



**Town Clerk**

Les Trigg

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15 Station Road  
STONE  
ST15 8JP

17 January 2022

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** will be held in **St Michael's Suite at the Frank Jordan Centre, Lichfield Street, Stone**, on **TUESDAY 25 JANUARY 2022 at 7:00pm** for consideration of the matters itemised in the following agenda.

The agenda is set out below and I trust you will be able to attend.

Les Trigg  
Town Clerk

**AGENDA**

1. **To receive apologies for absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest and Declarations under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992**
3. **Requests for Dispensations Received**
4. **Representations from Members of the Public**

To consider representations from members of the public on items to be considered at this meeting, in accordance with the Council's scheme of public participation.

5. **Minutes of Previous Meetings**
  - a) To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 7 December 2021, Minute No's GP22/123 – GP22/138 (attached).

6. **To Determine the 2022-23 to 2024-25 Budget for recommendation to the Council**

To consider the report of the Town Clerk (attached) and budget recommendations from the Sub-Committees.

7. **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.**

8. **Confidential Minutes**

To approve the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee held on 7 December 2021, Minute Numbers GP22/123, GP22/136 and GP22/137 (attached).

Members of the public are welcome to attend the General Purposes Committee meeting as observers and/or to make representations to the committee in accordance with the Council's scheme of public participation. Details of the scheme are displayed in the Council's notice boards and website.

# Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 7 December 2021

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

Officers: Mr L. Trigg and Mrs T. Williams

**ABSENT:** Councillors: A. Best, M. Green, M. Hatton, J. Hickling and Mrs J. Hood

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### **GP22/123    Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors: A. Best, M. Green, J. Hickling and Mrs J. Hood.

### **GP22/124    Declarations of Interests and Declarations under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992**

None

### **GP22/125    Requests for Dispensations**

None

### **GP22/126    To receive the report of the County Councillors**

#### **County Councillor Mrs J. Hood**

Councillor Mrs Hood had given her apologies for the meeting.

#### **County Councillor I. Parry**

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

### **GP22/127    To receive the report of Borough Councillors**

The Chairman invited Councillor Fordham to address the Committee.

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that following presentations at the last General Purposes Committee meeting by members of the public and discussion with the Stafford Borough Council Cabinet Member for Leisure and Head of Operations about the development proposals for Westbridge Park and impact on Alleyne's Academy, Borough Councillors had asked Officers to meet with stakeholders and those organising the town's festivals to find a mutually acceptable solution to any issues.

Councillor Fordham understands from both stakeholders and Officers that constructive meetings have taken place and that more meetings will follow.

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that a meeting had taken place between Town Councillors (himself and Councillor Kenney), Staffordshire Highways representatives, Stafford Borough Safety Officers and Staffordshire Police to discuss traffic movements in the High Street and the dangers presented to pedestrians.

As a result of the meetings plans have been devised to roll out a number of initiatives to improve the situation. The interventions (which will happen regularly and not be one offs) will be co-ordinated between Borough Council officers, Highways officers and the Police.

The Chairman invited Councillor Leason to address the Committee.

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that the Economic and Planning Committee at its last meeting had discussed the Planning Department and various problems it was encountering. He will submit a report to the Town Council with the details.

Councillor Leason said that following a meeting with Borough Officers the Food and Drink Festival Committee will be moving the Food and Drink Festival forward to July in 2022 due to the work beginning in Westbridge Park in the autumn.

The Chairman informed the Committee that he wished to change the order of the agenda so that budget overview (agenda item 9) followed Stone Heritage Centre (agenda item 16). The budget overview item would remain a public report.

**GP22/128**    **Representations from Members of the Public**

None

**GP22/129**    **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 2 November 2021 (Minute Numbers GP22/101 – GP22/117), be approved as a correct record.
- b) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 16 November 2021 (Minute Numbers GP22/118 – GP22/122), be approved as a correct record.

**GP22/130**    **Minutes of Sub-Committees**

- a) Estates Sub-Committee held on 16 November 2021 (Minute Numbers EST22/009 – EST22/017), that the draft minutes be noted, and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers EST22/013 and EST22/017 be adopted.
- b) Management Sub-Committee held on 16 November 2021 (Minute Numbers MAN22/015 – MAN22/023), that the draft minutes be noted.

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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.

**GP22/131**     **Provision of Hot Drinks**

The Committee considered the provision of hot drinks at Council and Committee meetings and concluded that it would like to have hot drinks to be available in the Council Chamber for attendees of meetings.

RESOLVED: That the Committee asks the Town Clerk to make the necessary arrangements to make hot drinks available in the Council Chamber.

**GP22/132**     **Town Council Payments**

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

**GP22/133**     **Update from Working Groups:**

**Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

It was reported that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had not met.

**Heritage Centre Steering Committee**

Councillor Kenney advised the Committee that the Heritage Centre Steering Committee had not met but a full report would be given on the Heritage Centre later in the meeting.

**Engagement with Young People**

Councillor Mrs Davies advised the Committee that the Engagement with Young People Working Group would be arranging a meeting at the beginning of the New Year.

**GP22/134**     **To receive reports from Town Councillors on attendance at meetings of local organisations and outside bodies as a representative of the Town Council**

**Stone Area Parish Liaison Group**

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that the next meeting would be held in the New Year.

**Stone ATC**

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that a new committee of Stone ATC had been elected at the Annual General Meeting on 9 November 2021.

Councillor Davies said that at a meeting on 30 November 2021 Stone ATC was reported to be in good shape with new members and a strong Civilian Welfare Committee that was better able to support the Squadron.

The Squadron's usual needs are money for the minibus etc, and they have various ideas for raising cash to support that.

**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 no formal meeting had taken place but there had been an informal meeting between officers and the Newsletter who is

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suggesting they can write an article to promote the Group and recruit some new members.

#### **Stone Common Plot Trustees**

Councillor Kenney and Councillor Mrs Davies advised the Committee that they had attended a meeting with Trustees where a discussion had taken place on repairs to the lock keeper's house.

#### **Stone Community Hub Liaison Group**

Councillor Mrs Davies advised the Committee that she and Councillor Mrs Hood had attended a meeting of the Stone Community Hub Liaison Group where a progress update had been given and the Hub seemed to be doing very well.

#### **SPCA Executive Committee**

Councillor Green was not available to provide a report.

**The meeting was adjourned and then reconvened after the open session of the Planning Consultative Committee meeting had taken place.**

#### **GP22/135 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 items of business covered by minutes GP22/136 and GP22/137 below.

#### **GP22/136 Confidential Minutes and Recommendations of Sub-Committee**

- a) Estates Sub-Committee meeting held on 16 November 2021, Minute Numbers EST22/009, EST22/016 and EST22/017.

RESOLVED:

- i. To note the draft minutes
- ii. To approve the recommendations contained in Minute Number EST22/017.

#### **GP22/137 Stone Heritage Centre**

The Committee considered the report\* of the Town Clerk (distributed with the agenda for the meeting) detailing the current position on the proposed Stone Heritage Centre.

RESOLVED: That the Committee directs the Steering Committee to retain the first floor of the Heritage Centre and asks that it gives due consideration to the effects of the layout of the building.

RESOLVED: That the Committee supports the costs for the Heritage Centre contained in the Town Clerk's report for inclusion in the budget recommendations to the Council.

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**The open session of the meeting recommenced for the next item on the agenda.**

**GP22/138 Budget 2021-22 to 2023-24 Overview**

The Committee considered the report\* of the Town Clerk (which was distributed with the agenda for the meeting).

RESOLVED: To note the standstill budget position for 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 and the issues related to setting the precept.

RESOLVED: That each sub-committee considers its financial needs for the next three years and reports back to the General Purposes Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2022 with its budget proposals.

**CHAIRMAN**

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## **Introduction**

1. This report considers the Budget to be recommended to the Council for 2022-23 and the indicative budgets for 2023-24 and 2024-25.

## **Background**

2. At a series of meetings during January 2022, this Committee and its Sub-Committees have considered the potential budgets for 2022-23 to 2024-25. It is now the role of this Committee to consider those potential budgets and decide, for recommendation to the Full Council meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022:
  - a. The budget for 2022-23 for each Budget Head.
  - b. Any contributions to or from reserves to be built into the budget.
  - c. The precept for 2022-23.
  - d. Indicative figures for 2023-24 and 2024-25 for each of the above items.
3. At the time of writing this report, the recommendations from all Sub-Committees are not yet available. This report will thus focus on the sums available to spend and the impact on reserves. Details of all Sub-Committee budget proposals will be made available at the meeting.
4. This year's budget is being prepared with the continuing uncertainty resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. The figures below, however, assume that all Council services will continue at broadly their current level. Previous lockdown and Covid operating experience has resulted in the Council having already made additional spending on the safety of office, community centre and other facilities and on the ICT infrastructure to support remote meetings and home working. Ongoing costs have also been built into standstill budgets. It is therefore likely that any loss of income due to future lockdowns or restrictions would be balanced by a reduction in event spending. No Covid contingency has therefore been provided.
5. This position may need to be reviewed as part of the Committee's considerations.

## **Payments by Stafford Borough Council**

6. For a number of years, the Council has received payments of around £30,000 from Stafford Borough Council in addition to the precept. For 2022-23 this includes £21,419 (increased from £20,509 in 2021-22) to compensate for a previous reduction in this Council's Taxbase



due to benefit changes and £11,461 for the cost of concurrent functions. Neither of these payments are a legal requirement and, at the time of writing this report, neither have been confirmed for continuation beyond the next financial year. The figures in this report assume that these payments will continue into the foreseeable future at the same cash level as 2022-23.

### **Council Tax**

7. With reference to the determination of the Council Tax level by the Council, the Secretary of State has the power to require a referendum of local people before the Council Tax can be put up by more than a specified percentage.
8. Currently it is not expected that parish Council Taxes will be capped for 2022-23 providing that the sector as a whole “shows restraint”.

### **Standstill Budget**

9. A “standstill” budget was presented to the last meeting of this Committee. The figures can be summarised as follows:

<b>Actual</b>		<b>Budget</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>2020-21</b>		<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2023-24</b>	<b>2024-25</b>
<b>£</b>		<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
30,275	Estates	59,250	53,080	30,600	31,170	31,350
18,307	Environment	28,725	28,700	18,270	18,780	19,320
27,760	Tourism & Town Promotion	32,800	30,800	39,500	35,350	34,800
201,999	Management	243,127	222,567	244,190	291,850	269,440
-	Neighbourhood Plan	7,900	525	-	-	-
-11,461	General Purposes	214,450	173,500	163,500	28,500	29,700
18,377	Earmarked Reserves	-167,152	-159,777	-	-	-
<b>285,257</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>419,100</b>	<b>349,395</b>	<b>496,060</b>	<b>405,650</b>	<b>384,610</b>

10. In order to be able to consider the budget bids from Sub-Committees, illustrations will be presented to the meeting to allow the Committee to consider the implications of different options for the budget and their impact on the Council Tax.
11. Whilst this Committee is responsible for making a recommendation on the budget, The Council is, of course, free to set the Council Tax at any level in any year. In addition, only the decision regarding the 2022-23 precept is binding on the Council. The indicative figures for the following two years can be changed as part of future budget setting processes.

### **Reserves and Balances**

12. In considering its recommendations to Council, the Committee will also need to consider the level of general reserves (balances) held by the Council.

13. Excluding the reserves earmarked for the Neighbourhood Plan and rollovers, the Council held a general reserve of £256,260 at the beginning of 2021-22. This is forecast to reduce marginally to around £256,117 by the end of the current year as follows:

	£
Opening Balances – 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2021	256,260
Planned Contribution to 2021-22 Budget from Balances	-69,188
Budget Adjustments (Mayor’s Heroes Awards)	-600
Forecast Underspending 2021-22	<u>+69,705</u>
	-83
Forecast Balances – 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022	<u><u>256,177</u></u>

14. I would normally recommend that a Council the size of Stone Town Council should hold balances equivalent of around six months’ net expenditure, unless there is a good, financially sound reason not to do so. Where balances are lower than this amount, there should be a plan to return them to this level as soon as possible, and an understanding by Councillors of the increased financial risk to the Council and the potential need for mitigations until the reserves are reinstated.

### **Recommendations**

15. That Members consider Sub-Committee budget proposals which will be presented to the meeting alongside the additional information in this report and determine the budget and precept level for recommendation to the Council.