

# Stone Town Council

## Minutes of the meeting held virtually on Tuesday 2 February 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 M. Green in the Chair and  
Councillors: A. Best, Mrs A. Burgess, J. Davies, Mrs L. Davies, K. Dawson, M. Hatton, J. Hickling, Mrs J. Hood, T. Kelt, R. Kenney, P. Leason, J. Powell, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

**ABSENT:** Councillors: K. Argyle and I. Fordham

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Before the meeting began Reverend Prebendary Cardinal led prayers

The Town Mayor informed Council Members that Tom Adamson had resigned from the Council and his position as a Councillor for the Stonefield and Christchurch Ward was now vacant.

The Town Mayor advised Members that the Town Council had followed the legal procedures required following the resignation of a Councillor. He said the Town Clerk had been told informally by Stafford Borough Council that the required number of residents had requested that an election be held to fill the vacancy, but formal confirmation was awaited.

A by-election is therefore expected to be held for the Stonefield and Christchurch Ward. Under current legislation, that election cannot be held before the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

The Town Mayor extended his thanks to Tom Adamson on behalf of the Town Council, whose enthusiasm and strong views on climate change had helped shape Stone Town Council policy.

### **C20/154** Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: K. Argyle and I. Fordham

### **C20/155** Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None

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**C20/156**    **Representations from Members of the Public**

There were no representations from members of the public.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Town Council's Public Participation Scheme was now suspended until after the by-election for the Stonefield and Christchurch Ward.

**C20/157**    **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Town Council held on the 1 December 2020 (Minute Numbers C20/145 – C20/153), be approved as a correct record.

**C20/158**    **Committee Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) The minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on the 1 December 2020 (Minute Numbers GP20/295 – GP20/311), were noted.
- b) The minutes of the Planning Consultative Committee meeting held on the 1 December 2020 (Minute Numbers P20/127 – P20/132), were noted.
- c) The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on the 5 January 2021 (Minute Numbers P20/133 – P20/138), were noted.
- d) The minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on the 19 January 2021 (Minute Numbers GP20/312 – GP20/327), were noted.

**C20/159**    **To Consider the Council's Budget for 2021-22 and to set the Council Tax for the Year**

The Council considered the Town Clerk's budget report\*, which was based on the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee on 19 January 2021. The Clerk confirmed in his report that the budget represented a sustainable position given the Town Council's expenditure plans.

Councillors expressed disappointment that it will now be necessary to increase the budget to cover the costs of a by-election when co-option could have been a possibility and just two years of the term was remaining.

Members acknowledged that the calling of an election was a democratic right afforded to all, but said they would be interested to know the identity of the individuals who had imposed the financial consequences on the town (which are set by Stafford Borough Council and estimated to be £9,000 to £9,500) at a time

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when everyone was struggling.

The Chairman advised the Committee that under S.228 of the Local Government Act 1972 the names of people supporting a request for an election are subject to public inspection. The Town Clerk confirmed that he was in discussion with the Borough Council's Legal Department and had requested further information.

RESOLVED:

In respect of the Town Council's budget for 2021-22 to 2023-24, it was resolved that:

1. The Budget recommended by the General Purposes Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021, and set out in the Clerk's report to this meeting, is agreed, with the addition of a £9,000 budget in 2021-22 to cover the cost of the by-election recently called by a number of Stone residents to fill the current Council vacancy.
2. The 2021-22 Council Tax for this Council's purposes should thus be £53.06 for a Band D property, rather than the £51.61 proposed by the General Purposes Committee, an increase of 4.8% over the current year, rather than 1.9%, with no change to the proposed indicative precept levels the following two years. This would result in a precept on Stafford Borough Council for 2021-22 of £328,803. Local Council Tax Support Grant of £20,509 will be added to this.
3. The wording for the 2021-22 Council Tax leaflet should be:

*"Stone Town Council provides services for the people and town of Stone.*

*These services include the provision of community facilities, such as the Frank Jordan and Stone Station community centres, allotment sites at Newcastle Road and Mount Road, and the Crown Meadow Nature Reserve and amphitheatre.*

*The 2021-22 budget includes additional funding to support the re-invigoration of our High Street following the pandemic, provide additional dog bin facilities and increase investment in the Council's commitment to tackle climate change. This is in addition to the development and operation of a new Heritage Centre within the exciting redevelopment at Crown Wharf. A sum of £9,000 has also been added to cover the cost of the by-election called by a number of Stone residents to fill the current Council vacancy.*

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*Investing in and working to promote a vibrant town and encourage visitors is a key Town Council priority. In order to support this, the Council organises regular events such as the Town Market and monthly Craft Market together with town centre events such as the Music Festival, Stone by the Sea, the Classic Car event and the St Georges Day celebration. Christmas lights are provided in the High Street and at Walton, with the Council's annual switch-on event being one of highlights of the town year. The High Street environment is enhanced by the Council's provision of hanging baskets along the High Street, and newly refurbished noticeboards and fingerposts throughout the town.*

*The Council provides bus shelters, benches and dog bins throughout the area and takes responsibility for the upkeep of many local amenities and planted areas. It also provides grants to help charitable and community organisations such as the Stone Community Hub, supports various festivals, and Council staff supply regular support and advice to local residents.*

*Whilst the pandemic has restricted a number of these activities in the last year, the Council is looking forward to being in a position to resume them all as soon as possible, and will continue with its financial backing of the Stone Helpline for as long as the current situation continues and the residents of the town need it.*

*By considering the impact of every planning application, the Council seeks to develop and conserve the town, and is currently awaiting the referendum on its Neighbourhood Plan so that it can help to shape and protect the future of Stone for years to come.*

*At its monthly meetings the Council welcomes questions from the public and sets aside time to listen and respond. Assistance with public questions will gladly be given by the Council's staff."*

4. The Clerk is authorised to seek tenders/quotations, place orders and make payments in accordance with this budget, the Council's policies, and Financial Regulations.

**C20/160 Local Government Transparency Code 2015  
Openness of Public Bodies Regulations 2014**

The Information\* for Quarter ending 31 December 2020 was noted.

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**C20/161 Civic Announcements**

There were no Civic Announcements due to the Coronavirus pandemic and Government requirements on social distancing.

**C20/162 Town Mayor's and Deputy Town Mayor's Reports of Engagements**

The Town Mayor's and Deputy Town Mayor's Announcements, which had previously been circulated, were noted.

**The meeting was suspended at this point to enable the public session of the General Purposes Committee meeting and the Planning Committee meeting to take place.**

**The Town Council was then reconvened for the confidential item on the agenda.**

**C20/163 To resolve, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the Public and Press be excluded from the meeting whilst the next item of business is 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.

**C20/164 Confidential Committee Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) The Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on the 1 December 2020 (Minute Numbers GP20/295 and GP20/311), were noted.

**TOWN MAYOR**

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