

Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in St Michael’s Suite at the Frank Jordan Centre, Lichfield Street, Stone, on Tuesday 15 November 2022

PRESENT: Councillor R. Townsend in the Chair and
Councillors: K. Argyle and Mrs K. Dawson and T. Kelt

Officers: L Trigg and Mrs T. Williams

By Chairman’s Invitation: A. Best, J. Davies and Mrs J. Hood

ABSENT: Councillors: Mrs A. Burgess, M. Hatton, R. Kenney, P. Leason and J. Powell
(Mayoral Engagement),

ENV23/020 Apologies

Councillors: R. Kenney and J. Powell (Mayoral Engagement)

ENV23/021 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None received

ENV23/022 Representations from Members of the Public

None

ENV23/023 Minutes of Previous Meeting

- a) The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on the 16 August 2022 (Minute Numbers ENV23/011 – ENV23/019), were approved as a correct record.

ENV23/024 Covid-19 Commemoration

The Chairman updated the Sub-Committee on the Covid-19 Commemoration project.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that he and the Deputy Town Clerk had attended a site visit with the Grounds Maintenance Contractor who had confirmed that he was planning to source a species of tree that required minimum maintenance and didn’t grow too big. The cherry trees that had originally been suggested were thought not to be the most suitable variety.

It had been proposed that approximately six to eight trees (depending on the size and type chosen) are planted in a semi-circle shape on ground located to the right

of the peace pole.

The Chairman reported that a quotation was also awaited for the refurbishment of the vintage bench. He said that once the costings were clear the budget would be evaluated to see whether a surplus of funds would cover the cost of a commemorative plaque.

The suggested orientation for the commemoration was that the bench and plaque face outwards towards Crown Meadow.

ENV23/025 Crown Meadow Improvements

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that Crown Meadow was regularly discussed at the monthly review meetings with the Grounds Maintenance Contractor. At the last meeting it was reported by the contractor that he had had a number of issues with machinery and other matters which had caused delays to the progress of work. Assurances were given that the work on Crown Meadow would be completed over the winter period and certainly by the end of the financial year.

The Chairman referred the Sub-Committee to the Crown Meadow Improvements report which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

He advised the Sub-Committee that a quotation for a new path and replacement steps in the area of Workhorse bridge had not included a ramp which was needed to make the area completely accessible. An estimate for work that included a ramp had now been requested.

The Sub-Committee suggested that consideration be given to the installation of bollards to prevent vehicular access. It was also suggested that the ramp may be used inappropriately and not the purpose intended leading the Sub-Committee to agree that this point required consideration.

The Chairman suggested the proposal to install a new information board on the Crown Meadow side of the river Trent be postponed due to the additional cost of the ramp.

It was also suggested that the installation of signage relating to the Westbridge Park development linking to Crown Meadow be delayed pending the Borough Council's renovation work on Westbridge Park.

The Chairman suggested that a quotation be obtained for moving two benches on Crown Meadow which due to ground erosion were getting ever closer to the river, with a significant drop close by.

ENV23/026 Members' Motion Under Standing Order 4

Councillor Andrew Best proposed that:

“Salary sacrifice schemes can offer benefits to both employees and employers by allowing the purchase of certain Government approved items by reduction to salary, rather than the employee meeting the cost from their net income. In these cases, the employee saves the income tax, National Insurance and pension contributions that they would otherwise have paid on the salary sacrificed (though pension and some other benefits are also correspondingly reduced) and the employer saves their contributions to National Insurance and pensions.

Once such scheme is the Bike to Work Scheme, details of which are available at <https://www.bike2workscheme.co.uk>. I feel this scheme would help some but not all Council employees and it’s a great “Green” incentive that helps the environment.

I recommend that the Sub-Committee asks the Town Clerk to consult with staff to ascertain if there would be any interest in such a scheme and, if so, bring back a full report to the Sub-Committee setting out the implications for the Council.”

The Town Clerk confirmed that there would be no cost implications in respect of the Council adopting the Bike to Work Scheme other than administration, and there were small potential savings. Under the Staffordshire County Council pension scheme pension contributions would continue to be payable at the same rate by employer and employee. The employee taking part in the scheme would however make savings on income tax and national insurance, and the Town Council would save employer national insurance contributions.

RECOMMENDED: That a Bike to Work Scheme be supported by the Town Council and offered to employees interested in signing up.

ENV23/027 Speaker on Environmental Matters

The Sub-Committee considered the paper from Councillor T. Kelt (which had been attached to the agenda for the meeting).

The Town Clerk reminded the Sub-Committee that the item had been brought forward from the previous meeting as Councillor Walley had not been available.

The Chairman invited Councillor Kelt to address the Council.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that rather than deferring the item again (as Councillor Walley hadn’t been able to attend the meeting) he would speak on Councillor Walley’s behalf.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that Councillor Walley had connections with an expert on environment and biodiversity who was willing to run environmental events for invited guests, and the Crown Wharf had indicated it would be willing for their conference facility to be used with no charge. The event could be advertised by ALBOS although other means of publicity could be used.

Councillor Kelt proposed the Sub-Committee asks Councillor Walley to approach

his contact to confirm their willingness to deliver the events and obtain costings for potential venues to take the matter to the next stage.

Some Councillors stated that they did not support the proposal as environmental matters was a bigger issue than the Council could tackle, and more progress would be achieved by working with the County and Borough Councils than by this Council going its own way.

County Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Sub-Committee that she would be pleased to arrange a meeting with County officers on the issue.

RECOMMENDED: That the Town Council does not support the progression of environmental talks with the expert proposed by Councillor Walley.

ENV23/028 Reports of Working Groups

Environmental Issues Working Group

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that the Environmental Issues Working Group had not met.

Councillor Townsend invited Councillor Kelt to update the Sub-Committee on some of the work he had been involved in.

Councillor Kelt reported that he had attended meetings of the Stafford Panel under environmental matters and raising awareness groups.

The activities and work going on include:

- The use of plastics on allotments
- Biodiversity workshops, of which there have been a number
- Repair cafés in Stafford – these are organised events where residents can bring items that can be repaired and reused. They are well attended by repairers and residents with different items being presented and most repairs successful.

There is a need to recruit volunteer repairers with the required skills and volunteer helpers to deal with the administration. They also need a suitable venue, insurance, advertising and access to equipment that repairers may need.

- Veolia visits – which would be better done through the Borough Council's Waste Management Group, inviting attendants from the Town Council when there are suitable dates.
- Non-recyclable items and what to do with them – going through item by item and publicising the information to the community.

The group has separately been looking at Stafford Borough Council's Local Plan 2020-2040 consultation.

Councillor Kelt suggested the Town Council consider the setting up of a Repair Café in Stone and it was agreed that the idea be explored by the Environmental Issues Working Group.

Councillor Kelt has also followed up on the Carbon Balloon but is awaiting a response from the County via the Borough Council.

Chairman

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