

# 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

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**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.

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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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