

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 1 March 2022

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

Officers: L. Trigg and Mrs T. Williams

ABSENT: Councillors: Mrs A. Burgess, M. Green, M. Hatton and R. Townsend

GP22/166 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor M. Green.

GP22/167 **Declarations of Interests**

None

GP22/168 **Requests for Dispensations**

None

GP22/169 **To receive the report of the County Councillors**

County Councillor Mrs J. Hood

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she had received the road resurfacing programme from the County (which looked encouraging) and will be forwarding a copy to all Town Councillors for information.

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she had asked the Town Clerk to investigate some issues with the bollards in Mill Street as they are not being routinely installed in the road to prevent traffic from accessing the High Street.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP22/170 **To receive the report of Borough Councillors**

The Chairman invited Councillor Fordham to address the Committee.

Councillor Fordham congratulated Councillor Leason on his appointment as Mayor Elect of Stafford Borough Council for 2022-23 which he said was a great honour for both Philip personally and for Stone town.

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that the Stafford Borough Council budget for 2022-23 had now been approved.

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The Chairman invited Councillor Leason to address the Committee.

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that he had attended the Borough Council's Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee meeting on 8 February 2022 where an update had been given on Section 106 agreements in respect of process and securing developer contributions to key projects.

Councillor Leason explained what Section 106 agreements are in that they are legally binding planning obligations between developers and the local planning authority to release funding to deliver projects within an area to ease or compensate for the impact of a new development on the local community. Contributions are often made towards education and highways, with the Borough Council being particularly focused on providing open space, sport, play facilities and affordable housing.

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that after Borough Councillors (Councillors Fordham and McKeown in particular) had raised concerns about the allocation of Section 106 monies and the progress of the various agreements, improvements had been implemented including the appointment of a Leisure, Policy and Implementation Officer to compile a data base of Section 106 agreements and enter it onto XCOM.

The Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee had been given various figures in relation to the year 2020-21, the most significant of which was that a total of £4,604,600 of Section 106 monies remained unspent (with £1,401,000 of this money allocated to projects and £3,203,600 in the pipeline).

Councillor Leason said the Committee had resolved to ask officers from the Strategic Planning Placemaking Team to contact all members in the wards where Section 106 monies were in the pipeline to seek further information on potential environmental and leisure prospects which could be eligibility assessed as future projects. If the money wasn't spent, it would be returned to the developer.

The Chairman advised the General Purposes Committee that the Borough Scrutiny Committee had set up a Task and Finish Group to scrutinise the process for S.106 monies.

GP22/171 Representations from Members of the Public

None

GP22/172 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 8 February 2022 (Minute Numbers GP22/147 – GP22/165), be approved as a correct record.

GP22/173 Minutes of Sub-Committees

There were no draft minutes for consideration.

GP22/174 **Stone Community Speed Watch**

The Chairman welcomed Tim Hodson and Richard West (members of Stone Community Speed Watch) and Michelle Shaker (Community Engagement Coordinator at Staffordshire Police), who had kindly agreed to address the Committee on their work and how the group could support the Town Council.

Michelle Shaker introduced herself and advised the Committee that she worked for Staffordshire Safer Roads Partnership on the Police side of the partnership and looked after the Community Speed Watch service for the whole of the County.

Tim Hodson and Richard West introduced themselves and advised the Committee that as lifelong residents of Stone had become involved in Community Speed Watch after seeing articles in the press.

Richard has recently taken over the Chairmanship from Tim, but their work is a real team effort.

Michelle provided an overview of Community Speed Watch advising the Committee that the initiative falls under the educational remit of Policing. Their work involved sending warning letters to drivers who travel over the speed limit with an escalation process that goes from a written to a verbal warning and thereafter targeted enforcement towards repeat offenders. They are very much about education and engagement rather than enforcement, where possible.

Data is compiled by volunteers which forms part of the Safer Roads Partnership enforcement strategy which includes the safety camera vans, roads policing, local policing, and the Special Constabulary.

Michelle advised the Committee that she is managing 78 groups (420 volunteers) at present which covers 88 different towns, villages, and wards within the County. These numbers are growing, and it is estimated that there will be around 100 groups by the end of the year.

Why do we do Community Speed Watch?

Tim Hodson advised the Committee that Stone Community Speed Watch does not set out to criminalise people but operates to increase motorists' awareness of vehicle speeds. Most are unaware they are speeding and generally have no wish to exceed the limit, drifting into excess speed through distraction.

Enhancement of safety is a very important factor in their work and the group want to engage with the community to achieve this. The volunteers get more thumbs up and thanks than abuse and pedestrians tell them they are doing a good job.

Tim said his personal mantra was that if in one year they prevent one child from getting knocked off a bike, injured or worse, they have succeeded.

Richard West advised the Committee that if the Community Speed Watch team is present and visible, drivers respond by slowing down and are also minded to be aware of their speeds on journeys thereafter. He acknowledged that driving can be mundane and people drive on familiar routes without a conscious awareness. The

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presence of Community Speed Watch therefore makes a huge difference to the speed of traffic.

How we do Community Speed Watch?

Richard West advised the Committee that six volunteers form part of the team in Stone and aim to work one Speed Watch session per week for about an hour. The weather conditions must be dry with good visibility. The team operate at several sites (listed on the handout distributed at the meeting). These are busy roads such as the Eccleshall Road, Newcastle Road, Lichfield Road, often near to schools. The team respond to requests from councillors or the media. Through 'A Little Bit of Stone' they often note concerns and if there is a place that needs to be looked at Michelle will undertake a risk assessment so the site can be added to their list.

Staffordshire Police must be informed of their plans a few days before the session and they liaise with the local Police Community Support Officers who often visit volunteers on site, giving extra visibility. Upon arrival at the site volunteers place warning signs on either side of where they are standing. They have to have a training session which everyone undertakes and have to go through a vetting process to be accepted on to the group. They must test the speed radar device before and after the session to check that it has calibrated correctly and in a team of three, one person will operate the radar device, another will log the required vehicle details (speed, colour registration number, make and the time) on the template sheet and a third person keeps a count of the total number of vehicles. They also check to see whether anyone is using their mobile phone. They often swap roles and at the end of the hour the log sheet is sent to Staffordshire Police for further action.

They carry a letter from Staffordshire Police which states they are acting on behalf of the police service. This is used as back up should anyone stop and talk to them.

Most drivers are logged between 35 and 40 miles per hour (although there have been drivers travelling at over 50 miles per hour in a 30mph zone) and they feel that their presence on the roadside works positively as most drivers slow down to the legal speed limit. They again reinforced their observations that speeding motorists are often distracted and not aware of their speed or the environment they are in. Some drivers however don't care.

Staffordshire Police have been very supportive in providing them with County data and the data for the Stone sites, which will now be issued regularly.

What Next?

Michelle reminded the Committee that being present at the side of the road makes a huge difference to the speed of traffic and for this reason more Community Speed Watch volunteers were needed.

She asked whether the Town Council's outlet could be used to support and promote Community Speed Watch (with the aid of statistics which can be supplied regularly) in slowing down traffic and saving lives.

Community Speed Watch would later like to attract funding for permanent Speed Watch signs (with the Police badge printed on them for the first time) to reduce

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the need to lug temporary signs around. The benefits of permanent signs are said to be amazing.

Michelle Shaker, Tim Hodson and Richard West took questions and noted comments from Town Councillors

The Committee thanked Michelle, Tim and Richard for an informative presentation. Members were pleased that Stone had public spirited people prepared to volunteer their time to improving the safety of residents.

The Committee raised concerns about specific roads in the town where it was hoped Community Speed Watch could assist. A concern was raised about the speed of traffic on the Oulton Road despite several initiatives taken by highways and the police over the past four years following the involvement of the county councillor and ward councillors. These included modified signage, road markings and parking restrictions.

The Committee said that speed Indicator devices (as installed by Hilderstone Parish Council) had seemed to be having a positive effect on vehicle speeds.

The Committee expressed the view that it was difficult to prove the success of prevention when the occurrence hadn't happened and hadn't been logged. If there are statistics to illustrate the effectiveness of Community Speed Watch before and after an intervention it would be useful to see the difference it makes.

Michelle was asked whether the Community Speed Watch and 20's Plenty for Staffordshire campaign could work together (as the Counties who engaged with the 20's Plenty scheme had seen their accident data decline) and she advised that the Police force are not able to offer support on the enforcement of speeds less than 30 miles per hour although some roads may justify lower speeds. She said that people as a rule tend to drive 5 to 10mph above the speed limit.

Michelle advised the Committee that speed limits can be promoted with wheelie bin stickers (30 and 40) which are supplied free of charge. They do have a limited stock of 20's which is the only help available for this speed.

She said the Speed Watch sessions although just one day a week (along with the wheelie bin stickers) had a psychological effect on motorists and made a dramatic difference to their driving behaviour.

The Committee identified school traffic as another big issue that needed to be addressed, particularly at school finish times. The traffic around Pirehill First School was given as an example and Tim Hodson and Richard West said they would absolutely respond to local need, confirming that Pirehill Lane and Eccleshall Road were already on their visit list (Tilling Drive was not).

Eccleshall Road was also raised as being in need of a Speed Watch visit after residents had previously asked for a Lollipop man/lady (which after a mini survey was not considered a safe enough place to operate).

It was acknowledged that a proportion of residents who are concerned about issues near their homes may be willing to become volunteers. With a greater number of volunteers, it would be possible to do more, more often.

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Richard and Tim said that they had a brief ready to go to 'A Little Bit of Stone' and asked for the support of the Town Council.

The Committee expressed its support for the scheme and confirmed that it would be prepared to offer a venue for training, free of charge, if the publicity results in new volunteers coming forward.

Michelle, Tim and Richard were thanked for their time before leaving the meeting.

GP22/175 **Grant Aid to Local Organisations**

The Committee considered the following requests for a grant:

STONE LIONS CLUB

The Committee considered the grant application received from Stone Lions Club requesting £500 to contribute towards a PSA Screening Event at the Stone House Hotel on Tuesday 26 April 2022. The event will provide men with the opportunity to have a PSA test to identify prostate problems.

RESOLVED: To award £500 to Stone Lions Club.

KIBBLESTONE DISTRICT SCOUT COUNCIL

The Committee considered the grant application received from Kibblestone District Scout Council requesting £500 to support Girlguiding Staffordshire's International Guide Camp (Unity) at Kibblestone in August 2022.

The Committee suggested the Scout Council be asked to include a note in their publicity to acknowledge that Stone Town Council had supported the event.

RESOLVED: To award £500 to Kibblestone District Scout Council.

GP22/176 **Queen's Platinum Jubilee**

The Committee considered the report* of the Town Clerk.

The report considered the governance arrangements for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee project and recommended an appropriate structure to the Committee. It also presented the initial report of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Working Group for the Committee's consideration and approval.

The report had been presented to the General Purposes Committee, rather than the Tourism and Town Promotion Sub-Committee, with the agreement of the respective Chairmen.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that in view of the limited time available until the Jubilee celebrations and the working group mechanism working very slowly, the report proposed that the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Working Group became a steering group to allow preparations to be made more speedily.

RESOLVED:

- a. To replace the current Queen's Platinum Jubilee Working Group with a steering group.

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- b. To adopt the terms of reference annexed to the Town Clerk's report for the steering group.
- c. To appoint Councillor Mrs J. Hood as the Chairman and Councillor R. Kenney as the Vice Chairman of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Steering Group.
- d. To approve the Working Group recommendations attached to the report.

GP22/177 Stone Heritage Centre

The Committee considered the report* of the Town Clerk.

The report considered the recommendations of the Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group for the design and approach to contracting for works for the Heritage Centre and sought approval from the Committee to proceed.

The Chairman advised the Committee that the finances had been approved for the build project at the Heritage Centre and now it was time to put the plans into action.

He said that the Steering Group had recommended approval of Version 4 of the plans in the report. The version 4 plans had been included in the Town Clerk's report (with the first three sheets showing the current layout of the building).

RESOLVED:

The Committee agreed to:

- a. Support the design of the Heritage Centre as proposed by the Steering Group.
- b. Support the approach to contracting proposed by the Steering Group.
- c. Receive regular reports from the Steering Group regarding project progress and consider decisions on any matters of policy, or significant changes to the project.
- d. Appoint contractors to undertake works on the Heritage Centre after considering the recommendations of the Steering Group.
- e. Authorise the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Steering Group and within the budget established by the Council to:
 - i. Make minor design changes or any clarifications necessary to deliver the project.
 - ii. Appoint suitable professionals to support the contracting process.
 - iii. Determine and tender suitable works contracts, based on the advice of the Steering Group, Staffordshire Purchasing and any other appropriate professionals.

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- iv. Undertake the evaluation of tenders and make recommendations to the Steering Group regarding contractors to be appointed.
- v. Regularly report to and take advice from the Steering Group.

GP22/178 Town Council Payments

RESOLVED: To note the list* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 to 31 January 2022.

GP22/179 Update from Working Groups:

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Councillor Mrs Hood reported that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had not met.

Heritage Centre Steering Committee

Councillor Kenney advised the Committee that the outcome of the Heritage Centre Steering Committee meeting had been discussed earlier in the meeting (above).

Engagement with Young People

Councillor Mrs Dawson informed the Committee that although the Working Group had not met this month, the Town Clerk had drafted a letter to be sent out to schools to ask their opinions on the scheme.

GP22/180 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 of the Liaison Group would take place in April 2022.

Stone ATC

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that the last meeting of Stone ATC had taken place on the evening of the last General Purposes Committee meeting, and he hadn't yet seen the minutes.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that no meeting had taken place.

Stafford & Stone Access Group

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that no meetings had taken place since the last report, but a recruitment article had been published in the Newsletter.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that a meeting had taken place, but it was inquorate. There was some informal discussion on the finances, progress with the Plot cottage and moles.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that no meeting had been held since the last report.

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SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Green was not available to provide a report.

CHAIRMAN