

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 5 October 2021

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

ABSENT: Councillors: M. Green, M. Hatton and J. Hickling

GP22/079 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors: M. Green and J. Hickling

GP22/080 **Declarations of Interests**

Councillor P. Leason declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 (Minute Number GP22/087) – Grant aid to local organisations: 1st Stone Scout Group.

Councillor Mrs K. Dawson declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 (Minute Number GP22/087) – Grant aid to local organisations: 1st Stone Scout Group.

GP22/081 **Requests for Dispensations**

None

GP22/082 **To receive the report of the County Councillors**

County Councillor Mrs J. Hood

The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs Hood to address the Committee.

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she had no report to deliver on this occasion.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP22/083 **To receive the report of Borough Councillors**

The Chairman invited Councillor Fordham to address the Committee.

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that the five Stone Ward Borough Independent Councillors will shortly be meeting with Stafford Borough Council Officers to discuss the next stages and the timing for the development of Westbridge Park.

GP22/084 **Representations from Members of the Public**

None

GP22/085 **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 September 2021 (Minute Numbers GP22/056 – GP22/078), be approved as a correct record.

GP22/086 **Minutes of Sub-Committees**

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 31 August 2021 (Minute Numbers TTP22/008 – TTP22/017), that the draft minutes be noted and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers TTP22/012, TTP22/013 (second recommendation: *That the General Purposes Committee considers the arrangements for a Queen's Platinum Jubilee Working Group*) and TTP22/016 be adopted.

Minute Number TTP22/015 had been adopted at the last meeting.

The Chairman advised the Committee that he had been approached by Councillors J. Davies, Mrs L. Davies and Mrs J. Hood to ask the Committee to reconsider the recommendation contained in Minute Number TTP22/013 (first recommendation: *That the Christmas Lights Switch-On is delivered virtually in 2021 and that the preparations for a live event in the High Street are not progressed*). He had also received a letter from Stone Traders Group in support of a live Christmas Lights Switch-On.

The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs Hood to address the Committee.

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she had been contacted by a great many people expressing their strong views about wanting to see a live Christmas Lights Switch-On event take place in the town in 2021.

After also noting that the London Marathon had taken place at the weekend, and also well attended local events (St George's Day and Food & Drink Festival) Councillor Mrs Hood asked the Committee to reconsider its decision not to hold a Christmas Lights Switch-On in the town.

RESOLVED; That Minute Number TTP22/013 (first recommendation) is revoked in favour of a live Christmas Lights Switch-On in the town on Thursday 25 November 2021.

RESOLVED: That the arrangements for a Virtual Christmas Lights Switch-On continue and be held concurrently.

RESOLVED: That the following Members be appointed to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Working Group (reference TTP22/016): K. Argyle, J. Davies, Mrs L. Davies, Mrs J. Hood, P. Leason, R. Kenney and S. Walley.

- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 31 August 2021 (Minute Numbers ENV22/007 – ENV22/013), that the draft minutes be noted and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number ENV22/011 be adopted.

GP22/087 Requests for Grants from Local Organisations

1st Stone Scout Group

Having declared personal interests, Councillor Mrs Dawson and Councillor Leason did not speak on this item, or vote.

The Committee considered the grant application from 1st Stone Scout Group requesting financial support in respect of the costs of hiring an alternative venue for its meetings while the Pump House receives renovation works and essential repairs to the floor.

RESOLVED: To award to 1st Stone Scout Group a grant of an unspecified value which will be equal to the costs of hiring the Frank Jordan Centre for Scout Group meetings for a maximum period of twelve months.

Douglas Macmillan Hospice

The Committee considered the grant application from the Douglas MacMillan Hospice requesting £200 towards the costs of providing children’s services (that have been taken on from the Donna Louise Trust). The application specifies that the hospice is currently caring for six children and their families in the Stone postcode area.

RESOLVED: To award £200 to Douglas MacMillan Hospice.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council reviews its policies in relation to national and large charities who apply for grant aid.

GP22/088 Review of Standing Orders

The Committee undertook to review the Council’s Standing Orders* which had been presented to the last meeting of the Committee and circulated electronically with the agenda for this meeting. The document had been reviewed by the Town Clerk, who had proposed amendments to reflect changes to the arrangements for: the location of meetings, urgent matters during the pandemic, serving notice on Councillors by email, accounts submission deadlines if specified in national regulations and procurement changes to reflect Britain’s exit from the European Union.

RESOLVED: That the Committee updates the Council’s Standing Orders Related to Council Business in accordance with the proposed revisions contained in the report.

GP22/089 Review of Financial Regulations

The Committee undertook to review the Council’s Financial Regulations* which had been presented to the last meeting of the Committee and circulated electronically with the agenda for this meeting. The document had been reviewed by the Town Clerk, who proposed changes to Regulation 5.7b (requirement to produce a report of all payments to each ordinary meeting of the General

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Purposes Committee), Regulation 5.10 (payments using PayPal) and Regulation 10.3 (procurement following Britain's exit from the European Union).

RESOLVED: That the Council's Financial Regulations are updated in accordance with the proposed revisions in the report.

GP22/090 Code of Conduct

The Committee considered the revised Code of Conduct which is based on the updated Local Government Association Model.

The revised Code of Conduct had been circulated with the electronic version of the agenda for the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the revised Councillor Code of Conduct (October 2021) is adopted by the Town Council.

GP22/091 Drinking Water Machines

The Committee considered whether The Town Council should continue to provide drinking water from cold water drinks dispensers in its offices, Council Chamber and two community centres.

The Committee expressed concerns that water machines are not hygienic and in the current climate present a risk in respect of Covid-19 safety. In addition the water cooling element of the machines are not environmentally friendly.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that (under Regulation 22 of the HSE Guidance and Approved Code of Practice) the Town Council has obligations as an employer to provide an adequate supply of wholesome drinking water (and drinking vessels) that is readily accessible to all staff.

The water should normally be obtained directly from a suitable public or private mains supply. If a cistern, tank or vessel is used as a supply, it should be well covered, kept clean and tested and disinfected as necessary. If refillable containers need to be used they should be suitably enclosed to prevent contamination and refilled at least once a day. The supply of bottled water does not meet the requirement and may only be provided as a supplementary source of drinking water.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the water supplied from the kitchens at each of the Council's sites may well fulfil the requirements of the legislation but this would need to be established before the water coolers (which are out of contact) could be removed.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk is asked to identify and implement a hygienic and environmentally friendly method for supplying drinking water to its employees which meet the Town Council's obligations as an employer.

GP22/092 Gambling Act 2005 – Draft Statement of Principles 2022 to 2025

The Committee considered a Stafford Borough Council consultation seeking views on the statement of the principles it proposes to apply when exercising its functions under the Gambling Act 2005.

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An email from the Licensing Manager at Stafford Borough Council had been circulated with the agenda and the Gambling Act 2005 Draft Statement of Principles 2022 – 2025 had been attached to the electronic version of the agenda.

The Committee noted the consultation but did not wish to have any input.

GP22/093 Nominations for SPCA Executive and AGM arrangements

The Committee considered an invitation to nominate a representative to stand for election to Staffordshire Parish Councils Association's Executive. It was noted that the election will take place at the Association's AGM on the evening of 6 December 2021.

RESOLVED: To nominate Councillor Mark Green to stand for election as a representative to the SPCA Executive Committee.

GP22/094 Members' Motion under Standing Order 4

Councillor Mrs Kerry Dawson

"I've been looking into ways we can get young people more involved in the Council and the things that we do. As part of this research, I have identified a potential role for a number of "Student Advisors" who would support the Council at appropriate meetings by providing advice from the perspective of younger people.

I would ask the Council for its support for me to work with the Town Clerk and local schools to put together a proposal which can be considered by this Committee and, if supported, implemented at the Annual Meeting in May 2022."

Councillor Mrs Dawson advised the Committee that she had had several discussions about how young people might get more involved with the Council and after research had discovered the NALC publication 'Whatever, yeah' containing several case studies on how other councils had been getting their youth involved in their work.

She believed the 'Student Advisors' model championed by Ringwood Town Council would benefit the Stone community, providing a mechanism for young people to have an input into local democracy and decisions relating to the town.

The Committee congratulated Councillor Mrs Dawson on identifying and raising this important issue.

RESOLVED: That the Management Sub-Committee is asked to consider the options for better representing young people and promoting youth engagement in the Town Council's activities.

RESOLVED: That the Management Sub-Committee meets on 19 October 2021 to consider its recommendations to the General Purposes Committee.

The Chairman of the Management Sub-Committee confirmed that any Councillor not on the Management Sub-Committee would be given a dispensation to speak.

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Councillor Steve Walley

"I would like to commence holding surgeries as a Town Councillor, for the residents of Stonefield and Christchurch Ward.

An ideal location would be the Frank Jordan Centre, and would propose that the Committee agree to use of the Centre free of charge for this purpose."

Councillor Walley advised the Committee that he considered it was important for Town Councillors to be as visible as possible and in working towards this wished to propose holding Town Council surgeries in collaboration with fellow ward Councillors. He suggested alternating the venues to ensure accessibility and asked whether the Frank Jordan Centre could be used free of charge for this purpose.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the ability to give free use of Council premises was permitted provided its purpose was clearly for the work of the Council and that the work was clearly non political.

The Committee agreed that the idea of holding surgeries was a good one in principle but raised a number of questions about how the sessions would work and how different scenarios would be managed.

The Committee raised the following points for consideration:

- That the project should be open to all so that the service benefits the whole town rather than specific wards.
- Safety and security are key considerations and a minimum of two Councillors should be present at surgeries.
- Ideally many more than two Councillors should be present at surgeries to maximise the collective knowledge that is available from the team.
- Many enquiries are likely to be related to signposting people to the services of other local authorities. Preparations will be necessary to ensure people are directed correctly for further advice and assistance.
- The Frank Jordan Centre is considered a suitable venue in respect of its proximity to the town and CCTV coverage.
- That the need to ensure revenue to the community centre is not missed. For example using the centre at times when it is not otherwise in use.
- Pop up surgeries could be considered such as a stall at a town market.
- Consideration needs to be given to promotion of surgeries, their frequency, a staffing rota, use of an appointment system, managing situations where people don't arrive, and the procedure for following up.
- How Walton would be served with surgeries. Walton North residents may not wish or have the ability to travel across the A34. Walton Ward Councillors wish to explore the options available for their own area. The Fire station community room was suggested as a possible venue.

RESOLVED: That the Committee asks Councillor Walley to develop a detailed plan for consideration at a future meeting.

GP22/096 **Town Council Payments**

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

GP22/097 **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 J. Davies informed the Committee that the next meeting of the Stone Area Parish Liaison Group would be held in two weeks.

Heritage Centre Steering Committee

Councillor Kenney advised the Committee that a meeting of the Content Sub-Group of the Heritage Centre Steering Committee was scheduled to take place on Monday next week.

GP22/098 **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 he had attended a Civilian Committee meeting last week and the Squadron was doing very well with numbers increasing. The ATC is now able to parade and should be out in force on Remembrance Sunday.

Age Concern Stone & District

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

Stafford & Stone Access Group

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that the next meeting of Stafford & Stone Access Group would be on 25 October 2021. Councillor Kelt is continuing to maintain the Access Group's website.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Kenney confirmed that a meeting of Stone Common Plot Trustees would be held at the end of the month.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Mrs Hood 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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GP22/099 **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 items of business.

GP22/100 **Christmas Market**

The Committee considered a proposal from the Stone Traders Association to hold a Christmas Market on Sunday 21 November 2021 in the High Street.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council supports Stone Traders Association's proposal to hold a Christmas market in the High Street and to provide financed subsidising to Stone based businesses and regular market traders but asks the Association to consider holding the market on Sunday 28 November (rather than Sunday 21 November 2021) when the Christmas Lights will be on in the town.

CHAIRMAN