asset and the Town Council should be doing more to integrate it into its plans and to increase its publicity.

The Town Clerk confirmed that individual members of political groups could become members of Council working groups and related bodies, but political groups themselves could not appoint representatives.

RECOMMENDED: That the proposals above are approved.

The Chairman commended both working groups for their hard work.

**ENV20/044**    **Crown Meadow Improvements**

The Chairman provided an update on the proposed improvements to Crown Meadow. Councillor Leason said the maintenance work had progressed as well as was possible given the weather and Covid-19 restrictions.

He said the grounds maintenance contactor was looking to work on the scrapes in the springtime.

Councillor Townsend asked the Chairman for a list of the outstanding grounds maintenance jobs at Crown Meadow and it was agreed that a report would be given at the next meeting.

**Chairman**