

# Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held at the Frank Jordan Centre, Lichfield Street, Stone, on Tuesday 2 August 2022

**PRESENT:** Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and  
Councillors: A. Best, J. Davies, Mrs K. Dawson, I. Fordham, M. Green, Mrs J. Hood,  
P. Leason, J. Powell, C. Thornicroft and S. Walley

Officers: L. Trigg and Mrs T. Williams

**ABSENT:** Councillors: K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess, Mrs L. Davies, M. Hatton, J. Hickling, T. Kelt  
and R. Townsend

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### **GP23/047**    Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: K. Argyle, Mrs L. Davies, J. Hickling,  
T. Kelt and R. Townsend

### **GP23/048**    Declarations of Interests

None

### **GP23/049**    Requests for Dispensations

None

### **GP23/050**    To receive the report of the County Councillors

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

The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs Hood to address the Committee.

#### Stone Scout & Guide Band

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she had been delighted to attend the Stone Scout and Guide Band's Annual General Meeting on 23 July where the young people were shining examples of local talent. They had demonstrated a growing confidence in playing their instruments and in chatting afterwards which was lovely to see and highlighted fine steerage from Councillor Kerry Dawson who was an excellent Bandmaster.

#### Disruptive Group of Youngsters

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she had been disappointed to receive many calls from residents concerned about the behaviour of a group of unruly youngsters in the town. Their antics had included dodging traffic on Christchurch Way and climbing on to the roof at the back of Specsavers. She has contacted the Chief Inspector with people's concerns and asked that any new incidents be reported to the Police.

### Flooded Subway

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that Walton subway was flooded and causing difficulties for residents who depend on it for a safe crossing over the A34. A jammed manhole cover was the cause of the build-up and arrangements had been made for the water to be pumped away (with the aid of a generator).

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that the Highways Department were working hard to resolve the problem and were planning to clear other drains/grids on local roads (excluding A and B roads). She asked that Councillors report to her, as quickly as possible, any that are known to be blocked.

Concern was expressed about the Eccleshall Road where construction work was creating silt on the surface which may result in blockages in the future.

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

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

### **GP23/051 To receive the report of Borough Councillors**

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee.

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she and the Town Clerk had worked hard on the arrangements for the Commonwealth Games Baton Relay in Stone and their input had resulted in an offer of tickets to the Rehearsal of the Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony.

Councillor Mrs Hood attended the occasion at the Alexander Stadium and the experience was remarkable and amazing. She thanked Stafford Borough Council for their generosity.

### **GP23/052 Representations from Members of the Public**

None

### **GP23/053 Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 5 July 2022 (Minute Numbers GP23/031 – GP23/046), be approved as a correct record.

### **GP23/054 Minutes of Sub-Committees**

- a) Estates Sub-Committee meeting held on 12 July 2022, Minute Numbers EST23/001 – EST23/009.

RESOLVED:

- i. To note the draft minutes
- ii. To approve the recommendations contained in Minute numbers EST23/005 and EST23/006.

Minute number EST23/009 was considered as part of confidential section of the agenda (item 17 and Minute Reference GP23/063).

**GP23/055 Budget Monitoring Report – June 2022**

The report\* of the Town Clerk was noted.

**GP23/056 Mayoral Facebook Site**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk\* (which had been attached to the agenda for the meeting) detailing a proposal from the Town Mayor, Councillor Jonathan Powell, to set up a Facebook or other social media site related solely to Mayoral activities.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the Press and Media Protocol had prevented the Town Mayor from setting up his own social media arrangements as it could put Councillor Powell in breach of the Code of Conduct. He said the Town Council if in agreement would need to give specific permissions to use the Mayoral designation, council logo etc.

The Chairman invited the Committee to consider whether the Council would like a Mayoral Facebook site in the short term – which the Mayor has offered to personally host and maintain – prior to the appointment of a new member of staff to handle social media for the whole Council.

The Committee discussed the positives and negatives of a Mayor's personal Facebook site and there were a number of supporting and opposing views.

The Councillors showing support believed that social media would be a successful, wide ranging and cost-effective way of promoting local organisations and the events and activities of the Mayor. They pointed out that the content would not be lost when the Council's site was set up as it could easily be transferred.

The Councillors against the proposal expressed the view that Facebook was by nature interactive and if the comments feature was switched off there would be little advantage over posting the information on the website.

They were concerned about trolling, maintaining political neutrality and management of the content which if interactive should be under the guidance of the Town Clerk.

Councillors expressed the view that Councillors Powell's existing personal Facebook page was excellent and that another short-term site with the Town Council's banner (prior to the setting up of social media for the whole council) was un-necessary.

RESOLVED:

That the Town Council do not wish to operate a separate Mayoral Facebook site, and that the objective was to operate a Council site, including Mayoral activities, when the new Heritage Centre Manager/Events and Marketing Officer had been appointed.

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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.

**GP23/057**     **Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association**

The Charman invited the Town Clerk to provide a verbal response to the question raised at minute GP23/028: 'The Committee requested further clarification and justification for the Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association annual subscription and the value it brought the Town Council'.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the annual subscription was £1,088.90 for 2022-23 which also included membership of the National Association of Local Councils (NALC).

He said that although the subscription had gone up this year (by a greater value than in previous years), his view was that the cost still represented good value for money. A new Welcome Pack (an extract of which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting) demonstrated the services Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association (SPCA) and NALC provided. These included a wide range of training courses which Town Council officers and councillors make good use of, Legal Topic Notes from NALC which provide invaluable guidance on the legal position with everything happening in the sector, weekly Bulletins, helpful telephone advice when needed and as a larger council Stone has direct access to many NALC services.

The Town Clerk confirmed that although some of these services were available elsewhere, they were far less comprehensive.

RESOLVED: That the services offered by Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association are valuable and worthwhile and that the Town Council continues its membership.

**GP23/058**     **Town Council Payments**

RESOLVED: To note the list\* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 to 30 June 2022.

**GP23/059**     **Update from Working Groups:**

**Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group**

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

**Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group**

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

**Engagement with Young People**

Councillor Mrs Dawson informed the Committee that meetings had taken place both last week and this evening with Councillor Powell. She said that a plan had been devised and the Town Clerk will after a discussion, prepare a note for the General Purposes Committee.

**Queen's Platinum Jubilee Steering Group**

This group has now been disbanded

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**GP23/060**     **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 Liaison Group had met virtually on Zoom on 27 July 2022. The environment article produced by Councillor Kelt was shared for information, but the main part of the meeting consisted of a presentation by Michelle Shaker of the Safter Roads Partnership.

Other topics discussed included HS2 and mention was also given to the cadet organisations and the Scout and Guide Band as surrounding parishes may not have these groups locally and promoting them was beneficial.

Councillor Davies said the meetings continued to be very useful and the next one would be held in October.

**Stone ATC**

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that he had attended a Welfare Committee Meeting on 19 July, and it was good to see there were even more enthusiastic people joining the Committee which was good for the ongoing success of 2352 (Stone) Squadron ATC.

**Age Concern Stone & District**

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that no meeting of Age Concern Stone & District had taken place.

**Stafford & Stone Access Group**

Councillor Kelt was not available to give a report on this occasion.

**Stone Common Plot Trustees**

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that there was a Plot walkabout arranged for 14<sup>th</sup> but no meetings had taken place.

**Stone Community Hub Liaison Group**

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that no meeting of Stone Community Hub Liaison Group had taken place.

**SPCA Executive Committee**

Councillor Green advised the Committee that he had no report.

**The meeting was adjourned and then reconvened after the open session of the Planning Consultative committee and closed session of the Town Council had taken place.**

**GP23/061**     **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

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**GP23/062**    **Confidential Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 5 July 2022, Minute Numbers GP23/031 and GP23/046 be approved.

**GP23/063**    **Confidential Minutes and Recommendations of Sub-Committees**

- a) Estates Sub-Committee Meeting held on 12 July 2022, Minute Numbers EST23/001, EST23/008 and EST23/009.

The Town Clerk provided additional supporting information to allow further consideration by the Committee of the items referred to in minute number EST23/009.

RESOLVED:

- i. To note the draft minutes
- ii. To approve the recommendations contained in Minute Number EST23/009
- iii. To obtain appropriate legal advice
- iv. To proceed with repairs to the Station Roof
- v. To approve a supplementary estimate of £2,000

**CHAIRMAN**