

# Stone Town Council – Management Sub-Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 16 November 2021

**PRESENT:** Councillor J. Davies in the Chair and  
Councillors: K. Argyle, Mrs L. Davies, I. Fordham, T. Kelt, R. Kenney and  
J. Powell

Officers: Mr L. Trigg and Mrs T. Williams

By Chairman's invitation: A. Best

**ABSENT:** Councillor: Mrs A. Burgess and M. Green

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**MAN22/015** Apologies

Councillor: M. Green

**MAN22/016** Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None received

**MAN22/017** Representations from Members of the Public

None received

**MAN22/018** Minutes

- a) That the Minutes of the Management Sub-Committee Meeting held on the 27 July 2021 (Minute Numbers MAN22/001 – MAN22/010), be approved as a correct record.
- b) That the Minutes of the Management Sub-Committee Meeting held on the 19 October 2021 (Minute Numbers MAN22/011 – MAN22/014), be approved as a correct record.

**MAN22/019** Working Groups

The Sub-Committee reviewed the operation of working groups.

A summary of current working groups with their parent committee and sub committees had been issued with the agenda for the meeting.

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\* 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 Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the purpose of working groups was to consider specific topics or issues before reporting back to the parent committee/sub-committee, reducing the need for too many Councillors to be involved in the detail work. Working groups don't have the authority to take decisions but are valuable in examining issues, consulting experts and making recommendations.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the issue with working groups was that they can last forever, requiring the need to prune them. He said he was interested in making sure the governance of the Town Council was working to the best effect of the town.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that working groups should be set up for a particular purpose where, ideally, three to five councillors work on a particular project. No decisions can be made by the working groups and are required to produce a written report to the parent committee in order for recommendations to be made. The group should generally have a defined end either on a specific date or when the task has been completed. The working group should not be ongoing in the long term.

The Sub-Committee acknowledged that groups such as the Stone Area Parish Liaison Group were not working groups of the Council and operated in a different way.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the current list of working groups appeared to be in accordance with what was needed. The only group that hadn't met was the Market Strategy Working Group.

The Sub-Committee agreed that the working groups should be kept under regular review.

#### **MAN22/020 Charity Policy**

The Committee considered the Town Council's policies on national and larger sized charities who make applications for grant aid. A copy of the Council's current policy had been attached to the agenda for the meeting.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the Town Council is sometimes asked to support organisations where questions are raised about whether they are local. As grant aid is paid by the people of Stone through the precept, the Council is responsible for making sure the expenditure goes to causes which directly benefit the town.

The Chairman asked the Sub-Committee whether it should tighten up the definition of local to make that clearer.

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The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that there was no local definition in the qualifying criteria, just that the organisation provides a benefit to the area. There have also been discussions about whether it is good use of finances to subsidise organisations that are many times the size of the Town Council.

The Sub-Committee suggested that it was stipulated in the application that the money was spent in Stone as larger organisations might not do that – they just ask for funding. The application form asks how the money will be spent and this is easy to follow through with a small group/organisation but more difficult with a larger organisation.

The Sub-Committee considered a range of financial and geographic qualifying criteria which could include an explicit definition for 'local' and turnover and reserves limits.

The Town Clerk offered to undertake some analysis of organisations to identify their turnover levels and to see where a good line might be drawn.

The Sub-Committee asked the Town Clerk to undertake an analysis exercise to produce some figures and options on forms of words that can be considered at its next meeting.

#### **MAN22/021 Updates**

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

a. Website/Facebook

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the resource to improve the website/Facebook did not exist at present and was not likely to be resolved until the post of Marketing Assistant/Heritage Centre Manager had been filled.

b. Service Continuity Plan

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee about ongoing progress with service continuity. A new telephone system has been installed and is up and running and enabling more sophisticated uses than previously. Calls can be transferred between mobile phones at home which is invisible to the customer with a lot more functionality to come.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the Town Council was about to have a refresh of its IT equipment. This was due to be installed over a three day implementation period in December 2021. All systems will be going to the cloud (Microsoft Azure) with no local

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server and the same experience in any location. The new system should improve resilience with backups in the cloud and local service provider guarantees. The system should also provide easier implementation at the Heritage Centre.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the system should be more robust with the most likely point of failure the office internet – though in the event of an extended office internet failure staff would still be able to have full access to office systems at any location with an operational internet link. The new system should therefore offer a high level of resilience and security, and is leading edge in the local council sector.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the Headstone Plan had proven its worth and was ready should it be needed again.

**MAN22/022 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.**

**MAN22/023 Confidential Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential minutes of the Management Sub Committee, held on 27 July 2021, Minute Numbers MAN22/001 and MAN22/010, be approved as a correct record.

**Chairman**

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