

# Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 21 March 2023

**PRESENT:** Councillor R. Townsend in the Chair and  
Councillors: Mrs K. Dawson (from Minute Number ENV23/36), T. Kelt, P. Leason  
and J. Powell

Officers: L Trigg and Mrs T. Williams

By Chairman's Invitation: No Councillors

**ABSENT:** Councillors: K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess, M. Hatton and R. Kenney.

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**ENV23/029 Apologies**

Councillors: Mrs K. Dawson (to Minute Number ENV23/035) and R. Kenney

**ENV23/030 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

None received.

**ENV23/031 Representations from Members of the Public**

None

**ENV23/032 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

- a) The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on the 15 November 2022 (Minute Numbers ENV23/020 – ENV23/028), were approved as a correct record.

**ENV23/033 Covid-19 Commemoration**

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

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the trees for the commemorative orchard had been chosen and a site meeting arranged (on 22 March 2023) to have a final look at the planting position. He said the trees were a variety of Cherry approved by the Borough Council's Arboriculture Officer. They were considered suitable for the conditions on Crown Meadow, will look good in a group of 6 or 7, not grow too big so they remain manageable in the future.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the bench was undergoing refurbishment and would be ready very soon.

The Sub-Committee agreed that the wording on the plaque (a purchase that was within budget and affordable) should be considered by the General Purposes Committee at its meeting on Tuesday 4 April 2023. The Chairman confirmed that he would circulate some suggestions for words ahead of the meeting which could be considered by the Committee or used as a starting point for discussion.

**ENV23/034 Crown Meadow Improvements**

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

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that the report was up to date, with some of the jobs that had been awaiting completion, now done. The new pathway across the amphitheatre hadn't yet been started and a meeting with the Ground Maintenance Contractor was arranged for an update on progress.

**ENV23/035 Crown Meadow Volunteer Group**

The Sub-Committee considered the establishment of a Crown Meadow Volunteer Group and the arrangements that would need to be made to do this.

The Chairman had circulated a document\* containing his proposal prior to the meeting.

He explained that it was difficult for the Grounds Maintenance Contractor to maintain the two scrapes to the desired standard on his own and within the budget available.

The Chairman suggested the Sub-Committee consider forming a Crown Meadow Volunteer Group (that would be tightly managed and by invitation only) to assist the Grounds Maintenance Contractor in undertaking some of the more routine and time-consuming jobs such as pulling up Willow saplings (of which there were thousands).

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the work of the group would take place under the stewardship of the Grounds Maintenance Contractor but free his time to allow him to concentrate on items that required greater expertise and abilities. The smaller jobs needed hours of manpower, and the volunteers could make a huge difference to this aspect of work.

The work would predominantly be undertaken by Town Councillors or people that had been handpicked for their experience. There would be very little equipment needed other than wellies and gloves (no power tools used by volunteers). The volunteers would always follow the Grounds Maintenance Contractor's instructions and only carry out clearly defined tasks in accordance with predetermined work times.

The Chairman suggested the Volunteer Group be trialled and reviewed to see if it would work.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that there were a number of points needing consideration including the costs, use of staff time and indemnity insurance.

He said that the Town Council's insurance would cover Town Councillors who were not classed as volunteers but would only cover a limited number of volunteers. The Town Clerk said that he had anticipated the quota of cover provided in the current insurance policy for volunteers would be used for volunteers at the Heritage Centre. Having two volunteer schemes in force might mean that extra insurance cover is needed depending on whether the total number of volunteers goes over the limits. The Town Clerk said there would be no volunteers required at the Heritage Centre until its opening date (apart from training) and there should be plenty of time to set up and evaluate the effectiveness of a Crown Meadow Volunteer Group before any additional insurance needed to be purchased.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that a Volunteer Agreement would be drawn up setting out the volunteers' relationship with the Town Council and the guidelines that needed to be followed.

The Sub-Committee expressed its support for the setting up of a voluntary group suggesting it would provide continuity going forward with any work on Crown Meadow and possibly beyond. The importance of how the group was set up and managed was acknowledged, in view of issues with volunteer groups that had operated previously.

**RECOMMENDED:** That the General Purposes Committee supports the Chairman's proposal to set up a Crown Meadow Volunteer Group to assist the Grounds Maintenance Contractor with his work on Crown Meadow.

**ENV23/036 Crown Meadow Hedgerow**

The Sub-Committee considered extending the hedgerow at Crown Meadow following a proposal submitted by Councillor Kelt.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the Grounds Maintenance Contractor had recently completed the planting of a 50-metre hedgerow along the fence line perimeter of Crown Meadow. It was now recommended that the hedgerow be extended further along the fence line on the eastern side to the Angler's car park.

He said that from an environment and biodiversity point of view the thick grass on this side of Crown Meadow supported very little habitat and a mixed species of hedgerow would make a positive improvement in providing a habitat and food source. A hedgerow was also a very good carbon storer.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the costs of extending the hedgerow (by an approximate 80 metres plus) would be £1,040 for the hedgerow plants and £520 for preparation of ground and planting (with savings on this sum if volunteers were able to help).

RECOMMENDED: That the Town Council approves the extension of the newly planted hedgerow on the eastern side of Crown Meadow to the Angler's Car Park, paid for from the Environmental Issues Budget.

## **ENV23/037 Reports of Working Groups**

### Environmental Issues Working Group

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that the last meeting of the Environmental Issues Working Group had resulted in the proposals discussed above. He said he would like to invite all members of the Environment Sub-Committee to the Environmental Issues Digital Working Group.

Councillor Townsend invited Councillor Kelt to address the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the Stafford Panel was continuing to meet and had last met in February. He said there was little to report on the Recycling Waste and Information Sharing Sub-Groups at present (of which he was a member), but there was a lot of activity in the other groups including the Farming and Biodiversity and Information Sharing Groups.

Councillor Kelt said the arrangements for a visit to the Veolia Four Ashes Materials Recovery Facility were still awaited, as was information from the Borough Council on the hard to recycle items, which once known could be considered locally.

He said they were also looking at Best Allotment practices in particular 'no dig' methodology (considered good) and use of black plastic sheeting (considered bad) to control weeds. The only thing on local allotments was not to use carpets and black plastic was likely to be used as an alternative.

Councillor Kelt informed the Sub-Committee about his visit to the Globe Foundation in Uttoxeter which was a great example of what could be done given the drive, money and support. They have a dedicated building and work on activities with various types of waste collection, preparing waste for Teracycle to pick up. They have a shop that sells unpackaged goods and equipment to process and repurpose waste plastic. They also educate.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that they have a meeting to discuss the terms of reference for the panel and whether they are fulfilling the needs of the attendees. The non climate change work doesn't currently appear in the terms of reference.

Councillor Leason informed the Sub-Group about the work undertaken by a group

of prisoners at Stafford Prison who were making blankets for the homeless out of used crisp packets.

**Chairman**

DRAFT