

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 3 August 2021

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: K. Argyle, A. Best, J. Davies, Mrs L. Davies, Mrs J. Hood, T. Kelt,
J. Powell, C. Thornicroft and S. Walley

ABSENT: Councillors: Mrs A. Burgess, Mrs K. Dawson, I. Fordham, M. Green, M. Hatton,
J. Hickling, P. Leason and R. Townsend

GP22/038 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors: Mrs A. Burgess, Mrs K. Dawson,
I. Fordham, M. Green, J. Hickling, P. Leason and R. Townsend.

GP22/039 **Declarations of Interests**

None

GP22/040 **Requests for Dispensations**

None

GP22/041 **To receive the report of the County Councillors**

County Councillor Mrs J. Hood

The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs Hood to address the Committee.

County Highways

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that the Highways Team from Amey had done a very good job on road resurfacing/patching repairs in the town, particularly with challenges caused by the weather. The team had been sensitive to the needs of commuters having undertaken the work during the night (which wasn't something they had to do).

Councillor Mrs Hood congratulated the Highways team on the quality of work and in almost meeting their target completion date.

Plane Tree

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that block paving repairs around the Plane tree in Granville Square were scheduled to remedy uneven surfaces following tree root movement. This was an ongoing problem as the Highways Team had last carried out repair work between lockdowns.

Full County Council Meeting

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that she had called for a Covid-19 vaccination centre to be set up in Stone. She said this would assist young people to

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get vaccinated, remove the need for travel to Stoke on Trent or Stafford and eliminate associated costs.

New Pub at Crown Wharf

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she and Councillor Kenny had been involved in the Crown Wharf development from its inception. She had delivered a report in favour of the development, challenged the Highways Department (one of the first jobs she had undertaken as a County Councillor) and supported the development at a Borough Council planning meeting where the architect had not been in favour of the traditional design (preferring something modern).

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that she was proud of the new pub and welcomed its opening which will be enjoyed by, all including the High Street. She said the pub was a remarkable achievement given the prevalence of public house closures nationally.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP22/042 To receive the report of Borough Councillors

The Chairman informed the Committee that Stafford Borough Council was now sharing its Chief Executive with Cannock Chase Council (on a temporary basis which may become permanent). Two deputy Chief Executives have been appointed – one at Cannock and one at Stafford. The officers are also looking at further shared services.

The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs Hood to address the Committee.

Trees on Westbridge Park

Councillor Mrs Hood referred the Committee to a coloured information sheet (distributed at the meeting) detailing the diseases that had damaged trees in Westbridge Park. The Borough Council had needed to fell the trees and to remove associated dangers to the public.

Councillor Mrs Hood emphasised that the trees were only removed because they were diseased and will be replaced by the Borough Council. She invited people to contact her with any questions.

Tilling Drive

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that completion of the temporary road had over run and Stafford Borough Council's Legal Department had written to the developer about the delay.

She informed the Committee that the play area on Tilling Drive will be enhanced and only youngsters will be playing football there.

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that she was working to achieve a compromise with the care home developers on forming a workable screen. She said removing the footpath at the side of the field had been suggested along with the planting of an avenue of trees. A local business has very kindly come forward to provide them. She called for ideas from the Councillors present.

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Full Borough Council Meeting

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that the new Corporate Business Plan 2021-24 had been issued at the full Council Meeting (which could also be downloaded). She said Stone had one of the strongest communities in the Borough which had been demonstrated repeatedly through the Covid-19 pandemic.

Councillors were also given the new Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government National Planning Policy Framework booklet, and the draft Equality and Inclusion Policy 2021-24. The Borough Council's vision was to have a prosperous and attractive borough and an equal opportunity for all.

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that the Welcome Back Fund would be financing the hanging baskets in the town and additional seating in the High Street.

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that the Borough Council had granted the Royal British Legion the Freedom of the Borough which was unanimous decision.

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that a member of the public had asked the Leader of the Borough Council what action would be taken in response to the Boundary Commission for England's Boundary Review proposals and the Leader's response had been that town and parish councils should sort the matter out themselves. He didn't feel the Borough Council should get involved.

Councillor Mrs Hood expressed her view that this was a disappointing response and the Town Council had done an excellent job in writing to the Boundary Commission. Her belief that 'if it ain't broke don't fix it' was also the overwhelming message from residents. She assured everyone that the five Borough/Town Councillors would be pleased to continue working for the town on this matter.

GP22/043 Representations from Members of the Public

None

GP22/044 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 8 July 2021 (Minute Numbers GP22/019 – GP22/037), be approved as a correct record.

GP22/045 Minutes of Sub-Committees

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 6 July 2021 (Minute Numbers TTP22/001 – TTP22/007), that the draft minutes be noted and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number TTP22/005 be adopted.
- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 6 July 2021 (Minute Numbers ENV22/001 – ENV22/006), that the draft minutes be noted and the

recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers ENV22/005 and ENV22/006 be adopted.

- c) Mayor's Charity Sub-Committee held on 6 July 2021 (Minute Numbers MC22/001 – MC22/006), that the draft minutes be noted along with the resolutions of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers MC22/004, MC22/005 and MC22/006.

GP22/046 Requests for Grants from Local Organisations

Florence Brass Band - £500

The Committee considered the grant application from Florence Brass Band requesting £500 towards two projects (identified before the Covid-19 pandemic struck). These are the redesigning of the storeroom to make it more ergonomic and improve safety when players collect instruments and accessories, and the advertising of vacant positions within the band.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that the application didn't meet the Town Council's policy in relation to the level of reserves compared with annual income.

RESOLVED: To award £500 to Florence Brass Band.

GP22/047 Covid-19

The Committee considered an email from Stafford Borough Council enquiring about the Town Council's intentions to commemorate local people who had lost their lives to Covid-19.

A copy of an email from Corporate Support had been attached to the agenda for the meeting.

The Committee expressed the strong view that a commemoration should include all people who had been adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic (including their relatives, friends and colleagues) and not just those who had died. The crisis had affected children who have missed almost two years of education, key workers and many others who have endured horrendous experiences.

The Committee also expressed the view that Stone was a distinctive and separate community wishing to create its own memorial or other appropriate commemoration. This approach would be far more significant for Stone people and reflect all sectors of the community.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk is asked to inform the Borough Council that the town will independently be considering a commemoration for local people whose lives have been affected by Covid-19 and will advise the Borough Council should finance be required.

GP22/048 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies

The Committee received a copy of the Town Council's response to the Boundary Commission for England's Review of Parliamentary Constituencies (circulated with the agenda for the meeting)

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The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Town Council's draft representation had been circulated to Councillors prior to its submission. He confirmed that no Councillor had requested changes or alterations and all comments given had been positive.

GP22/049 **Heroes of Stone Award**

The Committee considered the establishment of a Town Mayor's Heroes of Stone award Scheme.

The Chairman invited the Town Mayor to address the Committee.

The Town Mayor advised the Committee that he would like to establish an annual Stone Heroes Awards Scheme in recognition of exceptional voluntary work delivered by the people of Stone. It would be similar to other award schemes except that local people will be recognised who might otherwise be overlooked by the larger district or county. The recipients would be nominated and the awards categorised into: Community Hero of the Year, Junior Hero of the Year, Team of the Year, Environmental Hero of the Year and the big award of Stone's Hero (which would be one of the four nominees).

There would be a merit award and a winner with the awards ceremony taking place at the Mayor's Civic Dinner.

The Town Mayor suggested the judges consist of the Mayor and Mayoress, the Mayor of the previous year, the Deputy Mayor and potentially the Mayor's Chaplain.

The Committee asked that the Town Mayor consider genuine volunteers or someone who had done something truly remarkable, rather than organisations with lots of paid staff.

RESOLVED: That the Town Mayor submits his plans for the Heroes of Stone Award to the Town Clerk to enable the rules and costings to be prepared for consideration at a future General Purposes Committee.

GP22/050 **Community Diagnostic Hubs**

The Committee considered an email (which had been attached to the agenda for the meeting) from the Clinical Lead at the Community Diagnostic Hubs Project.

The Community Diagnostic Hubs Project is working to improve diagnostic services and is asking members of the public to take part in a survey. The survey requests information about how people currently access diagnostic services and views on what they think of the emerging proposals.

The Clinical Lead explained that most diagnostic tests used to work out what is causing a person's illness or symptoms are done in larger hospitals and national guidance now recommends that NHS organisations move towards a local approach for Community Diagnostic Hubs (CDHs) in the county.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee about the nature of the questions and the Committee concluded that collectively the Town Council could only respond to certain questions as the survey had more of a personal leaning.

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Although the Committee expressed the view that the general answers to the questions were obvious: NHS services require improvement in timeliness, resources and management, it was agreed that individually Councillors should give their personal opinion and should promote the survey in the community.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee be authorised to respond to the generalised questions in the survey, on behalf of the Town Council.

GP22/051 Town Council Payments

RESOLVED: To note the list* of Town Council payments made by the Council during the period 1 to 30 June 2021.

Councillor Mrs Hood said that the service provided by Stafford Borough Council to install and remove the bollards in the High Street was not always delivered. The Town Clerk said that he would follow this matter up.

GP22/052 Update from Working Groups:

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

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

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group

Councillor Davies informed the Committee that an excellent meeting had been held on 21 July via Zoom which was useful for these sorts of meetings as attendees were situated all around the northern part of the Borough. The usual topics were discussed such as HS2 and the consultation on the proposed Parliamentary Constituency boundaries.

Councillor Davies said that the forum continues to prove extremely useful and was not very time consuming for those who attend it.

Heritage Centre Working Group

Councillor Kenney advised the Committee that the Working Group's first meeting had been held last week, and members were joined by an architect and two experts in the field of heritage centres. All will supply costings before moving on with the project.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the working group had split into two specialised work areas; one for the heritage centre build and internal fittings and the other for the displays and exhibits.

The Town Clerk gave reassurances that the working group was a single working group that involved a piece of work requiring specialities. He said the working group would be expected to come together on a regular basis to ensure that its work was co-ordinated.

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GP22/053 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 had a meeting that evening. He reported that they were doing very well and sent their grateful thanks to the Town Council for the grant that had assisted in the purchase of air rifles which are now in full use and adding an extra and valued dimension to the training that the cadets receive.

Stone ATC is down to 14 cadets at the moment but they are unable to have more than 12 people at any one time under the Covid regulations. Next month they are going to do some more recruiting.

Councillor Davies said Stone ATC will be looking at providing a nomination for the Town Mayor's Cadet and hope to be present on Civic Sunday. They are affected by the Air Training Corps Covid-19 regulations and won't be able to march but can be present at the church.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that there had been no meeting.

Stafford & Stone Access Group

Councillor Kelt reported that a meeting had taken place a week ago which was both a regular meeting and also the AGM. The main part of the meeting had been taken up by a representative from the Borough Council Housing Group who came to talk about the availability of suitably adapted houses. Houses offered to disabled people are not always suitably adapted for their disability. The Housing Group have agreed to work on an adapted properties register so the adaptations can be fitted/made to the houses that are available.

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that the website had been discussed and an expert had advised that changes were required due to Brexit. Further information was awaited on this matter.

The Chair has announced that he will be standing down next year which will bring the Committee close to collapse due to lack of membership. There is a need to recruit new members.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Kenney confirmed that there had been no further meetings since the Plot walk.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Mrs Hood, Councillor Mrs Davies and Councillor Powell confirmed that no meetings had taken place.

SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Green was not available to provide a report.

The meeting was temporarily suspended and then reconvened after the open session of the Planning Consultative Committee meeting had taken place.

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GP22/054 **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.

GP22/055 **Heritage Centre Lease**

The Committee considered whether to enter into a lease for the operation of the Heritage Centre. A copy of the lease and associated documents had been attached to the electronic version of the confidential agenda for the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk is authorised to sign the lease for the Heritage Centre on behalf of the Town Council.

CHAIRMAN