

Stone

Town Council



Environment Policy

August 2021

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1 GENERAL

- 1.1 This policy guides the conduct of Council activities to the extent that they may affect the environment. It may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council or the General Purposes (GP) Committee¹.
- 1.2 Should there be a clash between the provisions of this document and those within other documents which prescribe the activities of the Council, the order of precedence shall be:
 - a. National Legislation
 - b. The Council's Standing Orders
 - c. Financial Regulations
 - d. Staffing Guidelines and HR related documents (e.g. Disciplinary Procedures)
 - e. All other documents, including this one.
- 1.3 Where any conflict still remains, precedence shall be determined by the General Purposes Committee.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The environment within the town and its surrounds has a major impact on the quality of life and the physical and mental health of its residents, workforce and visitors. A primary Council concern is to improve the local environment and, wherever possible, to seek to have a positive environmental impact.
- 2.2 In 2016 the global move to reduce the impact of human activity on the climate moved up a gear. It has been widely accepted for many years that human activity is affecting the atmosphere leading to global heating and climate extremes. To this end in 2019, Stone Town Council joined other councils in various tiers of local government in declaring a climate emergency.
- 2.3 Climate concerns are one aspect of the environment which has gradually come to public attention over time; however there are other contributors to the environment with a much longer history which also fall within the remit of this policy; these include: pollution, waste, green spaces, bio-diversity, flooding.
- 2.4 This document sets out a preferred way of working for the Council in activities over which it has direct control. It also identifies areas where the Council may be able to

¹ All references to "the Council" in this document shall also be considered to refer to the General Purposes Committee for functions which have been delegated to that Committee.

influence the activities of suppliers, clients, local business, community groups and the public in the form of patronage, advice and education.

3 OBJECTIVES

3.1 Stone Town Council aims to take actions that will improve the environment in Stone and reverse environmental deterioration that has occurred through past activities and to encourage and influence environmental improvement externally. The main objectives are to achieve:

- a. Carbon neutrality by taking actions that reduce or do not add net carbon emissions into the atmosphere in the areas of energy use for heating, lighting and power, energy supply and transport insofar as they can be directly controlled by the Council.
- b. Zero pollution, by the limitation of actions that reduce discharges of unwanted waste product and pollution into our countryside.
- c. Zero landfill, by taking actions that reduce waste matter being buried and polluting the countryside for future generations.
- d. 100% recycling of reusable waste, by seeking to turn our waste into reusable products or raw material.
- e. The protection of green space, by acting to prevent development on green spaces and improve existing green space for leisure activities.
- f. A reduction in flood risk, by avoiding actions that increase the risk of flooding and taking actions that reduce that risk.
- g. An increase in bio diversity, by improving and extending natural habitats, avoiding the reduction of such habitats and, where necessary, taking action to mitigate unavoidable losses.
- h. Improvement of air quality, by reducing emissions of noxious, toxic or carcinogenic gasses and particles into the atmosphere.

3.2 Timescales for these objectives will be determined by the General Purposes Committee following reports from the Environment Sub-Committee.

3.3 It is recognised that a relatively small urban community such as Stone can have little impact on global or even local climate. It is also highly unlikely that the Town Council can achieve these objectives unilaterally, because Stone is not an enclosed community and does not have direct control on the flow of people, materials and natural forces into and out of the town. However, by addressing local issues over which the Town Council have direct control and working with our colleagues at Stafford Borough

Council and Staffordshire County Council, who will have their own targets, Stone can make a difference and this will contribute to national and global efforts.

4 POLICY

- 4.1 New Council activities which may impact on the environment will be considered from an environmental perspective as well as other perspectives such as financial. This environmental assessment will be used to support decision making and to assist in making choices between options for an activity.
- 4.2 Current Council activities will be assessed over time and, where appropriate, action taken to reduce or improve their environmental impact.
- 4.3 Where the Council is undertaking a formal tendering process, the environmental credentials of each potential supplier will, where appropriate, be included as part of the assessment.
- 4.4 The Council's grant aid budget will be used to influence the environmental behaviour of community groups where possible and appropriate.
- 4.5 The public will be involved where possible, signposted to advice on improving their local environment, and encouraged to reduce their environmental impact.
- 4.6 Town Council environmental objectives will be aligned with County and Borough plans and, if appropriate, adjusted where they conflict.
- 4.7 The Environmental Initiatives budget will be reviewed annually as part of the budget process to enable the implementation of this policy within overall Council financial constraints and taking account of the Council's other policy priorities.

5 EXAMPLES OF THE POLICY IN ACTION

- 5.1 Once adopted, the Council will develop a series of actions in order to implement this policy within the financial, time, and other resource restraints of the Council.
- 5.2 This section provides examples of potential actions that the Council is already undertaking or could undertake in the future in order to implement this policy over time, and as resources permit. They are presented in the same order as section 4 above.
- 5.3 It is understood that the Council's remit and its influence in many areas is limited. Care must be taken to focus on areas under the Council's control, and ensure the positive benefits of the Council's involvement prior to seeking to influence the actions of others.

5.4 New Council activities:

- a. Develop a methodology for assessing the environmental impact of new activities in order for the Council to be able to assess this factor alongside other potential costs and benefits.
- b. Consider mitigation, e.g. tree planting, where an environmental impact unavoidable.
- c. Where appropriate, include the cost of the elimination or mitigation of negative environmental impacts in the budget for new activities.
- d. Seek external finance support for environmental improvement initiatives.

5.5 Current Council activities:

- a. Improve energy efficiency in the Council office and buildings.
- b. Purchase energy from sustainable sources.
- c. Purchase low energy items for Council controlled activities.
- d. Reduce the use of single use plastics in the Council office and buildings and at Council organised events.
- e. Replace plastic consumables, where possible, with sustainable alternatives.
- f. Ensure all residual waste is collected and disposed of with environment consideration.
- g. Use cleaning products and other consumables which do not damage environment.
- h. Reduce investment in fossil fuels.

5.6 Suppliers and contracts:

- a. Include environmental factors as part of the assessment criteria for any contracts formally tendered, giving a positive weighting to environmental recovery or lower environmental impact.
- b. Consider environmental factors when drawing up specifications for contracts.
- c. Follow up on suppliers environmental promises to the Council in tender documents, where appropriate.

5.7 Grant aid and community groups:

- a. Add a question to the grant aid application form regarding any potential environmental impacts of the proposal. Consider this information as part of deciding whether an application should be supported.
- b. Identify sources of information related to the availability of external grants and advice for environment recovery and improvement and provide details of these sources to community groups on request.

5.8 Working with the public:

- a. Provide means to improve environment where within Council remit, e.g. litter bins and collections.
- b. Follow up littering, pollution and other environmental issues.
- c. Promote environment quality, provision of clean green leisure space, footpaths, cycle ways.
- d. Provide information on the Council's website on local green space and how to keep it clean.
- e. Provide allotments.
- f. Promote a move away from fossil fuels.

5.9 Working with other councils:

- a. Align the Town Council's environmental plans with those of Stafford Borough and Staffordshire County, where appropriate.
- b. Support Stafford Borough and Staffordshire County environment improvements in Stone, rather than establishing our own in parallel where objectives are similar.
- c. Support environmental good practice in planning applications.
- d. Encourage retention of green space, existing flora and fauna, hedgerows, trees and other natural habitats.
- e. Request improvements in highways, roadworks and traffic flows in order to improve the environment.
- f. Consider street design, including road closures for play and school safety.
- g. Monitor infrastructure improvement, parks, provision of electric charging points, retro-fitting of infrastructure where feasible.

5.10 Budgets:

- a. Request appropriate funding as part of the Council's budget process.

- b. Ensure that the Council's potential actions as a result of this policy are fully costed and approved prior to implementation and are within Council budgets.
- c. Utilise available grant funding where this accords with Council objectives.