

# 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

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**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**