

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 25 January 2022

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

Officers: L. Trigg and Mrs T. Williams

ABSENT: Councillors: A. Best, Mrs A. Burgess, Mrs K. Dawson, M. Green, M. Hatton,
J. Hickling and R. Kenney

GP22/139 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors: A. Best, Mrs A. Burgess, Mrs K. Dawson,
M. Green, J. Hickling and R. Kenney

GP22/140 **Declarations of Interest, Requests for Dispensations, and Declarations under
Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992**

None

GP22/141 **Requests for Dispensations**

None

GP22/142 **Representations from Members of the Public**

None

GP22/143 **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7
December 2021 (Minute Numbers GP22/123 – GP22/138), be approved as
a correct record.

GP22/144 **2022-23 Budget Recommendation to the Council**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk* (which had been
circulated with the agenda for the meeting) examining the budget and precept
level for the financial year 2022-23 for recommendation to the Council.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the budget was being considered
against the background of considerable recent investment made to improve the
town. Crown Wharf will soon house the Town Council's new heritage centre and
substantial improvements made to the Frank Jordan Centre and to town centre
street furniture with more planned. The Town Council is also seeking to upgrade

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Crown Meadow nature reserve, refresh the Christmas lighting and arrange a celebration of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee.

In contrast to positive investment, the Town Council has also been faced with substantial unexpected bills for the refurbishment of the Stone Station roof and the costs of a recent by-election.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that in considering the budget recommendations to Council it also needed to consider the level of general reserves held which, if accepted, would be much lower than in previous years.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the Town Council normally aim to retain reserves that are about 6 months of annual spend but the budget proposal reduces the balance in the short term to the equivalent of three months spending. The reserves will however build back up again (to the equivalent of 4.5 to 5 months spending) at the end of the three-year period and continue to climb.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that, on the basis that plans were being made to replenish reserves, he would be happy to certify that, despite being much tighter than in previous years, the reserves were adequate for the Council's purposes.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that his report sets out the position as it stood prior to the recent round of sub-committee meetings.

The Chairman asked that hard copy documents entitled 'Revenue Budget 2022-23 to 2024-25 – Proposal to General Purposes Committee'* and 'Sub-Committee Budget Recommendations 2022-23'* be distributed at the meeting.

The Town Clerk referred the Committee to the 'Sub-Committee Budget Recommendations 2022-23' which contained a list of the recommendations (as extracts from the draft minutes) made by each of the sub-committees at the last round of meetings.

The Town Clerk also referred the Committee to the 'Revenue Budget 2022-23 to 2024-25' containing the Chairman's proposal that the Council adopt the standstill budget (summarised in paragraph 9 of the Town Clerk's report) with the amendments set out in the paper. Amendments a., b., and c. add to the budget all recommendations made by the sub committees.

Recommendation d. had not been discussed by the sub-committees and suggests making a one-off reduction to the Grants budget in the current year due to underspendings, without affecting the proposed Grants budget for future years.

The Town Clerk advised that a budget based on the recommendations outlined incorporating a reserves balance reduction to around three months spend (to thereafter be built back up) would result in a Council Tax for Town Council purposes of £56.51 in 2022-23 for a band D property.

After a motion in favour of recommending to the Council on 8 February 2022 that the budget set out in the circulated paper be adopted by the Council had been proposed and seconded a request was made for a named vote:

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Councillors:

K. Argyle	For
J. Davies	For
Mrs L. Davies	For
I. Fordham	For
Mrs J. Hood	For
T. Kelt	For
P. Leason	For
J. Powell	For
C. Thornicroft	For
R. Townsend	For
S. Walley	For

RESOLVED: To recommend to the Council that:

1. The Town Council's standstill budget for 2022-23 to 2024-25 should be as set out in the Clerk's report supplemented by the following additions/amendments:
 - a. Estates: Additional sums in 2022-23 of £500 for the provision of a new bench to be installed on the Uttoxeter Road and £500 for street furniture in the town are added. In addition, a provision of £28,000 is made in 2022-23 for repairs to the Station roof, and the Building Maintenance Reserve reduced by £30,000.
 - b. Environment: Additional budgetary provision in 2022-23 of £1,800 for Covid-19 commemoration, £1,500 for the provision of an additional information board by the bridge, £2,000 for the amphitheatre steps and accessibility ramp, and a contingency of £3,240 for the split tree at the amphitheatre, Walton roundabout lock gate, town border planting, refurbishment/replanting of Walton roundabout and improvements to the scrapes. This contingency would need to be the subject of further consideration by the Environment Sub-Committee before a recommendation is made to this Committee to go ahead with spending.
 - c. Tourism and Town Promotion: Additional budget of £5,000 in 2022-23 for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations.
 - d. Management: Removal of unspent sum of £12,000 from the Grants budget in the current year.
2. As a consequence of the above, the 2022-23 Council Tax for this Council's purposes should be £56.51 for a Band D property, an increase for the year of £3.45, with indicative Council Tax levels of £58.15 and £59.84 for the following two years. This would result in a precept on Stafford Borough

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Council for 2022-23 of £355,843. Local Council Tax Support Grant of £21,419 would be added to this.

The Committee thanked the Town Clerk for his work on the budget recommendations.

GP22/145 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.

GP22/146 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 December 2021, Minute Numbers GP22/123, GP22/136 and GP22/137 be approved.

CHAIRMAN