

# Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held in St Michael’s Suite at the Frank Jordan Centre, Lichfield Street, Stone, on Tuesday 7 March 2023

**PRESENT:** Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and  
Councillors: J. Davies, J. Hickling, Mrs J. Hood, T. Kelt, J. Powell, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

Officers: L. Trigg and Mrs T. Williams

**ABSENT:** Councillors: A. Best, K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess, Mrs L. Davies, Mrs K. Dawson, I. Fordham, M. Green, M. Hatton, P. Leason and S. Walley

### **GP23/172**     Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: A. Best, K. Argyle, Mrs L. Davies (illness), Mrs K. Dawson, I. Fordham, M. Green (illness) and S. Walley.

Where a reason for absence is given, this reason was approved for purposes of Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **GP23/173**     Declarations of Interests

None

### **GP23/174**     Requests for Dispensations

None

### **GP23/175**     To receive the report of the County Councillors

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

The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs Hood to address the Committee.

#### Highway Maintenance

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she had received notification from the County Highways Department that structural maintenance work would begin on 24 April 2023 to improve/renew the road surface around Walton Roundabout, incorporating drainage, curb stones and carriageway.

The Highways team have been working on drains at the top end of town, attending to those in need of maintenance but needing to return to Victor Street to repair three lid jams including their jet cleaning.

#### HS2 Meeting

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she had attended a meeting (on 7 March) with County Highways officers, County Councillors and representatives from Keir and Balfour Beatty.

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She said the meeting had been fruitful but its content was mostly confidential at this stage.

**County Councillor I. Parry**

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

**GP23/176 To receive the report of Borough Councillors**

**County Councillor Mrs J. Hood**

The Chairman invited Councillor Mrs Hood to address the Committee.

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that Councillor Andy Cooper had been elected as Borough Mayor Designate for the year 2023-24.

**GP23/177 Representations from Members of the Public**

None

**GP23/178 Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 February 2023 (Minute Numbers GP23/148 – GP23/171, be approved as a correct record.

**GP23/179 Minutes of Sub-Committees**

There were no Sub-Committee Minutes for consideration.

**GP23/180 Review of Standing Orders**

The Committee undertook to review the Council's Standing Orders\* which had been presented at the last meeting of the Committee and circulated electronically with the agenda for this meeting. The document had been reviewed by the Town Clerk who did not propose any changes.

RESOLVED: That no changes were required to the Town Council's Standing Orders.

**GP23/181 Review of Financial Regulations**

The Committee undertook to review the Council's Financial Regulations\* which had been presented at the last meeting of the Committee and circulated electronically with the agenda for this meeting. The document had been reviewed by the Town Clerk who did not propose any changes.

RESOLVED: That no changes were required to the Town Council's Financial Regulations.

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**GP23/182**      **Police and Fire Commissioner**

The Committee considered inviting the Staffordshire Police and Fire Commissioner, Ben Adams, to a meeting of the Town Council.

The Chairman advised the Committee that it might be beneficial to invite Mr Adams after completing two years in post as there was plenty to discuss with an increase in sporadic anti-social behaviour and some crime issues in Stone. The opportunity could also be used to talk about police resources.

RESOLVED: That the Staffordshire Police and Fire Commissioner be invited to a future meeting of the General Purposes Committee.

**GP23/183**      **Review of Staffordshire County Council Divisions**

The Committee considered a Boundary Commission for England review of division boundaries for Staffordshire County Council.

A link to the Review documentation had been provided with the agenda for the meeting and the Committee noted that the closing date for consultation responses was 20 March 2023.

The Town Clerk reminded the Committee that the Review of Staffordshire County Divisions had been brought forward from the previous meeting to allow time for the Committee to consider how it could respond. He said the Review did not contain a proposal but explained the current arrangements and invited consultees to make observations.

The Committee expressed the view that a single County Councillor should represent the whole of the Town Council boundary rather than the County Councillor for Stone Rural representing Walton North and the County Councillor for Stone Urban representing the remainder of the town.

It was suggested that Stone Rural and Walton North were contrasting areas that did not align well when grouped together for the sake of the numbers.

The Committee pointed out that Walton North residents naturally considered themselves to be part of Stone town (not seeing themselves as living in a particularly rural area) and preferred to be represented by the County Councillor for Stone Town who was already working for them and offering support on County issues.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council's response to the Boundary Commission for England's Review of Staffordshire County Divisions be prepared by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee and that the observations made by the Committee are incorporated.

**GP23/184**      **Members' Motion under Standing Order 4**

**Councillor Jill Hood**

*'I am aware that Stone Town Council has neither made nor been invited to make representation regarding Schedule 17 applications submitted to the Staffordshire County Council in late January, regarding HS2 lorry routes along the entire length*

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*of HS2 Phase 2a within Staffordshire. The CA3 area specifically will impact the Stone Town Council area.*

*I propose that the Council asks Councillors, on behalf of our residents in every ward, to question the proposed routes with a view to minimising disruption to our town, and to submit their comments to the Town Clerk to put to the consultation.'*

The Committee expressed concern that the Town Council was not being consulted on such an important issue affecting the town.

The Committee expressed strong concerns about the plan by HS2 to use Walton as a route for HGVs to transport heavy loads from the railhead to the Yarlet Satellite Compound via Pirehill Lane. The proposal for up to 42 LGV movements per day on this route would have a huge impact on the area, especially in respect of the local schools, nurseries and shopping area. There will also be serious environmental impacts and economic impacts for businesses.

The Committee agreed that the route would be unsuitable for frequent daily LGV movements, putting local people at risk and affecting residents' health and their quality of life.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the Town Council (along with other parish councils) were not formal consultees and should therefore submit an informal response to the County Council in the hope that County officers would take the matter up with HS2 directly and urge alternative routes be considered.

The Town Clerk suggested that Committee Members submit any individual comments they would like to make by first thing on Wednesday 8 March in order to be included in a Town Council representation.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk is asked to write to Staffordshire County Council in consultation with Councillor Mrs Hood, incorporating the concerns given by the Committee on HS2's planned use of Pirehill Lane as a route serving the HS2 Phase 2a railhead works.

**GP23/185      Members' Motion under Standing Order 4**

**Councillor Steve Walley**

*'I've been contacted by a resident of Trent Close in Stone who has witnessed a number of near misses when bikes and other canal users leave the towpath at Trentside clinic and filter onto Trent Close. There is a lack of visibility of motorists who are coming from Trent Close and it has been reported to me that the bikes often leave the towpath very quickly. This area gets quite busy and is also included on the national cyclists route, so I believe its only a matter of time before someone is injured or worse. There is already a very small sign in the grass but I would propose that we need a bigger sign to make sure we have done everything in our power to warn cyclists of the danger'.*

*Proposal: 'That the Town Council determines responsibility for the current sign and encourages the owners to install a larger one, which would be more visible to cyclists'.*

Councillor Walley was not available to address the Committee.

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**GP23/186      Town Council Payments**

RESOLVED: To note the lists\* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 to 30 November 2022 and 1 to 31 January 2023.

**GP23/187      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 was not available to provide an update.

**GP23/188      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 after the parish elections in May 2023.

**Stone ATC**

Councillor Davies informed the Committee that a meeting of the Air Cadets Welfare Committee was taking place this evening (7 March 2023).

**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 a well-attended meeting of the Stafford & Stone Access Group had taken place two months ago. Discussions had included different forms of road crossing, EV charging points (mainly in Stafford and Staffordshire generally), safety of access to the Gatehouse Theatre and on station access, which impacts Stone.

The Access Group had applied through North Staffordshire Access Group to be considered as part of 'Access for All' which gives monies to various stations to improve access. Councillor Kelt said that it was disappointing that several hundred stations had been included in the Plan but none of them were local to Stone. It was hoped that future tranches of local stations could be put forward for improvement.

Councillor Kelt also advised the Committee that a new member of the Access Group (an IT expert) was taking on responsibility for the website.

**Stone Common Plot Trustees**

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that he had attended a meeting of the Common Plot Trustees on Friday 3 March 2023 which was well attended.

The Treasurer had reported that the Plot finances were in good order.

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The Chairman had given an update on discussions with Staffordshire Police following the theft of wood and it was suggested that notices be displayed advising people not to remove wood from the Plot.

A plan was going to be produced on how to deal with the lower woodland path which was sliding down the bank in places. Repairs to the woodland steps had been completed and some work was ongoing. The hay meadow fencing had also been completed.

The Treasurer reported that several trees had been planted and registered under the Queen's Green Canopy Scheme. The Ash Die Back on the Plot would continue to be monitored and Trustees kept informed.

#### **Stone Community Hub Liaison Group**

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

#### **SPCA Executive Committee**

Councillor Green was not available to provide a report.

#### **Stone Traders Group Directors' Meeting**

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that a meeting of Stone Traders Group Directors' Meeting had taken place, but notification of its date was given very late, and no one was able to attend. The next meeting will take place in about a months' time.

The Committee suggested the Town Clerk circulated new future meeting dates to nominated Councillors (when made available) and requests feedback on who might attend.

**The meeting was temporarily suspended and then reconvened after the Planning Consultative Committee meeting and the closed session of the Town Council meeting had taken place.**

#### **GP23/189 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.

#### **GP23/190 Confidential Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 February 2023, Minute Numbers GP23/148, GP23/169, GP23/170 and GP23/171 be approved.

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**GP23/191**     **Heritage Centre**

The Town Clerk reported on the current position with respect to the Heritage Centre building works tender.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk is authorised to sign the contract to appoint the main contractor to the Heritage Centre building project.

RESOLVED: That once the contract had been signed the requirement for confidentiality is removed.

**GP23/192**     **Frank Jordan Centre**

The Town Clerk reported on discussions with Stone Community Hub.

**CHAIRMAN**