

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