

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in St Michael's Suite at the Frank Jordan Centre, Lichfield Street, Stone, on Tuesday 8 July 2021

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess, J. Davies, Mrs L. Davies, Mrs K. Dawson,
J. Hickling, Mrs J. Hood, T. Kelt, P. Leason, J. Powell, C. Thornicroft, R. Townsend
and S. Walley

ABSENT: Councillors: A Best, I. Fordham, M. Green and M. Hatton

GP22/019 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors: A. Best, I. Fordham and M. Green

GP22/020 **Declarations of Interests**

None

GP22/021 **Requests for Dispensations**

None

GP22/022 **To receive the report of the County Councillors**

County Councillor Mrs J. Hood

The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs Hood to address the Committee.

Health & Care Overview Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that Dr Richard Harling had attended the last meeting of the County Council's Health & Care Overview Committee to talk to Members about how well Staffordshire was doing in managing the Covid-19 pandemic. She said that he had been put forward for the Corporate Award of Director of the Year in recognition of his work in bringing people together in partnership to strengthen our pandemic response.

Councillor Mrs Hood said there had been a very lively debate when 'access to GP surgeries' was discussed. All present had the same concerns about residents' experiencing difficulty in getting doctors' appointments. She said it was hoped this situation would be changing soon. A survey had recently been undertaken by primary care surgeries which involved medical and non-medical staff putting forward ideas about how things could be improved.

Crime in Stone

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that a mindless spate of recent vandalism had resulted in 27 panes of broken glass at the Leisure Centre and 15 panes of broke glass at the M & S Food Store.

She urged people to consider the impact that negative social media posts can have on the general public. This follows a number of alarmed residents contacting her after the posting of a public video suggesting that, following an inspection of the crime scene, they considered a gun or other type of weapon had caused the damage. She urged people to think about the alarm and hysteria these types of messages cause residents.

Councillor Mrs Hood confirmed that the perpetrator had been apprehended by the Police who had done a fantastic job in solving the crime. Everyone was now feeling more relaxed, and it was good that Stone Town Council had played a part in catching the criminal.

Highway Work

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that on Wednesday the crew cutting the grass on the A34 had been forced to stop working to self-isolate. The grass was left uncut but this morning it was all systems go again.

She informed the Committee that Amey Highways Team were patching and resurfacing roads through the night in many areas, which was very good news.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP22/023 To receive the report of Borough Councillors

The Chairman invited Councillor Leason to address the Committee.

Grant Aid

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that Stafford Borough Council had been supporting local businesses with grant aid and had distributed more than £47 million to hundreds of local businesses suffering financial hardship during the pandemic, including many from Stone.

The Economic Growth and Revenues and Benefits Team continue to promote and pay Business Support Grants. Recent schemes have seen nearly 200 self-employed people apply for around £400,000 in financial help. These include people such as driving instructors, those renting chairs in hairdressing salons and taxi drivers.

The Restart Grants, for the supply of goods and services to eligible businesses such as the retail, hospitality and leisure industries, have also been made.

Electric Charging Points

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that he had been asked by a number of people about the installation of charging points on public car parks. The Borough Council has funding from a tripartite application made by Stafford, Newcastle and Stoke on Trent Councils to install charging points to taxis on Crown Street Car park and other car parks within the borough. These will be installed within the next few months and will be available for drivers to use.

Other car parks not included in the arrangements will have charging points fitted when they are next subject to a major refurbishment.

* 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.

GP22/024 **Representations from Members of the Public**

None

GP22/025 **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 4 May 2021 (Minute No's GP22/001 – GP22/018), be approved as a correct record.

GP22/026 **Minutes of Sub-Committees**

- a) Estates Sub-Committee held on 27 April 2021, (Minute Numbers EST20/041 – EST20/047), that the draft minutes be noted and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers EST20/045 be adopted.
- b) Management Sub-Committee held on 27 April 2021, (Minute Numbers MAN20/053 – MAN20/058), that the draft minutes be noted.

GP22/027 **Council and Committee Meetings**

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that this item (to consider the arrangements for Town Council meetings in July and onwards) had been a holding item, depending on what the Prime Minister had said in his recent address about the national position on Covid-19.

On the basis that the Government's Roadmap does end restrictions on 19 July, future Council, Committee and Sub-Committee meetings will be held in the Council Chamber, and the dates will follow the programme previously agreed. Should the restrictions be extended, meetings will be held at the Frank Jordan Centre instead.

GP22/028 **HS2 Annual Traffic and Transport General Meeting**

The Committee considered two representatives to attend the HS2 Annual Traffic and Transport General Meeting held with district and parish councils.

An email from the Phase 2a Stakeholder and Community Engagement Manager (Community Areas 2 & 3) and updated terms of reference had been attached to the agenda for the meeting.

RESOLVED: To make the following appointments of Council representatives to attend the HS2 Annual Traffic and Transport General Meeting:

- Councillor Mrs J. Hood
- Councillor R. Kenney

GP22/029 **Promotion of Stone Working Group**

RESOLVED: That the parent committee for the Promotion of Stone Working Group is changed from the General Purposes Committee to the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee.

GP22/030 **Review of Parliamentary Constituencies**

The Committee considered a Boundary Commission for England review of Parliamentary Constituencies.

The following documents had been attached to the agenda for the meeting:

- West Midlands region initial proposals summary
- Map of the proposed Stone and Great Wyrley County Constituency

The following documents had been attached to the electronic version of the agenda for the meeting:

- Guide to the 2023 Review of Parliamentary constituencies
- Initial proposals for new Parliamentary constituency boundaries in the West Midlands

The Chairman invited the Committee to comment on the public consultation.

The Committee expressed the collective view that it was not in favour of the proposed Stone and Great Wyrley County Constituency. The reasons for the objection included:

- The proposals are self-contradictory. The review talks about the importance of bringing communities together, stating that the current Stone Constituency is well balanced and appropriate for the communities it serves. The review then proceeds to dismantle these benefits, putting communities together that have nothing in common.
- The proposals attempt to put 65,000 people away in a corner. The areas in the proposed Stone and Great Wyrley Constituency include Penkridge, Hixon and many other villages that are all rural in nature. Stone won't sit well with a rural surrounding.
- Stone in North Staffordshire has nothing in common with the West Midlands. There isn't anything that ties the areas together – both having different outcomes, histories and cultures.
- From previous experience, there were problems when Stone was proposed to be part of Lichfield. At present the constituency relates to the people of Stone and the area. There is no relationship with Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay.
- Many people in Stone will not even know where Great Wyrley and Cheslyn Hay are located in the County.
- The proposals are bad news for the town. The suggestion is ludicrous, absurd and bears no relation (or consideration) to peoples' lives.

The Committee agreed that it hoped all residents would take part in the consultation and object most strongly. There is a clear process to appeal against the boundary changes and the Town Council should support residents with information about the proposals and how to produce an effective, robust and co-

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ordinated respond. The appeal should be made in accordance with the criteria set out and the consultation close should be borne in mind.

The Chairman asked that Councillors take action to inform Stone residents of the proper process for responding to the consultation.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee, is authorised to prepare a response to the Boundary Commission for England's review of Parliamentary Constituencies.

RESOLVED: That the consultation response is circulated to Committee Members, prior to its submission.

GP22/031 Public Consultation on Hybrid Bill Procedure

The Committee considered a public consultation on the second stage of a review of the Hybrid Bill procedure (first stage completed in 2017). The scope of the review was to consider and make recommendations on possible changes to procedure and practice of both Houses in relation to Hybrid bills so as to make the hybrid bill process simpler and less time consuming.

A link to further information on the Hybrid Bill procedure and practice had been provided with the agenda for the meeting.

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Stone Railhead Crisis Group had put forward a thorough and well-balanced executive summary and he hoped the Committee would consider this document as the Town Council's response.

The Chairman advised Committee Members to review the document individually and to forward their comments by Monday 12 July.

RESOLVED: That, subject to Town Councillors feedback, Stone Railhead Crisis Group's executive summary of the Hybrid Bill Procedure, be adopted and submitted as the Town Council's response to the consultation.

GP22/032 Christmas Lights

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that this item was on the agenda in case it was required following the Tourism and Town Promotion Sub-Committee meeting (on Tuesday 6 July 2021) when Christmas Lights were considered.

The item was, however, no longer required.

GP22/033 Town Council Payments

RESOLVED: To note the list* of Town Council payments made by the Council during the period 1 April to 31 May 2021.

GP22/034 Update from Working Groups:

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that no meeting of the Steering Group had taken place.

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She said that issues relating to Local Green Spaces and Local Green Infrastructure (including grass cutting) were in need of discussion, but these would be raised at the appropriate meeting.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the Stone Neighbourhood Plan had been made (following a referendum on 6 May 2021) and had also been accepted by Stafford Borough Council's Cabinet. It would be presented at the next full Stafford Borough Council meeting.

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that the last meeting of the Liaison Group (held on 14 April 2021) had covered a lot of ground and he had been impressed by the geographical coverage of the attendees.

He said that Zoom was a convenient way of holding these meetings which will continue to be used unless there is a presentation by a guest visitor.

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that the meetings are valuable and useful as they enable the sharing of experiences with friends.

He said that Barlaston Parish Council had experienced problems with the Borough Council's failure to recognise provisions within the Barlaston Neighbourhood Plan and he hoped the Stone Neighbourhood Plan would be fully recognised.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the next meeting would be taking place later in the month.

Promotion of Stone Working Group

Councillor Kenney advised the Committee that this Working Group would be moving to the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee.

Heritage Centre Working Group

Councillor Kenney advised the Committee that a meeting had been arranged to take place on Monday 12 July 2021.

GP22/035 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 Stone ATC were doing well and were getting back up to speed nicely. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 14 July 2021.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that a meeting had taken place on 4 June and Neil Norman had reported that grant aid had compensated Age Concern for its loss of income (caused by the inability to hold fundraising events such as the Christmas Tombola). It has been suggested that Age Concern look at taking on a Town Council market stall on a Farmers' Market day.

Councillor Davies was welcomed to the meeting as an additional Town Council representative.

The Age Concern office is currently open two days a week (Monday and Friday), staffed by two volunteers to provide help and advice. In order to restart the hospital transport service, the office would have to be staffed every day to take calls and allocate drivers. Mr Norman has suggested canvassing the office volunteers to see whether they would be happy to return based on Government Guidelines.

The Chairman has suggested that when conditions allow, an Afternoon Tea fundraising event could be organised. This was considered an excellent idea.

Stafford & Stone Access Group

Councillor Kelt reported that the meeting of the Access Group scheduled to take place in April had been deferred until June and then again until July. This meeting will coincide with the AGM and there is nothing to report until then.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Kelt confirmed that a meeting had taken place (two weeks ago). The minutes were read and the accounts considered before walking the Plot.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that no meetings had taken place.

SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Green was not available to provide a report.

GP22/036 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.

GP22/037 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 4 May 2021, (Minute Number's GP22/001 and GP22/018), be approved as a correct record.

CHAIRMAN