

Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber, 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 31 August 2021

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

By Chairman's invitation: Councillors J. Davies and Mrs J. Hood

ABSENT: Councillors: Mrs K. Dawson and M. Hatton

ENV22/007 **Apologies**

Councillors: Mrs K. Dawson

ENV22/008 **Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

None received

ENV22/009 **Representations from Members of the Public**

None

ENV22/010 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on the 6 July 2021 (Minute Numbers ENV22/001 – ENV22/006), were approved as a correct record.

ENV22/011 **Environment Policy**

The Sub-Committee considered the Environment Policy* which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Sub-Committee raised questions about the Policy's implications on the Town Council's tendering process, making it complex for bidders, adding costs and potentially reducing the pool of suppliers.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the policy would not present a significant financial risk to the Town Council as the tendering process is only used infrequently and the Council would retain the opportunity to make individual decisions. The Council would not be obliged to accept any specific terms and would be able to balance environmental and financial consequences.

The Sub-Committee sought clarification from the Town Clerk on a number of

points in the draft Environment Policy and the following amendments were agreed:

- 5.9f. *Request roadside, verges, footpaths be kept clear and tidy.*
Delete the whole line
- 5.9g. *Consider street design, including road closures for play and school safety.*
Insert the word 'road' before the word 'closures'.

The Chairman asked that the Allotments Policy be reviewed on the next agenda.

RECOMMENDED: That the General Purposes Committee is asked to adopt the revised Environment Policy.

ENV22/012 Crown Meadow Improvements

The Sub-Committee considered the update (which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting) on the work being undertaken by the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contractor on Crown Meadow.

First Walk

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that two walks had taken place on Crown Meadow and following the first walk the Biodiversity Officer had confirmed in a letter that management of the wetland scrapes had been successful. The Biodiversity Officer suggested that consideration could be given to an annual hay cut with the cuttings removed to prevent nutrition building up. This would maintain the diversity of wild flowers and create light and space for the plants to develop.

The Biodiversity Officer also suggested that in September, 50% of each scrape is cut with the cuttings removed, followed by the remaining 50% cut the year after. The two year rotation would give space and help control the Willow and other dominant species.

The Chairman suggested asking the grounds maintenance contractor for an estimate of the cost of the work.

Second Walk

The Chairman reported on the observations and recommended actions noted during the second walk of Crown Meadow which were:

- The Perspex in the information board is dirty and obscure.
- A second information board should be installed near to the footbridge.
- Volunteers are recruited to sand and repaint the benches.
- To contact the river authority about the fallen Ash tree which could cause problems with debris build up and flooding.
- That the Himalayan Balsam is controlled by volunteers or through the creation of a 'Friends of Crown Meadow'.
- Install picnic benches on the field next to Crown Meadow.

The Sub-Committee made the following comments in response to the observations/recommendations:

- Working with volunteers can be problematic.
- The Ash tree is full of wildlife and has been in the river for a number of years.
- Himalayan Balsam needs to be cleared from upstream.
- The natural resource of Balsam should not be taken away without replacing it with something else.
- Cutting half of the scrapes each year may keep the Balsam in check.

The Sub-Committee concluded that professional advice would be sought from the Biodiversity Officer on how to best manage the Himalayan Balsam. A recommendation on the varieties of flower species to plant would also be requested. The Chairman said that he would provide a report at the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Sub-Committee that she felt the previous reports on the removal of trees had been misleading as these were actually whips and saplings. She said the Environment Sub-Committee had not recommended the removal of mature trees (except in respect of the removal/replanting program to screen M & S).

The Sub-Committee agreed that more accurate detail and clarification was needed as it was important to give the correct work instructions to the grounds maintenance contractor.

ENV22/013 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 the next area of work for the Working Group would be implementation of the Environment Policy.

He confirmed that a further meeting would be held with the Borough Council to properly understand their policies/practices on the reduction and recycling of single use plastics and to agree how that could be implemented across Stone.

b) Environmental Issues Working Group

The Chairman invited Councillor Kelt to provide a verbal report on the work of the Environmental Issues/Climate Working Group.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that a meeting had taken place several weeks ago and a number of actions agreed. On the advice of the Town Clerk most actions could be implemented straight away with the need to obtain costings and approval of the General Purposes Committee on others.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the Working Group would proceed with some of the agreed actions which would involve working with Stafford Borough Council on areas of common concern.

Councillor Kelt said that the working group would also be making contact with Walton Priory Middle School (who had responded to its letter about environmental issues) to talk about the activities the children were doing.

Chairman