

# Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 5 April 2022

**PRESENT:** Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and  
Councillors: K. Argyle, A. Best, J. Davies, Mrs L. Davies, Mrs K. Dawson, I. Fordham,  
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, J. Hickling and R. Townsend

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**GP22/181**    **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs A. Burgess, M. Green and J. Hickling.

**GP22/182**    **Declarations of Interests**

None

**GP22/183**    **Requests for Dispensations**

None

**GP22/184**    **To receive the report of the County Councillors**

**County Councillor Mrs J. Hood**

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Chairman that she would not deliver a report on this occasion.

**County Councillor I. Parry**

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

**GP22/185**    **To receive the report of Borough Councillors**

The Chairman invited Councillor Fordham to address the Committee.

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that Stafford Borough Council was now a hung council following the decision by two Conservative Members to cross the floor to join the Borough Independents.

**GP22/186**    **Representations from Members of the Public**

None

**GP22/187**     **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 1 March 2022 (Minute Numbers GP22/166 – GP22/180), be approved as a correct record.

**GP22/188**     **Minutes of Sub-Committees**

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 15 March 2022 (Minute Numbers TTP22/036 – TTP22/042), that the draft minutes be noted.
- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 15 March 2022 (Minute Numbers ENV22/031 – ENV22/038), that the draft minutes be noted, and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers ENV22/034 b) and ENV22/037 (not ENV22/038 as stated on the agenda) be adopted.

**GP22/189**     **Appointment of Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor Elect**

The Committee considered the appointment of a Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor Elect.

The Committee also considered the arrangements for Mayor Making.

RESOLVED: That the Town Mayor Elect for 2022-23 is Councillor J. Powell, and the Deputy Town Mayor Elect is Councillor A. Best.

RESOLVED: That Mayor Making takes place at St Michael & St Wulfad's Church during the Civic Sunday Church Service (on 10 July 2022), rather than at the Annual Meeting held in the Council Chamber (on 10 May 2022).

**GP22/190**     **Town Council Surgeries**

The Committee received a written follow up report on Town Council Surgeries from Councillor Walley which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The report followed a Members Motion under Standing Order 4, raised at the General Purposes Committee meeting on 5 October 2021 (Minute Number GP22/095).

The Chairman invited Councillor Walley to address the Committee.

Councillor Walley advised the Committee that since the meeting in October 2021 he had worked on the detail of his idea in consultation with the Town Clerk and proposed that the Town Council hold a series of monthly outdoor 'Resident Engagement Events' in different locations in Stone starting in May 2022 for a period of six months for the purpose of gathering views on local issues and offering residents a means of meeting Town Councillors face to face.

The Committee discussed the proposal and confirmed its interest in improving engagement and communication with members of the public by facilitating the

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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.

opportunity for people to talk and to express views about local issues, with surgeries providing a useful means of doing this. It was also recognised that many issues are not under the Town Council's direct control but are national government, County or Borough related.

Town Councillors did however express several concerns about the detail of Councillor Walley's proposal which included:

- The outside environment would not be suitable or comfortable. There is no privacy in the street and people's conversations will be overheard.
- The Council should not expect members of the public to approach them just because they happen to be there in the street.
- Councillor safety could be compromised particularly in the current climate. The wearing of body camera equipment would not prevent attacks or keep Councillors safe.
- The wearing of body camera equipment would be recording personal and private conversations which is not acceptable. It would also appear impersonal and threatening, giving the wrong message to people feeling anxious or vulnerable.
- The whereabouts of Councillors should not be advertised.
- Councillors are already approachable through lots of different modes/methods of communication.
- There are other ways of running surgeries.
- The Fire Station is no longer a community fire station (in respect of offering community rooms for general hire).

The following suggestions were made by the Committee:

- To hold virtual Zoom sessions with individual members of the public and a specific Councillor or a Councillor on surgery duty. Residents could access the technology from their own homes or somewhere convenient to them which may include the library (subject to a private room being available) if they don't have access at home.
- To pursue the original proposal to hold surgeries at the Frank Jordan Centre in a private and comfortable environment.
- To pursue the proposal to hold surgeries at other venues within the various wards.
- That body cams are used but only turned on in the unlikely event that a person's manner or behaviour requires it. Most of the time they would not be needed or used. Data protection would need investigation.
- To increase the visibility of Councillors through the use of 'A Little Bit of Stone' and other social media outlets.
- To offer flexibility and choice in the range of ways that Members of the public can contact Town Councillors. This could encompass all modes of communication and working with partners such as the Church, Community Hub and Age Concern.
- That the logistical arrangements need to be determined including the appointment of Councillors and booking arrangements.

**RESOLVED:** That the Council hold a monthly surgery at the Frank Jordan Centre for a trial period of three months, followed by a report to the General Purposes Committee on the long-term proposals for Councillor surgeries.

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RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk works in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee and Councillor Walley on the arrangements for the surgeries and a suitable start date.

**GP22/191 National Pay Award 2021-22**

The Committee considered the report\* of the Town Clerk informing the outcome of the 2021-22 national pay award negotiations for local government staff and its impact on the Council.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that this was the pay award from April 2021 which related to staff on the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) terms and conditions of employment.

RESOLVED: That the Committee adopts the new 2021-22 salary levels for staff on national pay scales as set out in the report.

**GP22/192 Town Council Payments**

RESOLVED: To note the list\* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 to 28 February 2022.

**GP22/193 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 work of the Heritage Centre Steering Committee was currently on hold while the procurement of services was progressing with the County Council.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the papers drafted by the County were being put together by the architect to go to tender.

**Engagement with Young People**

Councillor Mrs Dawson informed the Committee that although the Working Group had not met, the Town Clerk has sent a letter to schools, and she has sent a letter to home educators to ask their opinions on the scheme.

One acknowledgement has been received back but no solid responses as yet.

**Queen's Platinum Jubilee Steering Group**

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that the Group was making good progress with lots of exciting plans coming forward.

She said that Sunday 5 June 2022 was going to be a really good day once the Borough Council has confirmed the Town Council can use Westbridge Park.

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**GP22/194**     **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 on 27 April 2022.

**Stone ATC**

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that the next meeting of Stone ATC would be held on 3 May 2022.

**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.

**Stone Common Plot Trustees**

Councillor Kenney advised the Committee that the Stone Common Plot AGM would be taking place on 27 April 2022.

**Stone Community Hub Liaison Group**

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

**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.**

**GP22/195**     **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.

**GP22/196**     **National Pay Award 2021-22**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk concerning the National Pay Award 2021-22 related to staff not on the national pay scales.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations in the report be adopted.

**GP22/197**     **Staffing Matters**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk concerning the salary of a member of staff.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations in the report be adopted.

