



Stone

Town Council

Town Clerk
Les Trigg

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19 July 2021

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **MANAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE** will be held in the **Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone**, on **TUESDAY 27 JULY 2021 at 7:05pm**, or upon the rising of the Estates Sub-Committee, if later.

The Agenda is set out below, and I trust you will be able to attend.

Attendees are asked to wear face masks other than when taking part in the meeting.

Les Trigg
Town Clerk

Councillors: J. Davies (Chairman), I. Fordham (Vice Chairman), K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess,
Mrs L. Davies, M. Green and T. Kelt

AGENDA

- 1. To receive apologies for absence**
- 2. Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations Received**
- 3. 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.

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Management Sub-Committee held on 27 April 2021, Minute Numbers MAN20/053 – MAN20/058 (attached).

5. **Policies and Procedures**

To consider the updated Press and Media Protocol (attached).

6. **Headstone**

To receive an update on project Headstone following its recent implementation.

7. **Financial Control**

To update Sub-Committee members on the Council's financial control procedures.

8. **Updates:**

- a. Website/Facebook
- b. Service Continuity Plan

9. **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.

10. **Staffing Matters**

To consider a report of the Town Clerk regarding staff recruitment.

Will any Councillors who wish to speak at this meeting, but are not members of the Sub-Committee, please inform the Chairman before the start of the meeting.

Members of the public are welcome to attend the Management Sub-Committee Meeting as observers and/or to make representations to the committee in accordance with the Council's scheme of public participation. Details of this scheme are displayed in the Council's notice boards and website.

Stone Town Council – Management Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held virtually on Tuesday 27 April 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 J. Davies in the Chair and
Councillors: Mrs L. Davies, I. Fordham and T. Kelt

By Chairman's invitation: Mrs J. Hood, P. Leason, J. Powell and R. Townsend

ABSENT: Councillor: K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess, M. Green and R. Kenney

MAN20/053 Apologies

Councillors: K. Argyle, M. Green and R. Kenney

MAN20/054 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None received

MAN20/055 Representations from Members of the Public

The Sub-Committee noted that the Town Council's Public Participation Scheme had been suspended until after the by-election for the Stonefield and Christchurch Ward.

MAN20/056 Minutes

That the Minutes of the Management Sub-Committee Meeting held on the 5 January 2021 (Minute No's MAN20/041 – MAN20/052), be approved as a correct record.

MAN20/057 Public Access to Meetings

The Sub-Committee considered whether the Council should investigate adding audio and video facilities to the Council Chamber to allow meetings to continue to be broadcast over YouTube once physical meetings return.

The Chairman reminded the Sub-Committee that the previous twelve month period had proven the worth of technology put in place by the Town Clerk to enable the Council to meet remotely. It had also highlighted how interested the people of Stone are in the work of the Town Council.

* 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 suggested the Town Council look forward to holding physical meetings again whilst investigating whether new technology can be embodied to 'Build Back Better' and enable the continuation of public viewing remotely.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that he had investigated suitable technology and it was emerging that the best approach was the installation of three wide angled cameras in the Council Chamber. Any new system introduced would need to be upgradable so that hybrid meetings are possible if the Government approves remote attendance by Councillors in the future. The equipment needed would include screens, extra bandwidth and sound to broadcast technology.

The Sub-Committee expressed the view that remote public access to meetings was an important consideration with a number of advantages, including improved access to residents with physical disabilities and that residents including the young would be able to see with ease what the Council is about and examples of democracy in action.

Councillor Mrs Davies asked that it be recorded in the minutes that the Town Clerk is awaiting quotations for the necessary equipment.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that it is unlikely that current internet bandwidth in the Council Chamber would be sufficient for remote broadcasting, so quotations would need to include broadband improvements. He also stated that he would discuss whether other users of the building might have the capacity to support this need.

The Town Clerk confirmed that grant aid opportunities from external sources would be fully investigated.

The Sub-Committee concluded that the Town Council should fully support the investigation of suitable technology to make possible remote access to physical meetings and so improve the Council's performance on transparency, accessibility and open democracy.

The Sub-Committee agreed that the Town Clerk should continue his research and provide a further update on his findings when appropriate.

MAN20/058 Updates

The Chairman thanked the Town Clerk for the work undertaken to ensure that the sad death of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, was appropriately commemorated.

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The Sub-Committee received updates on the following:

a. Website

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that improvements were slowly being made to the website which had included news items including press releases, a new meetings page and information on Planning and the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that when the Town Council gets closer to the opening of the Heritage Centre a lot more information will need to be uploaded.

b. Facebook

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that he had no update on the Facebook page as little progress had been made since the Marketing and Events Assistant had left the authority.

The Sub-Committee expressed its disappointment that the Town Council had not yet launched a Facebook page, considered one of the most popular mediums used by young people. The Sub-Committee also suggested that alternative social media platforms be investigated.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the project needed to be taken on by someone with a good understanding of Facebook (or other platform) and the skills to get it up and running. In addition, social media in all its forms needed significant time resources and dedication in keeping information up to date. The immediacy of responses and regularity of maintenance was an important factor in providing an effective and professional offering.

The Sub-Committee confirmed that the project needed to be high on the Council's to do list as soon as there was a resource to work on it.

c. Service Continuity Plan

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the Service Continuity Plan had been robustly tested over the previous twelve months. He advised that a new telephone system had been ordered and 10 May had been given by Virgin Media as a provisional date for installation.

The Town Clerk advised that the part of the Plan that had thankfully not been tested was protection of the buildings contents against fire. Discussions had recently begun on the benefits of transferring paper files to electronic via a scanning program followed by archiving of data files.

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The Sub-Committee considered the options for the safe and secure storage of original historic documents which it concluded should be professionally stored off site. The County Records Office or the Heritage Centre were given as options for consideration.

The Chairman concluded that the Service Continuity Plan had proven its worth and the Town Council was as a result making substantial changes to improve its operation in the future.

The Sub-Committee agreed that a full review should be undertaken in the next six to twelve months.

d. Resolutions Progress Report

The Chairman invited feedback on the Resolutions Progress Report and the Sub-Committee confirmed that Members found it useful and would like it to continue.

e. IT Contract

The Town Clerk informed the Sub-Committee that he had nothing but praise for the Town Council's IT contractor who had provided an excellent service throughout the period of the COVID-19 lockdown.

Chairman

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Town Council



Press and Media Protocol

August 2021

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Stone Town Council regularly receives enquiries from the media, both to the office and to Councillors and in some circumstances the Council, or Councillors personally, will instigate media contact. In addition, staff and Councillors may have their own social media sites, such as on Facebook or Twitter, and/or post to social media sites owned by others.
- 1.2 The purpose of this protocol is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Town Clerk, all officers and Members involved in dealing with any aspect of the media, including social media, and to provide guidance on how to handle media enquiries.
- 1.3 The Council recognises the need for openness and this should be reflected in how media communication is dealt with.
- 1.4 This protocol aims to ensure that the Council, its members and its officers are seen to communicate in a professional and objective manner in any circumstance where it could be perceived by the reader that they are acting in an official capacity. In all cases, the Council's approach to the media should be:
 - open and honest
 - proactive
 - responsive and timely
- 1.5 It must be remembered at all times that very few members of the public, and even some members of the media, do not understand Council procedures and protocols and may find it difficult to differentiate between when an individual is acting in an official capacity and when they are acting as a private individual. It is therefore incumbent upon the councillor/officer to ensure that all of their communications are clear in this respect and follow the guidance for official communications unless it is very clear that they are acting in a personal capacity.
- 1.6 In any event, even in a personal capacity, no councillor or officer should enter into any communication which could unreasonably bring the Council into disrepute.

2 HANDLING MEDIA ENQUIRIES

- 2.1 The Town Clerk will co-ordinate all media enquiries made to the Council Offices and reply directly where the enquiry is a question of fact. In other circumstances it may be more appropriate for the Town Mayor, the Chair of a Committee, or another Councillor specifically involved in an issue to respond to the enquiry, in which case the Town Clerk will contact them as appropriate.
- 2.2 Other officers who are directly approached by a member of the media should normally refer all enquiries to the Town Clerk, rather than attempting to answer

questions direct, other than for simple, factual queries (e.g. what time is Tuesday's meeting).

- 2.3 Councillors who are directly approached by a member of the media should always respond in accordance with the guidance contained in this protocol.
- 2.4 The Council, individual councillors and staff should not pass comment on leaks, anonymous allegations or allegations about individual staff and Members.
- 2.5 The Council has a responsibility to act in an open and accountable way, and should always explain if there is a reason why it cannot answer a specific enquiry.

3 NEWS, PRESS RELEASES AND WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA POSTINGS

- 3.1 News/press releases and Website/Social Media/YouTube postings are key techniques for publicising Council activities, decisions and achievements. All of these types of activity, and any other related activity which involves dissemination of information or opinion to the public, are referred to as "releases" within this document. Where used, this term relates to any and all information streams available unless specifically identified otherwise.
- 3.2 There are two main types of releases – official Council releases and Councillor releases.
- 3.3 **Official Council Releases** – The Town Clerk is authorised to issue official releases and to talk to the media on behalf of the Council as a whole. Such releases will be non-party political and will accurately reflect the corporate view of the Council.
- 3.4 Where appropriate, official media releases will include a quote from the relevant Councillor(s). This would usually be the Town Mayor or a Committee Chairman. Such quotes would be agreed between the Councillor quoted and the Town Clerk.
- 3.5 Releases will not seek to promote the views of specific political groups, publicise the activities of individual Councillors (other than official Mayoral activities), identify a Member's political party or persuade the general public to hold a particular view.
- 3.6 **Councillor Releases** - Councillor releases are personal and are written and issued by the Councillor responsible. Such releases:
 - a. May or may not be political, other than in the case of the Town Mayor, where they should never be political.
 - b. Should not include the name of any officer, use the Council crest/logo or use the Council telephone number as a point of contact.
 - c. Should not refer to any position held by the author within the Council (e.g. Chairmanship of a Committee), unless agreed in advance with the Town Clerk for items of a non-political nature.

- d. Should be factually accurate in respect of the Council’s corporate view, situation, actions and decisions made or not made. (Advice can be sought from the Town Clerk if a Member is in any doubt.)
 - e. Should always be clear that the views contained are personal to the author and not necessarily the Council’s view.
- 3.7 As outlined in paragraph 1.5 above, care must be taken to avoid misleading the public as to the source of, and support for, information or opinion released. In particular:
- a. All releases where it may be possible for a member of the public to perceive that the information has come from, or has the support of, the Council should be treated as an official Council release.
 - b. All other releases which may be perceived as relating to Council business should be treated as Councillor releases.
 - c. Authors should not refer to themselves as “Councillor” in any release does not relate to Council business, in order to prevent any possibility of confusion by members of the public.

4 INTERVIEWS

- 4.1 Any Member contacted by a journalist or similar requesting an interview or a comment should ascertain whether that person is seeking a Council view or the view of the Member as an individual. If the former, the guidance set out below for officers contacted by journalists should be followed in the same way. If an individual view is being sought, the guidance for releases above should be followed.
- 4.2 The requirements in paragraph 4.1 above also relates to non-journalist or self-generated interviews or presentations of the kind most often seen on websites, social media and YouTube.
- 4.3 Any officer contacted by a journalist requesting an interview or a comment should refer the journalist to the Town Clerk, the Town Mayor or the appropriate Committee Chair. The person put forward for interview will depend on the situation and the information required by the journalist.
- 4.4 In any event, officers should never give their opinion on specific Council policy but must keep to the corporate line and key messages. Their role is to provide expertise and factual knowledge only, in support of the Council’s approved and agreed policies.

5 MEDIA ACTIVITY AHEAD OF AND DURING MEETINGS

- 5.1 The media pick up many stories from agendas and reports ahead of meetings. All Council and Committee agendas are automatically sent to the local media, displayed on town notice boards and published on the Town Council website.
- 5.2 Members of the media are welcome to attend and regularly do attend Council and Committee meetings. During meetings Members should be mindful that any comments and messages are put across in a manner which gives the journalist an accurate picture, rather than relying on the journalist's interpretation of what can be a complex issue or report.

6 PUBLICITY IN ELECTION PERIODS

- 6.1 The rules governing publicity change when an election has been announced. In the period between the notice of an election and the election itself (Purdah) all proactive publicity about candidates or other politicians is halted. This applies to local, national or European elections.
- 6.2 During this period council publicity should not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in a way that identifies them with individual Members or groups of Members. This is to make sure that no individual Councillor or political party gains an unfair advantage by appearing in corporate publicity.
- 6.3 In these circumstances quotes in press releases will be avoided wherever possible. Where a quote is required, however, that quote will be from the Town Clerk in accordance with the guidelines in this protocol.

7 NON-COUNCIL RELATED MEDIA ACTIVITY

- 7.1 Officers and Members of the Council who have contact with the media or make releases in a personal capacity or as members of non-Council related organisations must not describe themselves as a councillor nor refer to their Council posts and must make it clear to the journalist concerned that they are speaking in a personal capacity or on behalf of the non-Council related organisation.

8 CORRECTING INACCURATE REPORTING

- 8.1 Should the media, social media, a website or similar publish/broadcast something inaccurate about the Council, a decision needs to be taken on any action necessary to correct it.
- 8.2 The issue should be discussed with the Town Clerk as soon as possible to allow him to determine an appropriate action and who is the most appropriate person to take that action. This could be, for example, a letter or news release, a conversation with the journalist concerned, a personal letter to the editor or legal advice. Where a news release is to be issued, the Clerk will consult with appropriate Committee Chairman and, where appropriate, with the Member who has issued the incorrect information.
- 8.3 It should be noted that in the case of minor inaccuracies which have little or no impact on the message being conveyed, it can sometimes be counterproductive to complain.
- 8.4 Each case must be judged individually.
- 8.5 Occasionally the Council will get something wrong. In these cases damage limitation is the key – this can usually be achieved by holding hands up, apologising, and stating how we are going to learn from the error or put it right.

9 USE OF THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- 9.1 Internet use covers all websites, networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter etc., forums and blogs which may be used by both officers and Councillors.
- 9.2 If the above are used in an official capacity or on Council related business, the guidance in this protocol must be adhered to in the same way as for any other media contact and they must be used in a responsible and appropriate manner.
- 9.3 For example, whilst acting in an official Stone Town Council capacity Members and officers should not:
 - a. Undertake any action that may result in actions for libel, defamation or other claims for damages
 - b. Process personal data other than for the purpose stated at the time of capture
 - c. Promote any political party or undertake any campaigning
 - d. Promote personal financial interests or commercial activities
 - e. Be used in an abusive, hateful or disrespectful manner

- 9.4 If social media and the internet are used in an unofficial capacity, Members and Officers should restrain from anything that could be construed as bringing the Council into disrepute.

August 2021