

Town Clerk

Les Trigg

Tel: 01785 619740

Email: clerk@stonetowncouncil.gov.uk

15 Station Road

STONE

ST15 8JP

8 April 2021

Dear Councillor,

A **VIRTUAL** meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** will be held on **TUESDAY 13 APRIL 2021 at 7:05pm** or upon the rising of the Town Council meeting, 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

AGENDA

1. **To receive apologies for absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Requests for Dispensations Received**
4. **To receive a report from County Councillors representing Stone Town**
 - County Councillor Mrs J. Hood
 - County Councillor I. Parry
5. **To receive a report from Borough Councillors representing Stone Town**
6. **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.

7. Minutes of Previous Meetings

- a) To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 24 February 2021, Minute No's GP20/347 – GP20/350 (attached).
- b) To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 2 March 2021, Minute No's GP20/351 – GP20/365 (attached).

8. Minutes of Sub-Committees

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 16 March 2021, Minute Numbers TTP20/058 – TTP20/065 (attached)
 - i. To consider the draft minutes
 - ii. To consider the Recommendations contained in Minute Number TTP20/062
- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 16 March 2021, Minute Numbers ENV20/045 – ENV20/052 (attached)
 - i. To consider the draft minutes
 - ii. To consider the Recommendations contained in Minute Number ENV20/051

9. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

To consider the notes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting held on 23 March 2021 (attached).

10. Appointment of Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor Elect

To consider the appointment of a Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor Elect.

11. Council Meetings

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

12. Stone Farmers' Market

To consider the use of the Market Square as part of the Stone Farmers' Markets on 1st May 2021 and 5th June 2021 to help support the return of the Market to the High Street.

13. Welcome Back Fund

To consider the attached letter sent by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Chairman of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) regarding the sharing of Welcome Back Fund allocations received by principal councils with town and parish councils in their area. Stafford Borough Council have been allocated £121,848 from this Fund.

14. Stafford District (B) Payphone Consultation

To consider a British Telecom consultation seeking views on proposals to remove telephone boxes in Stone after research has shown that the payphones are no longer regularly used.

An email from Stafford Borough Council is attached along with a spreadsheet detailing the locations of the telephone boxes and a BT notice offering kiosk adoption.

15. Parish Council Workshop – Invitation

To determine attendance at the Parish Council Workshop organised by Stafford Borough Council. A copy of the invitation is attached.

16. Town Council Payments

To receive a list of payments made by the Council during the period 1 to 28 February 2021 (attached). This replaces the previous “Non-Cheque Payments Report” as most payments are now made electronically.

17. Update from Working Groups:

- a) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
- b) Stone Area Parish Liaison Group
- c) Traffic Management in Stone Working Group
- d) Promotion of Stone Working Group
- e) Heritage Centre Working Group (including considering the appointment of external co-opted members to the group)

18. 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 – Mayor & J. Davies

Age Concern Stone & District – Cllr C. Thornicroft

Stafford & Stone Access Group – Cllr T. Kelt

Stone Common Plot Trustees – Cllrs: Mrs L. Davies, Mrs J. Hood, T. Kelt and R. Kenney

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group – Cllrs: M. Hatton, Mrs J. Hood & J. Powell

SPCA Executive Committee – Cllr M. Green

Members of the public are welcome to attend the General Purposes Committee meeting as observers and/or to make representations to the committee in accordance with the Council’s scheme of public participation. Details of the scheme are displayed in the Council’s notice boards and website.

NOTE: Due to the pending by-election for the Stonefield and Christchurch Ward, the Town Council’s Public Participation Scheme is currently suspended.

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held virtually, on Tuesday 24 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 Mrs J. Hood in the Chair, and
Councillors: A. Best, J. Davies, Mrs L. Davies, I. Fordham, M. Green, T. Kelt,
J. Powell, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

ABSENT: Councillors: K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess, Mrs K. Dawson, M. Hatton, J. Hickling,
R. Kenney and P. Leason

GP20/347 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess,
Mrs K. Dawson, J. Hickling, R. Kenney and P. Leason

GP20/348 Declarations of Interests

None

GP20/349 Requests for Dispensations

None

GP20/350 HS2 Phase 2a

The Committee considered the Town Council's response to a Government consultation seeking the views of residents in a number of local authority areas on a variety of topics including the environmental and traffic impacts of the HS2 Phase 2a Scheme works between the West Midlands and Crewe.

A copy of the consultation document had been attached to the electronic version of the agenda.

A draft paper containing a response to the consultation had been prepared by the Town Clerk and circulated to all Town Councillors prior to the start of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee accepts the draft paper (attached as an appendix to the minutes) as the Town Council's response to the HS2 Phase 2a consultation under Clause 60 of the High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Bill as amended in the House of Lords.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the General Purposes Committee is authorised to make any necessary minor amendments to the consultation response, should the need arise.

CHAIRMAN

* 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.

Response to Consultation under Clause 60 of the High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Bill as Amended in the House of Lords

Introduction

Stone Town Council is the local council which represents over 16,000 residents within the urban area of Stone in North Staffordshire. The Town Council has previously petitioned both the House of Commons and the House of Lords in respect of aspects of the proposed high speed rail link between the Midlands and Crewe.

The Town Council's concerns relate largely (but not exclusively) to the proposed Stone Railhead/Infrastructure Maintenance Base and its impact on the town, both during its construction and its ongoing operation. Within its petitions, the Council and its partner parish councils have presented a significantly more viable option for re-siting the railhead, but those proposals were not accepted.

This submission, therefore, restricts itself to answering the four questions posed in Clause 60 of the High Speed Rail (West Midlands – Crewe) Bill as Amended in the House of Lords. These answers will, however, focus mainly on the Railhead/Infrastructure Maintenance Base due to the excessive adverse impact this is expected to have on the area.

Question A – The impact of road traffic as a result of the HS2 Phase 2a works.

The Town Council has previously challenged HS2 on its estimated number of HGV movements during the construction of HS2 and the railhead. The company has failed to provide information on its calculations of HGV movements, but the Council remains convinced that this number has been significantly underestimated.

Even without taking this into account, however, the Council still has very major concerns regarding HGV movements and their impact on the town:

1. A significant number of HGV movements are planned for the Eccleshall Road, through the residential area of Pirehill Lane and up to the top using the old dirt track to the proposed Yarlet Embankment satellite compound, then returning.

There are, however, two new housing developments along that route containing a total of 570 residential homes. These residential developments, Udall Grange and Langdon Green, are not shown on HS2 maps and so are unlikely to have been taken into account when traffic levels or other environment issues were assessed.

The Pirehill Lane route cuts through a densely populated residential estate to reach the satellite compound at Yarlet. The use of this route by HGVs would be likely to

force Tilling Drive to become a rat run for schools and other traffic, and could create a hazard for parents and very young children attending the three nurseries, two first schools and one middle school in that area.

The route along Eccleshall Road to the Walton Roundabout, which feeds both Stone town and the A34, is already heavily congested particularly at peak times. These two new housing developments will already create a significant increase in congestion along this route without any additional HS2 traffic. Additional HS2 traffic can only add to this severe traffic problem.

2. HS2 initially proposes to use the use the eastern end of Yarnfield Lane and its connection with the A34 at the Wayfarer public house for HGV access for around 15-18 months until the proposed links to the M6 open. This was originally predicted by HS2 to require one HGV movement onto and off the A34 every three minutes, but current intentions are less clear. Once the M6 connections are open HS2 is expecting the western end of Yarnfield Lane to be used by up to 1 HGV every 30 seconds in each direction. This appears to the Council to be unrealistic and would be likely to result in HS2 contractors seeking extensions to the working hours, with the resultant increased impact on local residents. Taking this into account together with the additional residential traffic/HGV movements referred to in the previous point would create a risk of economic paralysis to both Stone High Street and the surrounding business parks as motorists seek to avoid the A34 and A51 due to the extreme congestion likely on those roads.
3. An unfortunately all too regular occurrence in the area is a closure of the M6 between Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent, usually due to an accident. In these cases, whether northbound or southbound, motorway traffic is diverted onto the A34 through Stone usually resulting in a virtual “car park” along much of the A34 until after the motorway is re-opened. Additional HS2 traffic will only compound this already major problem.
4. In addition to the above, the A34 is a major route for emergency service vehicles, and any addition to existing congestion could have risks to the lives of residents of the area. For example, the A34 is the main route for ambulances from south of Stone, including the major residential town of Stafford, to the accident and emergency facilities at North Staffordshire hospital. Speedy access to this A&E department are essential due to the limited A&E opening times and facilities at Stafford Hospital.

In addition, the Stone Fire Station exits directly onto the A34. Any additional congestion could significantly affect the ability of the fire service to respond to incidents in a timely fashion, thereby threatening both local lives and property.

5. The A51 is currently used by cycle clubs who ride in large groups. The many additional HGVs that will use this route to access the sites near Stone will present a threat to their safety and potentially even stop them cycling for this reason. Current

government policy is to encourage healthy activities such as cycling, not put obstacles in the way.

Our petition to the House of Lords included our deep concerns for the safety of cyclists using the A51/A34 roundabout junction at the Stone Business Park. In order to relieve congestion that it will create, HS2 is proposing to construct a free flow lane between the A51 and the A34 southbound carriageway, however the Council has severe concerns about the safety of this proposal for cyclists.

Question B – The impact of the phase 2a works on the natural environment, including but not limited to the impact on ancient woodland.

This question has been answered with respect to wider environmental impacts, and not just limited to the natural environment.

Firstly, it is a major concern of the Town Council that works on the railhead site will be carried out day and night and once it is in operation as an infrastructure maintenance base it will both be supplied at night from the Norton Bridge to Stone Railway, and send its trains out onto the HS2 mainline to maintain it. This is likely to result in a significant and ongoing disruption to residents, particularly those in the Udall Grange, Langdon Green estates and parts of Manor Hill, in respect of:

1. Light pollution, as the site will be lit up at night to allow works to take place.
2. Noise levels, due to construction noise day and night
3. Air pollution, due to dust and other polluting materials from the construction site.

Despite having been granted outline planning permission years before HS2 submitted its proposals as part of the hybrid bill process, the environmental effects on these properties do not appear to have not been carried out by HS2.

A review needs to be undertaken of construction procedures and times of operation to minimise the impact of these problems on residents.

Secondly, it is well documented that in the first phase of HS2, contractors are breaking promises made during the consultation process and communities on the route of HS2 are facing “complete chaos” as a result.

A government cross-party transport select committee meeting was told that:

In particular, HS2 contractors working on the first phase of the line have been accused of “demolishing first, then designing later [...] failing to stick to approved HGV routes [...] introducing last minute traffic diversions [...] damaging local roads and properties [...] and using temporary land take for longer than originally set out”.

At the meeting, MPs, local councillors and senior environmental figures called for independent “sheriffs” to ensure contractors working on HS2 are kept in check.

To help mitigate this behaviour, we would like to ask that funding from HS2 would be made available to Stone Town Council to employ “Sheriffs”, along similar lines to those proposed

at the above meeting. This should help to ensure that this type of behaviour is closely monitored, and action taken quickly to deal with it.

Question C - Whether there are sufficient transport provisions for the purposes of passengers connecting to HS2 Phase 2a and to address changes to general passenger movements caused by the HS2 Phase 2a works.

Despite all the disruption that the building of HS2 Phase 2a will create for Stone residents, their “reward” for this will be a significant downgrading of their inter-city rail services once HS2 is in operation.

Currently it is a short journey by rail or car to Stafford Railway Station, where residents can enjoy a regular and speedy rail service to, for example, Liverpool, Manchester and London Euston. The HS2 proposals include some provision for continued links between Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent stations and the main HS2 line, but this in itself appears to be an inferior service to those currently operating via the West Coast Mainline. Should this service prove unviable, Stone residents would need to travel to either Crewe or Birmingham to join HS2. Each of these would be a significant journey in their own right, and result in a time to travel to London, for example, much greater than that currently enjoyed locally. Even catching a train from Stone or Stafford to get to Birmingham would result in termination at New Street Station, requiring further travel within Birmingham to Curzon Street in order to board HS2.

A further problem for the area would be the impact of HS2 on the capacity of the existing Norton Bridge to Stone railway by adding one train each way per hour to link to Macclesfield. This limits the scope for the use of this line to introduce new services to the area.

Question D - whether the construction of new railway stations and improvements to railway stations, including any reopening of lines, is necessary in relation to question C.

As referred to above, Stone Town Council and its parish council partners have previously proposed an alternative location for the railhead/infrastructure maintenance base at Aldersey’s Rough near to the M6 Keele Services. It is the Council’s strong view that this would have been a more viable option and provided a better and less expensive option for HS2 overall.

The use of Aldersey’s Rough instead of Stone would also facilitate the reopening of the former Newcastle/Stoke to Market Drayton line which would prove the catalyst to create new direct train services across the Potteries conurbation via Crewe to Manchester Airport, Liverpool and other North West towns and cities.

It would also enable stations close to Stone, such as Wedgwood and Barlaston to reopen to train services and provide additional local services through our town to Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent.

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held virtually, on Tuesday 2 March 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 L. Davies, Mrs K. Dawson,
I. Fordham, M. Green, T. Kelt, P. Leason, J. Powell, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

ABSENT: Councillors: K. Argyle, M. Hatton, J. Hickling and Mrs J. Hood

GP20/351 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: K. Argyle and Mrs J. Hood

GP20/352 Declarations of Interests

None

GP20/353 Requests for Dispensations

None

GP20/354 To receive the report of the County Councillors

County Councillor Mrs J. Hood

Councillor Mrs Hood was not in attendance at the meeting.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP20/355 To receive the report of Borough Councillors

The Chairman invited Councillor Fordham to address the Committee.

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that following a public consultation, the Borough Council had (at its last meeting) approved its Corporate Business Plan 2021-24. The vote had been 22 in favour to 0, but with 17 abstentions. All Borough Independent Councillors abstained on the vote due to concerns that the Plan had failed to mention the second phase development on Westbridge Park. Reassurances have been given that the project remains in the plans.

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that Stafford Borough Council (at the same meeting) had agreed a 1.9% rise in the tax residents will pay for Borough Council services in the year 2021-22.

Councillor Fordham reported on an initiative led by Stone Borough Councillors in response to concerns about recent crime levels in the town.

* 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.

The three ward councillors for St Michael's and Stonefield have been meeting with the local Police Commander and his deputy since the autumn to discuss crime levels in Stone. The purpose of the meetings was to understand and support the police response and help with intelligence gathering and dissemination of information. The liaison meetings, which have been productive for both Councillors and Police, are now being expanded to a town wide initiative by including the ward Councillors for Walton.

Town Councillors have also been asked to nominate a representative from their number for each of the four town wards. Residents will now be represented by their elected member, maximising the possibility of productive dialogue with the Police and a positive change to the levels of crime in the town.

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that, notwithstanding its resource constraints, Staffordshire Police had been very active and increasingly successful in apprehending offenders and bringing them before the courts.

GP20/356 Representations from Members of the Public

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

GP20/357 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 2 February 2021 (Minute No's GP20/328 – GP20/346), be approved as a correct record.

GP20/358 Minutes of Sub-Committees

There were no minutes for consideration.

GP20/359 Heritage Centre

The Committee considered the membership of a working group to consider the internal layout, fittings and use of the Heritage Centre.

RESOLVED: To appoint Councillor Kenney, Councillor Mrs J. Hood and Councillor Leason to the Heritage Centre Working Group. These representatives will identify and invite further members with appropriate skills and knowledge to join the Group, subject to the approval of the General Purposes Committee.

GP20/360 Planning Application Validation Criteria Consultation

The Committee considered a Stafford Borough Council consultation seeking views on its Planning Application Validation Criteria setting out the information needed to assess planning applications.

An email from Stafford Borough Council had been attached to the agenda for the meeting and a copy of the Local Validation Requirements had been attached to the electronic version of the agenda.

* 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.

The Chairman invited the Chairman of the Planning Consultative Committee, Councillor J. Davies, to lead the item.

Councillor Davies informed the Committee that he welcomed the intentions of the consultation, believing it to provide useful guidance to planning applicants, but that it could be more user friendly.

Councillor Davies said the steps comprising the planning process are not explained and should be set out clearly, perhaps in the form of a flow chart, giving easy reference to the appropriate details that will guide prospective applicants. He suggested the decision making process (how and when) be made clear and the circumstances where the Borough Council's Planning Committee become involved. Information should also be included about the ward Member who may call the application in.

Councillor Davies expressed the view that it was both disappointing and worrying that the role of town and parish councils was not mentioned in the document which he considered was further evidence of the local planning authority's disdain for the opinion that local councils represent. He said Town Councillors had been mystified by the Borough Council's decision to reject the call to amend its constitution to give parishes an absolute right to speak at planning committee meetings. The reason for declining to do so was unconvincing and the Borough Council remain out of alignment with the practices of over 90% of other district level councils in England.

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that there was no formal reference or acknowledgement in the Planning Application Validation Criteria to neighbourhood plans. Made and adopted neighbourhood plans should form part of the statutory Development Plan along with Part 1 and Part 2 of the adopted Local Plan.

Councillor Davies informed the Committee that Barlaston Parish Council was unhappy that the adopted Barlaston Neighbourhood Plan had been disregarded by the Borough Council. He called for Stafford Borough Council to be asked to explain the reason they are ignoring neighbourhood plans.

He thanked the Parish Clerk at Barlaston for sharing the views of the parish council's planning consultant, Urban Vision, who had also given the Town Council highly valuable services in the preparation of its own neighbourhood plan.

Councillor Davies questioned the reason the Borough Council is unwilling to engage with local communities and made reference to non compliance with its own 'Statement of Community Involvement' policy.

The Committee were invited to add additional comments and Councillor Fordham suggested that the timescales for the planning application validation and consultation processes are also included as useful information for applicants.

RESOLVED: That a response to the Planning Application Validation Criteria Consultation is compiled (before the close date of 14 April 2021) by the Town Clerk in consultation with Councillor J. Davies, Councillor R. Kenney and Councillor I. Fordham.

* 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.

GP20/361 Non-Cheque Payments

RESOLVED: To note the list* of non-cheque payments made by the Council during the period 1 to 31 January 2021.

GP20/362 Update from Working Groups:

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Councillor Kenney confirmed that there was no update as the Town Council await the Stone Neighbourhood Plan referendum in May.

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group

Councillor Davies, advised the Committee that the notes for the meeting in January had been circulated. He said they illustrated the value of the discussion taking place and a lot of good work with the Police. The next meeting will be in April.

Traffic Management in Stone Working Group

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

Promotion of Stone Working Group

Councillor Powell advised the Committee that there had been three productive meetings of the Working Group this year.

The trader representatives had reported that the Christmas period had been quiet but the feedback was very positive in respect of the free parking provision. There was a positive attitude to 2021 and all believe the economic bounce back will be speedy.

Councillor Powell reported that the Working Group was midway, looking at promotions to help the town through lockdown and post lockdown with continued restrictions. It was focusing on local businesses and residents and how best to put the plans into action.

He said that a 'No Place Like Stone' promotion was being formulated along with other promotions, although moving forward with ongoing uncertainty was challenging. He said that all members of the Group were focussed on the future.

Councillor Powell advised the Committee that the Working Group was building a plan for marketing its ideas and was getting closer to putting them into action. With that in mind the group will be asking for a fund to cover promotional and marketing needs.

GP20/363 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

* 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 T. Kelt advised the Committee that no meeting had taken place and the next meeting would be in April.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Kenney confirmed that no meeting had taken place.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Kenney confirmed that no meeting had taken place.

SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Green advised the Committee that for personal reasons he had been unable to attend the meeting held last night.

GP20/364 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.

The meeting was suspended at this point to enable the Planning Committee meeting and confidential section of the Town Council meeting to take place.

The General Purposes Committee meeting was then reconvened for the confidential item on the agenda.

GP20/365 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on the 2 February 2021 (Minute Numbers GP20/328 and GP20/346), be approved as a correct record.

CHAIRMAN

Stone Town Council – Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held virtually on Tuesday 16 March 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 Mrs J. Hood in the Chair and
Councillors: A. Best, J. Davies, M. Green, R. Kenney, P. Leason and J. Powell

By Chairman's invitation: No Councillors

ABSENT: Councillors: I. Fordham and C. Thornicroft

TTP20/058 Apologies

Councillors: I. Fordham and C. Thornicroft

TTP20/059 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation

None received

TTP20/060 Representations from Members of the Public

None

TTP20/061 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee meeting held on the 15 December 2020 (Minute Numbers TTP20/047 – TTP20/057), were approved as a correct record.

TTP20/062 Calendar of Events 2021

The Chairman invited the Sub-Committee to consider the arrangements for Stone Town Council events through 2021 when it was hoped the Covid-19 crisis would be easing.

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs Hood, expressed her view that putting events in the calendar, and making plans as soon as circumstances allow, would offer everyone something to look forward to and a glimmer of optimism for the town.

The Sub-Committee agreed that the Town Council events which could provisionally be added to the calendar now were Civic Sunday on 11 July, Civic Carols Service on 12 December 2021 and possibly Trafalgar Dinner in October.

* 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.

The Sub-Committee acknowledged that many other events held in the town relied upon a large number of participants from outside of the Council and in respect of the annual Music Festival, a complex and lengthy planning process. As the legal limits on social distancing are not ending until 21 June, it was agreed that High Street events could not feasibly be arranged until this date had arrived.

The Sub-Committee agreed that the Music Festival be postponed for a further review after the Government's phased easing of lockdown measures had concluded and a successful outcome was hopefully emerging.

RECOMMENDED: That the Town Council sets a provisional date on the second Saturday in September (Saturday 11 September 2021) for a Music Festival, which should be confirmed along with other High Street event dates, after 21 June 2021.

RECOMMENDED: That the Town Clerk is asked to contact the participants usually involved in the Music Festival to seek their support for an event in September when it is hoped the circumstances (relating to Covid-19) will be favourable.

TTP20/063 Christmas Lights

The Sub-Committee reviewed the 2020 Christmas lighting provision and considered any improvements that could be introduced in 2021.

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that she had attended a productive meeting on 8 March 2021 with the Town Clerk and Christmas lighting contractor. The topics discussed had included the anchor point and catenary wire breakage in the 2020 High Street display and potential options for lighting displays in 2021 around the Plane tree and at Walton shops.

Councillor Mrs Hood said that she would like 2021 to be the year when a good display of lights is installed at the Walton shops as she considered local people had been short changed over a number of years. However, an existing project to install new lights hadn't been without its difficulties – in respect of the means by which new lights could be mounted and supported and in obtaining the necessary permissions – which were explained in detail by the Town Clerk.

The Sub-Committee expressed its disappointment that the project had not come to fruition and asked the Town Clerk in consultation with the Christmas lighting contractor to do their very best to ensure the challenges are resolved and the project completed in time for the Christmas season.

TTP20/064 Bunting

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that the Christmas Lighting contractor would be in town very early on 11 April to install the bunting. She said it was an important task because it will give hope to the residents and businesses in the town and ensure the High Street looks and hopefully feels festive.

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Reports from Working Groups

To receive reports from Working Groups:

Town Centre Appearance and Environment Working Group

No report was available from the Working Group.

Town Centre Events and Attractions Working Group

No report was available from the Working Group.

Councillor Kenney pointed out to the Sub-Committee that the Town Centre Appearance and Environment Working Group and the Town Centre Events and Attractions Working Group had been superseded by other working groups and should be removed from the agenda.

Remembrance Plaques Working Group

Councillor Davies advised the Sub-Committee that he was pleased the recommendation from the last meeting had been approved by the General Purposes Committee. He said the working group hadn't physically met yet (as this hadn't been possible) but he had sketched out an idea for the plaque which will be circulated to members of the group.

Councillor Davies said that Oak Tree Farm had agreed in principle to work with the Working Group to produce the plaques but the current circumstances make it impossible to take the project any further.

He said the project would prove a useful tie in with preparations for the 70th Anniversary of the Accession of Her Majesty next year, when it was hoped all in the town would be involved.

Chairman

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Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held virtually on Tuesday 16 March 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 P. Leason in the Chair and
Councillors: M. Green, T. Kelt, R. Kenney, J. Powell and R. Townsend

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

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

ENV20/045 Apologies

Councillors: K. Argyle and Mrs A. Burgess

ENV20/046 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None received

ENV20/047 Representations from Members of the Public

None

ENV20/048 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on the 15 December 2020 (Minute Numbers ENV20/038 – ENV20/044), were approved as a correct record.

ENV20/049 Dog Fouling

The Sub-Committee considered the issue of dog fouling in the town and the need for the provision of dog bins.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that dog ownership had increased during the Covid-19 pandemic along with an increase in reports of dog fouling on pavements and grass verges in the town. He expressed the need for dog owners to be educated about the health risks of not picking up dog faeces and remind them that they could be fined.

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that he would be arranging to collect stickers from Stafford Borough Council reminding dog owners to pick up the mess and be more public spirited. The stickers will be taken to a central

location for collection and use by all.

The Chairman read out an email he had received from Mr David Barratt of Regent Travel expressing concern about an ongoing dog fouling issue in the High Street near his shop. The Streetscene Co-Ordinator has arranged for the Borough Council's Enforcement Officer to investigate the matter and to install stickers in appropriate places.

The Chairman asked the Sub-Committee for its thoughts on whether it would wish to work with the Borough Council to install additional dog bins.

Some Sub-Committee Members expressed their support whilst pointing out that bins cannot be installed on lamp posts, highlighting the need to be sure about where they are going to go.

Other Members did not support dog bins, believing it was entirely the dog owners responsibility to take their dog waste home. Dog bins are expensive to empty and people don't want them located near their homes and businesses.

The Sub-Committee concluded that more bins was not the answer to the problem and dog owners needed to be prepared to pick the dog faeces up off the ground. Education on the health risks and penalties is what is needed.

The Committee suggested that members of the public need to know how to report dog fouling incidents they witness and this information needs to be publicised in public places. Stickers and signage would serve this purpose and the Enforcement Officer would be sure to welcome the intelligence.

ENV20/050 Crown Meadow Improvements

The Chairman updated the Sub-Committee on the outstanding grounds maintenance jobs at Crown Meadow:

Tree removal and replanting: removal of four willow and silver birch trees from both scrapes and their replanting as part of a hedge along the perimeter of Crown Meadow to shield the M&S building. The Grounds maintenance contractor is scheduled to undertake this work during March 2021.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that in autumn the leaves fill up the scrapes.

The Chairman said that additional trees would also be required for planting and suggested inviting local people to sponsor a tree to commemorate a special anniversary. He suggested that ten trees in total would be needed (the four that were relocated and six new trees).

A question was raised about the need to remove the trees, especially the willow which may already be positioned in its natural habitat, with a suggestion that coppicing should first be attempted. The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee

that willow grow very large and would eventually cover the scrapes. Councillor Leason said the Biodiversity Officer had recommended the course of action planned (although he will check the point again).

Weed clearance: top off area by the old bridge. Clear weeds and spray. The Grounds maintenance contractor is scheduled to undertake this work during March 2021.

Scrape 1: dig out area to create shallow pond and plant wildflowers. Cut a new path around the scrape. A possible completion date will be the end of the summer due to frogs and newts on the Meadow.

Sub-Committee members expressed annoyance at having to pay to have bullrushes removed to control their growth each and every year that passes.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee about the specific projects at Crown Meadow which included providing an 80m path across the amphitheatre with ramp rather than steps. The Crown Meadow paths would also be widened involving removal of over growth and the patching of stones.

The Sub-Committee asked that the maintenance contractor receive a written thank you sent on behalf of the Town Council for the work he undertakes, quietly, quickly and expertly.

The Sub-Committee reiterated the need to create publicity and information around Crown Meadow so that people are aware of this green asset, unusually located, very close to the town.

ENV20/051 Membership of Working Groups

The Chairman invited Councillor Townsend to advise the Sub-Committee on this item.

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that the working groups are actively developing proposals and projects they wish to take forward. However both working groups need to be strengthened in number as there are some members who regularly attend meetings and some members who do not. Both are looking for one or two additional members to join their groups.

RECOMMENDED: That Councillor J. Powell joins the Single Use Plastics Working Group.

RECOMMENDED: That additional members are invited to join the Single Use Plastics Working Group and Environmental Issues Working Group when the minutes are considered by the General Purposes Committee (during recommendations from the Environment Sub-Committee).

ENV20/052 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 been meeting regularly and had been shaping up its purpose, aims and objectives.

The working group is working with the Town Clerk in conjunction with the Environmental Issues Working Group to develop a draft policy document that will inform and enable all Town Council activities to take climate and plastic use proposals into consideration.

The Working Group considers it a very important exercise to meet with relevant officers at Stafford Borough Council and Councillor Kenney is setting this up. The objective is to understand the Borough Council's policy on single use plastics and to see which elements the Town Council could adopt and implement.

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that the following two proposals were detailed in the report:

- That Stone Town Council should undertake an internal audit of its own use of plastics
- That communications are opened with Roots of Stafford and Manor Hill First School (who offer public recycling points for plastic and other materials not accepted into blue bins) to see how the Town Council can support and publicise their services.

A question was raised about exploring the cost of alternatives to single use plastics when they are removed from use. The Town Clerk informed the Sub-Committee that plastics would be removed where reasonable to do so and that the Council would have to consider the cost implications against the benefits of removing the plastic.

b) Environmental Issues Working Group

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

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

Councillor Kelt provided the Sub-Committee with an update on feedback he had received on points one to seven of the report:

Energy Audit and Action Plan (Point 1)

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the Town Council had been asked to proceed with an initial investigation.

The Town Clerk confirmed that he had made contact with Stafford Borough Council and the owners of the Stone Station. He said the item was progressing.

Terms of Reference (Point 2)

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the Working Group considered it to make sense for the terms of reference to cover all environmental activities of the Council (the work of both working groups).

Councillor Kelt advised that the Town Clerk would create a policy document and assess the potential costs. He will report to the next Environment Sub Committee.

Councillor Kelt said he had no feedback from Councillors (after seeking their views prior to the meeting) and hoped that indicated there were no objections to the paper.

Review Copies of Staffordshire County Council and Stafford Borough Council Meeting Minutes (Point 3)

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the Working Group would be working in conjunction with the Single Use Plastics group on this item.

Liaise with County and Borough Council (Point 4)

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the Working Group would be working in conjunction with the Single Use Plastics Working Group on this item.

Liaise with Schools (Point 5)

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the letter* (attached to the agenda for the meeting) had been revised and accepted for issue. The working group proposes to send the letter out during the Easter break in the hope that it would be addressed during the summer term.

Review other council websites on climate emergency (Point 6)

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the Working Group had looked at a number of different websites and was picking out the best points to incorporate into its plans.

Identifying Local Community Actions Groups (Point 7)

Councillor Townsend confirmed that he would be undertaking this task soon.

The Chairman, Councillor Leason, suggested that the Working Groups consider establishing a Town Mayor's award to commend schools and youth organisations for reducing single use plastic, their work in protecting the environment and in making Stone a greener place. He said it would be nice to be able to present a signed certificate from the Town Mayor demonstrating the Town Council's appreciation for the work undertaken.

Chairman

Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group

Notes of the meeting held on Tuesday 23 March 2021

NOTE: Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic (COVID-19) and Government Guidelines on public gatherings, the meeting was held virtually on Zoom.

PRESENT: Councillors:

Mrs J. Hood (Chairman), A. Best, M. Green and R. Kenney

Also: Mrs H. Barter (Urban Vision), A. Osgathorpe and Mr L. Trigg

APOLOGIES: Councillor: J. Powell

Also: Mrs J. Bonser

ABSENT: Councillor: I. Fordham

To consider the preparations required in advance of the Neighbourhood Plan referendum on 6 May 2021

The Chairman invited Hannah Barter to update the Steering Group on the neighbourhood plan referendum process.

Hannah reminded members that the referendum result was based on the votes of those that turn out on the day and if 50% or more of the electors vote 'yes' the plan will be made.

The plan does not have to go through any further process after the referendum result and will be made immediately at that point.

Stafford Borough will pay for the administration of the referendum including the polling cards. The Borough Council will advertise the referendum and the Town Council will be able to notify the community and remind residents (listed on the electoral register) to come out and vote.

Hannah read the following paragraph from the Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide explaining what parish and town councils are entitled to do in respect of publicity for the referendum: *'the neighbourhood plan body may encourage voting and disseminate information on the proposed neighbourhood plan, within reasonable expense limits. Public money and parish councils can only produce factual material about the neighbourhood plan, not promote a yes vote. However members of the parish council and others may act independently using independent funds, to campaign for a 'yes' vote'.*

Hannah advised the Sub-Committee that the question on the ballot paper will be:

* 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.

‘Do you want Stafford Borough Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Stone Town Council Neighbourhood Area to help it decide planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area?’.

The Town Clerk advised the Steering group that it had been a difficult task trying to establish what town and parish councils are permitted to do in relation to publicity. The legislation is very clear in respect of what Borough/District Councils are allowed to do and what individual councillors are able to do but there is no mention of town and parish councils. Information on the internet was conflicting and neither NALC nor Stafford Borough Council were willing to offer advice.

The Steering Group agreed that it should follow the advice of the ‘Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide’ (produced by Locality). The Town Council can promote the election, encourage people to vote but not to be seen to be encouraging a ‘yes’ vote.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that If anyone, councillors or not, wanted to run a campaign (‘yes or ‘no’) they are constrained by the election expense rules that apply to all other elections.

The Steering Group agreed that a press release should be issued after the General Purposes Committee meeting (on 13 April 2021), and that advertisements would be placed on ‘A Little Bit of Stone’ and in the Stone & Eccleshall Gazette.

Hannah advised the Steering Committee about producing posters and website content which should include a link to the neighbourhood plan with a reminder to vote. People should also be told that if 50% or more people turn out and vote ‘yes’ on the day, the plan will be made.

Hannah advised the Steering Group that the important work will begin after the plan is made. Barlaston Parish Council has been concerned that Stafford Borough Council is not using the neighbourhood plan policies when producing their decisions (and is not referencing them). Urban Vision has written to the Borough Council (on the parish council’s behalf) stating that it is making unlawful decisions.

She said that if the Borough Council chooses not to use the policies in the neighbourhood plan there has to be a material consideration, otherwise the decision is unlawful.

Hannah advised the Steering Group to monitor the Borough Council’s decisions and to submit a letter to the Borough as soon as possible after any decision notice has been issued where there may be reason to believe that a decision is unlawful. A copy of Urban Vision’s draft letter to the Borough Council can be obtained from the Parish Clerk at Barlaston for adaption.

Hannah advised the Steering Group that Town Council representations should include information about how the Borough Council is both meeting policies and failing to meet policies (with policy reference numbers quoted).

The Steering Group suggested adding a standard paragraph to each planning representation and Hannah advised that the following statement be incorporated at the beginning:

* 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.

The neighbourhood plan forms part of the statutory development plan, together with the adopted Stafford Borough Part 1 and Part 2 Local Plan. You will be aware of the requirement of Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that planning decisions be made in accordance with the statutory development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The requirements of Section 38 have been clarified through subsequent caselaw.

The Chairman asked Hannah's advice about a number of instances in the town where Local Green Infrastructure has been sold by auction with planning applications now expected. Hannah suggested that a Zoom meeting be arranged to discuss these individual cases when planning applications are made. Town Council representations should include the evidence base originally collected in relation to the Local Green Infrastructure, and other things such as the Plan's community facilities policies to strengthen the argument.

Hannah pointed out that the Town Council could, following the sale of Local Green Infrastructure, buy the new landowners contact details from the Land Registry and write to advise them of the status of the land.

Hannah informed the Steering Group that the first draft of the Borough Council's Planning Application Validation Criteria did not make any reference to neighbourhood plans. East Staffordshire has been quoted by parish and town councils as a good example because their criteria document contains a reminder near the beginning telling people to check to see if there is a neighbourhood plan for their area, and if there is, that those policies are also applicable.

AGREED:

That in accordance with the advice of Urban Vision and the Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap Guide, the following preparations be undertaken by the Town Council to publicise the Neighbourhood Plan referendum on Thursday 6 May 2021:

- To issue a press release immediately after the General Purposes Committee meeting on 13 April 2021.
- To place an advertisement in 'A Little Bit of Stone'.
- To place an advertisement in the June edition of the Gazette.
- To publish information on the Town Council's website.
- To consider producing a poster for display in shops and public places.

* 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.

Introduction

1. This report considers the arrangements for Council meetings following the ending of legal approval to hold virtual meetings.

Background

2. Soon after declaring the first national lockdown in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Government enacted legislation that allowed Councils to meet virtually, rather than in person. This reduced the risk of infection and allowed Council meetings to take place in circumstances where this would not otherwise have been possible.
3. We have recently been informed that this provision will not continue beyond 6th May 2021. Although there is currently a legal challenge at a national level claiming that virtual meetings are legal and have always been legal, it is unlikely that this will be resolved before the 6th May. The Committee therefore needs to put plans in place for meetings from May onwards.
4. The government has issued advice on the use of Council buildings during the pandemic, the latest version of which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-council-buildings>.

The Council's Position

5. The Council does not have a building large enough to accommodate a full, Covid safe meeting under current government guidance.
6. The use of virtual meetings has been a particular success for the Council in terms of public interest. Meetings are currently conducted online using Zoom software, with public access via a virtually live YouTube link. The videos of the meetings then remain accessible on the Council's YouTube Channel at least until the draft minutes of the meeting are approved.
7. Prior to using this process, the level of press and public attendance at Council meetings was low, with one or two attendees being typical. This occasionally increased to about 6-10 if an item of particular public interest was being considered. Attendance rarely exceeded these figures, and the Council would have struggled to accommodate them if they had.
8. The Council's YouTube Channel, however, currently has 74 subscribers, and the number of views of Council meetings can often be in the hundreds. For example, the Council/GP/Planning meetings on 2nd March 2021 had been viewed on 476 occasions at the

time of writing this report, the 2nd February meetings were viewed almost 300 times before they were removed, and the highest number of views for any meeting were just under 650.

9. As part of the decision not to extend virtual meetings, the Government did open a “Call for evidence” as to whether future legislation should be introduced to allow virtual meeting attendance. It is suggested that the above information is submitted to the Government in response to this call for evidence.

Council and Committee Meetings in May 2021

10. The current Council meeting schedule has a meeting of the full Council planned for 11th May 2021 and meetings of the General Purposes and Planning Consultative Committees planned for 18th May 2021.
11. The full Council meeting planned for May is the Council’s AGM and is legally required to take place. As 2021 is not the year of an ordinary Council election, the meeting can take place on any day in May.
12. We are currently awaiting the Government’s report on social distancing, so there is a possibility that a physical meeting could take place after 17th May if the “roadmap” is on target, the new social distancing recommendations have been reported on and adopted, and those recommendations are such that the Council’s facilities are once again able to host meetings.
13. In my view, however, the situation outlined in the previous paragraph represents too much of a risk to the Council meeting its legal obligations to offer a viable solution.
14. It is therefore recommended that the May 2021 full Council meeting is held virtually using Zoom/YouTube on Tuesday 4th May 2021 to ensure that the Council meets its legal obligations.
15. One consequence of the above recommendation is that it will not be possible to hold a “Mayor Making” event in the usual way, though it is unlikely that any option considered would be able to include this. It is therefore suggested that a formal event is held later in the year, to be agreed with the new Mayor, possibly as part of Civic Sunday.
16. The Council will still be required to appoint its new Mayor as the first item of business on the AGM.
17. The same issues set out in paragraph 12 above also apply to the General Purposes and Planning Consultative Committees currently planned for 18th May 2021. Although there is no legal obligation to hold either meeting, the GP meeting is a key one as it determines which members sit on Sub-Committees and other bodies for the following year, and each Planning meeting not held reduces Members’ opportunity to debate planning applications in full at a public meeting.

18. It is therefore recommended that both the General Purposes and Planning Consultative Committee meetings are also moved to be held as virtual meetings following the full Council on 4th May 2021.
19. The Committee should also consider the Annual Public Meeting for which the Council sets the date and undertakes the administration. This meeting is currently planned for 29th April 2021.
20. Any resident of the Stone Town area can attend this meeting, and persons living outside the area can observe. In recognition of the level of public interest in Council meetings at present, as outlined in paragraph 8 above, the holding of this meeting on Zoom stands a reasonable chance of having so many attendees as to be unmanageable as a virtual meeting. It is therefore recommended in this case that the meeting is deferred to as late as possible in May to allow the greatest opportunity for it to be held physically, rather than virtually. As this meeting is normally held on a Thursday, a revised date of 27th May 2021 is recommended.
21. The Council has no legal obligation to call this meeting, so it can be cancelled should it ultimately prove impossible to hold due to Covid restrictions.

Council and Committee Meetings in June 2021

22. Dependent on the outcomes of the items outlined in paragraph 12 above, it may be possible to hold physical meetings on Council premises again in June 2021. This is, however, by no means certain. It may be that physical meetings in Town Council premises have to be delayed until after 21st June 2021 under the Government's roadmap, or even later if the roadmap is delayed.
23. Currently meetings of the full Council and the General Purposes and Planning Consultative Committees are planned for the 8th June 2021. We are legally obliged to hold a full Council meeting by no later than the 29th June 2021 in order to submit the 2020-21 accounts to the External Auditor by 30th June 2021.
24. In view of the current uncertainty, and the need to hold at least a full Council meeting in June, it is recommended that setting the date(s) for the June Council and Committee meetings is delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Town Mayor, and the Chairmen of the General Purposes and Planning Consultative Committees. It is currently considered that the most likely dates would be the 22nd or 29th June 2021, according to the situation at the time.

Council and Committee Meetings from July 2021 Onwards

25. It is recommended that meetings from July onwards are considered at the June meeting of the General Purposes Committee, when the position should be clearer.

Other Council and Related Meetings

26. In addition to Council and Committee meetings, the Council also holds its own sub-committee, steering group and working group meetings, and organises meetings of the Town Hall Trust and the Richard Vernon Trust.
27. None of these groups make decisions which are binding on the Council, so there is no legal reason to hold them physically. It is recommended that these groups continue to meet virtually using Zoom, and broadcast via YouTube if the meetings are open to the public.

Conclusions

28. This report has considered the implications of the Government decision not to extend virtual meetings beyond 6th May 2021, and makes recommendations designed to continue the safe and efficient execution of Council business while the pandemic continues.
29. These recommendations are summarised below.

Recommendations

30. The Committee are recommended to:
- a. Move the May meetings of the full Council, the General Purposes Committee and the Planning Consultative Committee to 4th May 2021 and hold them virtually.
 - b. Change the date of the Annual Public Meeting to 27th May 2021.
 - c. Delegate to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Town Mayor and the Chairmen of the General Purposes and Planning Consultative Committees, authority to set the dates of the June Council and Committee meetings.
 - d. Consider arrangements for Council and Committee meetings in July 2021 onwards at the June meeting of the General Purposes Committee.
 - e. Continue to hold Sub-Committee, steering group and working group meetings virtually until decided otherwise by the General Purposes Committee.
 - f. Organise future Town Hall Trust and Richard Vernon Trust meetings virtually until decided otherwise by each Trust individually.
 - g. Authorise the Town Clerk to submit details of the Council's positive experiences regarding public interest in the work of the Council as a result of virtual meetings to the Government's "Call for evidence".



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP

**Secretary of State for Housing,
Communities and Local Government**

***Ministry of Housing, Communities &
Local Government***

Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

www.gov.uk/mhclg

To: National Association of Local Councils

23 March 2021

Dear Sue

WELCOME BACK FUND

I would like to draw your attention to a new “Welcome Back Fund” which I announced at the weekend, and the allocations for which have been published today; they can be found [here](#).

This new £56 million Fund will help councils boost tourism, improve green spaces and provide more outdoor seating areas, markets and food stall pop-ups – giving people more, safer options to reunite with friends and relatives.

Part of this funding will also support coastal areas in the same way as they prepare for a great summer, with funding going to all coastal resorts across England to safely welcome holiday makers in the coming months and have a successful summer. The funding can also be used by councils to:

- Boost the look and feel of their high streets by investing in street planting, parks, green spaces and seating areas to make high streets as beautiful and welcoming as possible.
- Run publicity campaigns and prepare to hold events like street markets and festivals to support local businesses.
- Install signage and floor markings to encourage social distancing and safety.
- Improve high streets and town centres by planting flowers or removing graffiti.

I would strongly encourage your members to engage with the local authority to which the allocation has been made as they develop their spending plans for their allocations. I have written to all leaders and Chief Executives in England today, strongly encouraging them to work with parish and town councils and to pass this funding on wherever possible, given the important role parish and town councils will need to play in delivering initiatives in the community and on our high streets

This funding was part of several announcements I made on 20 March. These also included expert support for 70 local authorities from the High Streets Task Force, and the Government’s response to the consultation on the private parking Code Enforcement Framework which was held in the Autumn of 2020.

Together, these measures will support a safe and successful reopening of our treasured high streets and seaside resorts, giving people the reassurance that they can shop and socialise in a COVID-secure way.

They also build on the Government's comprehensive package of support of £200 billion, to help businesses that have been affected by COVID-19. This package includes the small business grants, the coronavirus loan schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, as well as deferral of income tax payments.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Jenrick". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke underneath the name.

RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP

From: Victoria Barraclough <VBarracough@staffordbc.gov.uk>
Sent: 19 March 2021 10:01
Subject: Stafford District (B) Payphone Consultation
Attachments: Stafford District (B) Annex.xlsx; Street_Payphone notice_English.pdf

Good Morning

BT are undergoing a consultation to remove the phone boxes attached which I believe to be in your areas. Please could you have a look and respond on the attached spreadsheet to advise whether you agree, object or would like to adopt.

Please could I have all responses by **Friday 30th May**.

Kind regards

Vicki



Victoria Barraclough | Planning Support Lead
Stafford Borough Council | Civic Centre | Riverside | Stafford | ST16 3AQ
01785 619327 | VBarracough@staffordbc.gov.uk | www.staffordbc.gov.uk

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Please return in this format to ensure that the telephone number of the kiosk is clearly shown

	Telephone Number	Address	Postcode	Average calls per month	Posting Completed Date	Agree Adopt Object	Reason for objection - based on need for telephony only not the kiosk
1	01785254326	JUNC QUEENSVILLE AVENUE PCO1 LICHFIELD ROAD STAFFORD	ST17 4LP	1	10/03/2021		
2	01785251469	JCN PEEL TERRACE PCO1 SANDON ROAD STAFFORD	ST16 3HF	10	10/03/2021		
3	01785840344	NR THE FOX INN PCO1 MARSTON CHURCH EATON STAFFORD	ST20 0AS	0	10/03/2021		
4	01785812311	PCO PCO1 LICHFIELD ROAD STONE	ST15 8QU	3	10/03/2021		
5	01785812312	A34 SOUTHBOUND PCO1 ASTON STONE	ST15 0BJ	0	10/03/2021		
6	01785760218	GREENSIDE YARNFIELD STONE	ST15 0NA	4	10/03/2021		

Notice date:



We're thinking about removing this payphone

Our research shows that this payphone doesn't get used very much now, so we think it might be time to take it away.

Alternatively, you might like to adopt a kiosk. Some communities have turned theirs into a defibrillator point, a library, or even a miniature art gallery.

Do you have any comments?

If so, please contact your local authority within 42 days of the date shown above. And if you'd like to find out more about adopting a kiosk, please visit www.bt.com/adopt for more information.

If you'd like to know where the next nearest payphone is, or which local authority you're in, please call us on **0800 661610** and choose option 1.

From: Corporate Support <corporatesupport@staffordbc.gov.uk>
Sent: 01 April 2021 17:13
Subject: Parish Council Workshop - Invitation

Dear Parish Councils

Following on from our previous valuable conversations with you and in response to your feedback, we would like to invite you to an **online workshop** that is specifically for parish councils only.

You have told us that there is a lot of information circulating at the moment - helpful advice and guidance that residents need, but navigating it all and conveying it at the right time, in the right way, can be challenging. This upcoming workshop is on the topic of **communication** and how best to **engage** with residents amongst the many voices competing to be heard. We will provide a space where we can all learn from each other, to share experiences, tips and suggestions. We'll have some good practice examples to show and expert voices to answer questions. Like our previous [webinar](#) series, these will be held via Zoom, with a more interactive format allowing you to contribute your thoughts and ask questions throughout.

Next week you will receive a survey - please complete and submit this in advance, the results will help us tailor the workshop content to best support you.

We want as many parish councils to be involved as possible and therefore are offering three places to each Parish Council. It is up to you who you allocate places to, your council could be represented by the Clerk, Chairperson or a Councillor/s with a particular interest in communication and community engagement.

By return email please can you indicate your preferred date and time option below, we will finalise the date based on a majority vote:

- Option 1 – Tuesday 27th April at 3pm
- Option 2 – Tuesday 27th April at 6pm
- Option 3 – Wednesday 28th April at 2:30pm

If you have any questions in the meantime please email Health@Staffordbc.gov.uk or contact Sarah Ruff, Health and Wellbeing Community Support Officer on telephone number 01785 619 675.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards



Corporate Support | Democratic and Corporate Services
Stafford Borough Council | Civic Centre | Riverside | Stafford | ST16 3AQ
01785619207 | corporatesupport@staffordbc.gov.uk | www.staffordbc.gov.uk

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Stone Town Council - Payments

The table below lists payments made by the Council in the period since the last report, for the Committee's information.

The table includes payments by cheque, direct debit, PayPal, telephone banking and online banking. It excludes salary and related payments, payments from the Mayor's Charity, and transfers between the Council's bank accounts, which can be seen by any Member on request. All amounts exclude VAT.

Inv Date	Reference	Supplier	Description	Amount
08/01/2021	743014903/001/0121	Virgin Media Business	Broadband Jan / Feb 2021	£50.00
22/01/2021	22183	Stone Gazette Ltd	Ad in ST15 Directory 2021	£360.00
26/01/2021	713402021785405	Pozitive Energy	FJC Gas Usage 01/01/21 to 20/01/21	£300.24
26/01/2021	1346174	British Gas	Standing Charge 61 High Street	£11.50
26/01/2021	1346062	British Gas	Standing Charge Feeder Pillar 1	£8.80
29/01/2021	SINV00493396	J G Fenn Ltd	Toilet Cleaner for FJC	£12.90
31/01/2021	EU-01751367	Opayo by Elavon	Sage Card Payments fee Jan 2021	£15.00
31/01/2021	VE01074646	Veolia ES (UK) Ltd	Waste Collection Jan 2021	£58.21
31/01/2021	VE01074645	Veolia ES (UK) Ltd	Waste Collection Jan 2021	£72.61
31/01/2021	INV-0471	Current Electrical & Property Services	Setting up marquees Jan 2021	£155.00
31/01/2021	140341364	World Pay	Worldpay managed service fee Jan 2021	£12.50
01/02/2021	3814	Cress Security	Annual Intruder Alarm Maint & Monitoring to 01/02/2022	£357.00
03/02/2021	742962701/001/0221	Virgin Media Business	Office Telephone Lines Feb 2021	£51.73
05/02/2021	INV-7933	EDG Security Limited	Replace LED fittings following test failure	£326.00
06/02/2021	V01839240998	EE	Mobile Phone Charges Jan 2021	£22.00
06/02/2021	V01839240998	EE	Mobile Phone Charges Jan 2021	£21.28
06/02/2021	V01839240998	EE	Mobile Phone Charges Jan 2021	£26.28
08/02/2021	743014903/001/0221	Virgin Media Business	Broadband Feb/Mar 2021	£50.00
09/02/2021	713392021805355	Pozitive Energy	SSCC Elec Usage Jan 2021	£224.38
11/02/2021	713382021809026	Pozitive Energy	FJC Elec Usage Jan 2021	£128.84
11/02/2021	713412021809027	Pozitive Energy	SSCC Gas Usage Jan 2021	£316.24
11/02/2021	713402021809025	Pozitive Energy	FJC Gas Usage 21/01/21 to 31/01/21	£168.79
12/02/2021	Elec 49/21	R Mountfords	Yard Brush - VAT Correction - Transno. 26928	£1.46
15/02/2021	65550	Prism Solutions	Telephone Line Rental Feb 2021	£44.45
15/02/2021	65550	Prism Solutions	Telephone Line Rental Feb 2021	£46.69
18/02/2021	244/21/0103748	Siemens Ltd	Photocopier Lease Rental 21/3/21 to 20/6/21	£150.00
18/02/2021	13398	Call Handling Services Ltd	Call Handling Service Jan 2021	£26.24
22/02/2021	Elec 49/21	BMA Window Cleaner	Window Cleaning FJC	£65.00

Inv Date	Reference	Supplier	Description	Amount
22/02/2021	Elec 49/21	BMA Window Cleaner	Window Cleaning Station	£25.00
23/02/2021	Elec 49/21	Miscellaneous	GP20/337 Grant to Oulton First School (Christchurch Acad)	£500.00
25/02/2021	135853	Prism Solutions	ICT Services Feb 2021	£714.92
26/02/2021	1415716	British Gas	Elec feeder pillar 1 Jan/Feb 2021	£8.80
26/02/2021	Elec 49/21	Miscellaneous	GP20/337 Grant to Aston Lodge Residents Assoc	£250.00
26/02/2021	1415646	British Gas	Elec 61 High St Jan/Feb 2021	£11.50
28/02/2021	143210549	World Pay	Safer Payments & Dashboard fee Feb 2021	£9.99
28/02/2021	143250737	World Pay	Managed Service Fee Feb 2021	£12.50