

Stone Town Council – Management Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 27 July 2021

PRESENT: Councillor J. Davies in the Chair and
Councillors: K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess, Mrs L. Davies and R. Kenney

By Chairman's invitation: Mrs J. Hood and P. Leason

ABSENT: Councillor: I. Fordham, M. Green, T. Kelt and J. Powell

MAN22/001 Apologies

Councillors:, I. Fordham, M. Green, T. Kelt and J. Powell

MAN22/002 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None received

MAN22/003 Representations from Members of the Public

None received

MAN22/004 Minutes

That the Minutes of the Management Sub-Committee Meeting held on the 27 April 2021 (Minute No's MAN20/053 – MAN20/058), be approved as a correct record.

MAN22/005 Policies and Procedures

The Sub-Committee considered the updated Press and Media Protocol which had been attached to the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the main differences in the updated Protocol were that it had been tightened and expanded to include social media and self generated items such as Members' own websites or YouTube channels. The updated Protocol also focusses on the point that members of the public don't necessarily always understand when a Councillor is acting as a Councillor and provides guidance in this respect.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the most significant of the individual changes was that Councillors should not describe themselves as

* 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.

Councillors unless they are doing something directly related to council business, including ward casework. They should not describe themselves as Councillor when doing something for another body to ensure there is no question of confusion about their position.

The Town Clerk reminded the Sub-Committee that using a Councillor's own email address for council business was subject to Freedom of Information.

RECOMMENDED: That the Press and Media Protocol is accepted by the Town Council.

MAN22/006 **Headstone**

The Chairman invited the Town Clerk to update the Sub-Committee on project Headstone after implementation following the death of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the Headstone protocol had worked well although there hadn't been as many actions to implement as would have been required under normal circumstances (outside of Covid-19 restrictions).

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the action points agreed with Stafford Borough Council had not gone exactly to plan but good communication links had ensured that things did work out in the end. For example, the Town Council had been told not to issue its own press release using its own words (amongst other things) but the County Council and Borough Council proceeded to produce their own statements and Stone Town Council then followed their lead.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the document would be updated with new members of the Royal Family but he did not believe there was a need to update the procedures.

The Sub-Committee concluded that the protocol had worked well and the Town Clerk was thanked for his efforts.

MAN22/007 **Financial Control**

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that this item had been listed on the agenda after Councillors had expressed a desire to better understand the financial controls of larger town councils (rather than the financial controls of smaller councils which had been covered on various training courses).

The Chairman invited the Town Clerk to brief the Sub-Committee on the Town Council's financial management and control procedures.

* 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 Town Clerk explained the Town Council's financial management and control procedures in detail (splitting the topic into strategic and operational financial management) with the support of an accompanying note* that was distributed at the meeting.

At the end of the briefing the Sub-Committee concluded that it was satisfied appropriate financial procedures were in place. The Chairman stressed that it was incumbent upon Councillors to take responsibility for checking reports (particularly the regular payments list and bank reconciliations) conscientiously.

MAN22/008 Updates

The Chairman invited the Town Clerk to provide updates on the following:

a. Website

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that some improvements had been made to the website but more time was needed to modernise its design.

He explained that the website was a Council information website as opposed to a community website that sought to publicise the town.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that no new work had been undertaken in relation to Facebook.

The Sub-Committee expressed concern about potential data protection issues with Facebook and the Town Clerk suggested that a Facebook page, if launched, should include only news and event items.

b. Service Continuity Plan

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that time spent working from home had demonstrated an ability to do so which was useful to know in respect of service continuity.

He advised that there was still a lot of paper in the office and the Deputy Town Clerk was looking at the potential for digitising the office filing system.

The Sub-Committee concluded that the measures in place were effective but further lessons would continue to be learned to improve resilience in the future.

* 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.

MAN22/009 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.

MAN22/010 Staffing Matters

The Sub-Committee considered the Town Clerk's report on staff recruitment which had been issued with the agenda for the meeting.

The Sub-Committee concluded that it would revisit the staffing needs of the Council in respect of the Heritage Centre and Events and Marketing requirements when the staffing needs for the Heritage Centre had been identified.

Chairman

* 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.