



Town Clerk

Les Trigg

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15 Station Road
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24 August 2021

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT SUB COMMITTEE** will be held in **the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone**, on **TUESDAY 31 AUGUST 2021 at 7:05pm** or on the rising of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee, if later.

Please find the agenda set out below.

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

Les Trigg
Town Clerk

Councillors: P Leason (Chairman), T. Kelt (Vice Chairman), K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess, Mrs K. Dawson, M. Hatton and R. Townsend

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 Environment Sub-Committee held on 6 July 2021, Minute No's ENV22/001 – ENV22/006 (attached)

5. **Environment Policy**

To Consider the attached Environment Policy.

6. **Crown Meadow Improvements**

To receive an update on the work being undertaken by the Council's Grounds Maintenance contractor (note attached).

7. **Reports of Working Groups**

- Plastic Free Community/Single Use Plastics Working Group
- Environmental Issues Working Group

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 Environment 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 on the Town Council's notice boards and website.

Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in St Michael’s Suite at the Frank Jordan Centre, Lichfield Street, Stone, on Tuesday 6 July 2021

PRESENT: Councillor T. Kelt in the Chair and
Councillors: K. Argyle, Mrs K. Dawson, R. Kenney, J. Powell and R. Townsend

By Chairman’s invitation: Councillor Mrs J. Hood

ABSENT: Councillors: Mrs A. Burgess, P. Leason and M. Hatton

ENV22/001 **Apologies**

Councillors: P. Leason

ENV22/002 **Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

None received

ENV22/003 **Representations from Members of the Public**

None

ENV22/004 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on the 16 March 2021 (Minute Numbers ENV20/045 – ENV20/052), were approved as a correct record.

ENV22/005 **Crown Meadow Improvements**

The Chairman for the meeting, Councillor Kelt, invited Councillor Mrs Hood to address the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Mrs Hood expressed strong concerns about the Sub-Committee’s decision to remove trees from Crown Meadow, particularly the Willow, when they were already positioned in their natural habitat.

Councillor Mrs Hood said that she had contacted the Biodiversity Officer for advice after the Sub-Committee Chairman, Councillor Leason, had said he would seek clarification on previous advice to remove and relocate the trees.

The Biodiversity Officer informed Councillor Mrs Hood that he thought the scrapes had done really well and had developed a good wetland flora over time. He said that the scrapes required some management and the Willow needed

coppicing to let light in and to prevent a Willow copse from establishing (to maintain balance). He said that the coppicing should target a percentage of trees every year and be undertaken on a rotation so that the wetland flowers are maintained. Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Sub-Committee that the Biodiversity Officer had not indicated that the trees should be removed.

The Chairman expressed the view that if trees are growing in the wrong place there was an argument for mitigating the situation with replanting.

The Chairman suggested the Sub-Committee consider the new information obtained from the Biodiversity Officer with a view to taking further decisions on his most recent advice.

The Chairman invited the Town Clerk to update the Sub-Committee on the outstanding grounds maintenance jobs at Crown Meadow:

Tree removal and replanting:

Scrape 1: The grounds maintenance contractor has not worked on this Scrape yet, the work is planned for later in the year.

Scrape 2 (located near the river): The grounds maintenance contractor has completed the initial work of replanting trees which was considerably more labour intensive than had been expected. There are little trees starting to grow which need to be managed and maintained before moving on to Scrape 1.

Widening of the paths: This work has been completed.

Weed clearance: There is weed clearance required by the bridge which the grounds maintenance contractor has started, and will be ongoing.

Other work: The grounds maintenance contractor will be planting some edging plants later in the year. He hasn't yet started work on the amphitheatre path. He has almost got the bullrushes under control.

The Sub-Committee agreed that now would be a good time to take photographs of the meadow for professional mounting and display. Crown Meadow is at present looking more beautiful than ever.

Councillor Mrs Hood complimented Mr Plant the grounds maintenance contractor, for the magnificent job he is doing. She has observed that the better the Meadow is kept, the more that young people seem to be appreciating it – and taking litter away.

The Sub-Committee suggested that a site visit be organised for Environment Sub-Committee Members (with an invitation to all Town Councillors) so they can view the site, the work undertaken and management/maintenance issues. The suggested photographs could be taken during the visit.

The Sub-Committee suggested the site visit include the Biodiversity Officer from

Stafford Borough which would improve the dialogue between the contractor, the chairman and the team of councillors. The discussion would be informal with the Chairman reporting back at the next Sub-Committee meeting.

RECOMMENDED: To arrange a site visit to Crown Meadow.

ENV22/006 **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.

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that Councillor Powell had now joined that team.

He confirmed that a meeting had taken place with officers and elected members from Stafford Borough Council who are involved in the Borough Council's strategy and policy on single use plastics and environmental issues.

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that the Town Clerk had initiated the plastics audit aimed at Stone Town Council moving towards a stronger position on plastic usage and recycling.

He advised that the working group had been in contact with Roots at Stafford who are involved in recycling in this area. They are willing to work with the Town Council and currently work with Stafford Borough Council who provide the collection bins for the Recycling. This aspect will be expanded upon now they have met with Town Council representatives.

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that a letter had been posted to schools and the first positive response had been received back.

The working group has tabled a number of ideas that could form part of a community engagement campaign. These included a Mayor's Award for Environmentalism, website and social media features and a presence at town markets. Firm proposals on these will be put forward as soon as is possible.

The working group will meet again soon to determine the next steps and particularly how to work with Stafford Borough Council and reach out to the public with a community engagement campaign.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that a plastics audit of the Town Council office had been undertaken but the meeting with Stafford Borough Council (last week) had raised questions which might require

him to revisit some aspects. He had learned that some recyclable plastics were being eliminated in favour of materials that are not recyclable. Drinking straws were given as an example. The Town Clerk's audit had looked at all the usual items found in an office, conducted on the basis of eliminating the use of plastic. His findings were that some items could be eliminated and some could not. There are positive steps that can be taken and the issue will be in hand when staff return to the office.

b) Environmental Issues Working Group

The Chairman provided a verbal report on the work of the Environmental Issues/Climate Working Group.

He advised the Sub-Committee that Councillor Powell had joined the working group. The main items of discussion had involved collaborating with Stafford Borough on both single use plastics and the climate.

The Chairman reported on an environmental issues/climate meeting held between himself, Councillor Leason and representatives from Stafford Borough Council. The meeting had been positive and officers had shown great interest in working with the Town Council.

Councillor Kelt and Councillor Leason had learned about the existence of an Eco Schools Group in Stafford and that Manor Hill First School and Oulton First School were part of the group.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee about another meeting that had taken place on waste disposal which included single use plastics. This was again positive with feelings that all should work together. Time is now required to consider the next steps.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that a response had been received to the Town Council's letter to schools and Manor Hill First School had indicated that it would be pleased to work with the Town Council on Environmental issues.

He said that everything was positive going forward and that another working group meeting was needed to decide how to deal with the results of the discussions.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the Town Clerk had drafted an environment policy document on behalf of the Town Council which looked very good. He said there was a need for it to be considered by the Sub-Committee before going to the General Purposes Committee and he hoped the process could be dealt with as speedily as possible.

The Chairman asked for the Sub-Committee's support in allowing the working groups to continue working collaboratively – in an information gathering capacity – with Stafford Borough Council on environmental

issues.

The Town Clerk reminded the Sub-Committee that the working groups had no decision making authority and that all information must be reported back to the Sub-Committee for a recommendation.

RECOMMENDED: That the working groups are permitted to invite representatives from Stafford Borough Council, as external providers of information on single use plastics and environmental issues, to future meetings.

Chairman

Stone

Town Council



Environment Policy

August 2021

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1 GENERAL

- 1.1 This policy guides the conduct of Council activities to the extent that they may affect the environment. It may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council or the General Purposes (GP) Committee¹.
- 1.2 Should there be a clash between the provisions of this document and those within other documents which prescribe the activities of the Council, the order of precedence shall be:
 - a. National Legislation
 - b. The Council's Standing Orders
 - c. Financial Regulations
 - d. Staffing Guidelines and HR related documents (e.g. Disciplinary Procedures)
 - e. All other documents, including this one.
- 1.3 Where any conflict still remains, precedence shall be determined by the General Purposes Committee.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The environment within the town and its surrounds has a major impact on the quality of life and the physical and mental health of its residents, workforce and visitors. A primary Council concern is to improve the local environment and, wherever possible, to seek to have a positive environmental impact.
- 2.2 In 2016 the global move to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate moved up a gear. It has been widely accepted for many years that human activity is affecting the atmosphere leading to global heating and climate extremes. To this end in 2019, Stone Town Council joined other councils in various tiers of local government in declaring a climate emergency.
- 2.3 Climate concerns are one aspect of the environment which has gradually come to public attention over time; however there are other contributors to the environment with a much longer history which also fall within the remit of this policy; these include: pollution, waste, green spaces, bio-diversity, flooding.
- 2.4 This document sets out a preferred way of working for the Council in activities over which it has direct control. It also identifies areas where the Council may be able to

¹ All references to "the Council" in this document shall also be considered to refer to the General Purposes Committee for functions which have been delegated to that Committee.

influence the activities of suppliers, clients, local business, community groups and the public in the form of patronage, advice and education.

3 OBJECTIVES

3.1 Stone Town Council aims to take actions that will improve the environment in Stone and reverse environmental deterioration that has occurred through past activities and to encourage and influence environmental improvement externally. The main objectives are to achieve:

- a. Carbon neutrality by taking actions that reduce or do not add net carbon emissions into the atmosphere in the areas of energy use for heating, lighting and power, energy supply and transport insofar as they can be directly controlled by the Council.
- b. Zero pollution, by the limitation of actions that reduce discharges of unwanted waste product and pollution into our countryside.
- c. Zero landfill, by taking actions that reduce waste matter being buried and polluting the countryside for future generations.
- d. 100% recycling of reusable waste, by seeking to turn our waste into reusable products or raw material.
- e. The protection of green space, by acting to prevent development on green spaces and improve existing green space for leisure activities.
- f. A reduction in flood risk, by avoiding actions that increase the risk of flooding and taking actions that reduce that risk.
- g. An increase in bio diversity, by improving and extending natural habitats, avoiding the reduction of such habitats and, where necessary, taking action to mitigate unavoidable losses.
- h. Improvement of air quality, by reducing emissions of noxious, toxic or carcinogenic gasses and particles into the atmosphere.

3.2 Timescales for these objectives will be determined by the General Purposes Committee following reports from the Environment Sub-Committee.

3.3 It is recognised that a relatively small urban community such as Stone can have little impact on global or even local climate. It is also highly unlikely that the Town Council can achieve these objectives unilaterally, because Stone is not an enclosed community and does not have direct control on the flow of people, materials and natural forces into and out of the town. However, by addressing local issues over which the Town Council have direct control and working with our colleagues at Stafford Borough

Council and Staffordshire County Council, who will have their own targets, Stone can make a difference and this will contribute to national and global efforts.

4 POLICY

- 4.1 New Council activities which may impact on the environment will be considered from an environmental perspective as well as other perspectives such as financial. This environmental assessment will be used to support decision making and to assist in making choices between options for an activity.
- 4.2 Current Council activities will be assessed over time and, where appropriate, action taken to reduce or improve their environmental impact.
- 4.3 Where the Council is undertaking a formal tendering process, the environmental credentials of each potential supplier will, where appropriate, be included as part of the assessment.
- 4.4 The Council's grant aid budget will be used to influence the environmental behaviour of community groups where possible and appropriate.
- 4.5 The public will be involved where possible, signposted to advice on improving their local environment, and encouraged to reduce their environmental impact.
- 4.6 Town Council environmental objectives will be aligned with County and Borough plans and, if appropriate, adjusted where they conflict.
- 4.7 The Environmental Initiatives budget will be reviewed annually as part of the budget process to enable the implementation of this policy within overall Council financial constraints and taking account of the Council's other policy priorities.

5 EXAMPLES OF THE POLICY IN ACTION

- 5.1 Once adopted, the Council will develop a series of actions in order to implement this policy within the financial, time, and other resource restraints of the Council.
- 5.2 This section provides examples of potential actions that the Council is already undertaking or could undertake in the future in order to implement this policy over time, and as resources permit. They are presented in the same order as section 4 above.
- 5.3 It is understood that the Council's remit and its influence in many areas is limited. Care must be taken to focus on areas under the Council's control, and ensure the positive benefits of the Council's involvement prior to seeking to influence the actions of others.

5.4 New Council activities:

- a. Develop a methodology for assessing the environmental impact of new activities in order for the Council to be able to assess this factor alongside other potential costs and benefits.
- b. Consider mitigation, e.g. tree planting, where an environmental impact unavoidable.
- c. Where appropriate, include the cost of the elimination or mitigation of negative environmental impacts in the budget for new activities.
- d. Seek external finance support for environmental improvement initiatives.

5.5 Current Council activities:

- a. Improve energy efficiency in the Council office and buildings.
- b. Purchase energy from sustainable sources.
- c. Purchase low energy items for Council controlled activities.
- d. Reduce the use of single use plastics in the Council office and buildings and at Council organised events.
- e. Replace plastic consumables, where possible, with sustainable alternatives.
- f. Ensure all residual waste is collected and disposed of with environment consideration.
- g. Use cleaning products and other consumables which do not damage environment.
- h. Reduce investment in fossil fuels.

5.6 Suppliers and contracts:

- a. Include environmental factors as part of the assessment criteria for any contracts formally tendered, giving a positive weighting to environmental recovery or lower environmental impact.
- b. Consider environmental factors when drawing up specifications for contracts.
- c. Follow up on suppliers environmental promises to the Council in tender documents, where appropriate.

5.7 Grant aid and community groups:

- a. Add a question to the grant aid application form regarding any potential environmental impacts of the proposal. Consider this information as part of deciding whether an application should be supported.
- b. Identify sources of information related to the availability of external grants and advice for environment recovery and improvement and provide details of these sources to community groups on request.

5.8 Working with the public:

- a. Provide means to improve environment where within Council remit, e.g. litter bins and collections.
- b. Follow up littering, pollution and other environmental issues.
- c. Promote environment quality, provision of clean green leisure space, footpaths, cycle ways.
- d. Provide information on the Council's website on local green space and how to keep it clean.
- e. Provide allotments.
- f. Promote a move away from fossil fuels.

5.9 Working with other councils:

- a. Align the Town Council's environmental plans with those of Stafford Borough and Staffordshire County, where appropriate.
- b. Support Stafford Borough and Staffordshire County environment improvements in Stone, rather than establishing our own in parallel where objectives are similar.
- c. Support environmental good practice in planning applications.
- d. Encourage retention of green space, existing flora and fauna, hedgerows, trees and other natural habitats.
- e. Request improvements in highways, roadworks and traffic flows in order to improve the environment.
- f. Request roadside, verges, footpaths be kept clear and tidy.
- g. Consider street design, including closures for play and school safety.
- h. Monitor infrastructure improvement, parks, provision of electric charging points, retro-fitting of infrastructure where feasible.

5.10 Budgets:

- a. Request appropriate funding as part of the Council's budget process.
- b. Ensure that the Council's potential actions as a result of this policy are fully costed and approved prior to implementation and are within Council budgets.
- c. Utilise available grant funding where this accords with Council objectives.

Crown Meadow - Improvements

Job Description	Details	Current Status	Approved Budget	Spend to Date	Total Forecast Cost	Anticipated Date of Completion
Scrape 1	Dig out area to create a shallow pond and plant wildflowers. Cut a new path around the scrape	Weatherdependent and status of flooding	2,200	0	2,200	Dec to Feb 2022
Tree Removal	Removal of Willows and Silver Birch trees from both scrapes	Work Completed - March / April	660	660	660	Completed
Weed Clearance	Top off area by old bridge. Clear weeds and spray	Work Completed - March / April	380	380	380	Completed
Tree Re-planting	Remove four trees from the middle of the field and re-plant to form a hedge to shield the M&S building	Costs cover tree re-planting only. Further investment in plants will be required to create a hedge. Estimated at £350 - £750	760	0	760	October 2021
Total			4,000	1,040	4,000	

Crown Meadow - Specific Projects

Job Description	Details	Current Status	Annual Budget	Spend to Date	Total Forecast	Anticipated Date of Completion
Amphitheatre Path	Provide an 80m path with a ramp rather than steps	To be completed	1425	0	1425	September 2021
Crown Meadow Paths	Widening of paths, remove growth and patch stones	Work Completed March / April	1110	1130	1130	Completed