

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 4 April 2023

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: K. Argyle, J. Davies, Mrs L. Davies, Mrs K. Dawson, I. Fordham,
M. Green, Mrs J. Hood, T. Kelt, J. Powell, C. Thornicroft, R. Townsend and S. Walley

Officers: L. Trigg, R. Mincher, Ms L. Thorley and Mrs T. Williams

ABSENT: Councillors: A. Best, Mrs A. Burgess, M. Hatton, J. Hickling and P. Leason

GP23/193 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors: A. Best and P. Leason (who as Borough Mayor was on a mayoral duty).

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

GP23/194 **Declarations of Interests**

Councillor Fordham declared a personal interest in agenda item 20 (Minute Number GP23/212).

GP23/195 **Requests for Dispensations**

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that a dispensation request had been received from Councillor Fordham who was seeking permission to speak (but not vote) on agenda item 20 (Minute Number GP23/212).

As chairman and trustee of Stone Community Hub, Councillor Fordham wished to offer clarification of factual information to inform the discussion where required.

RESOLVED: That the Committee grant Councillor Fordham the dispensation to speak (but not vote) on agenda item 20 (Minute Number GP23/212).

GP23/196 **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 the road resurfacing/improvement works programmed for Walton roundabout were expected to begin imminently. She said that she would be meeting with Highways officers later in the week to discuss a number of enquiries which included a request from residents of Eccleshall Road for a crossing that would assist children in accessing school safely.

* 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.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP23/197 To receive the report of Borough Councillors

Due to this meeting taking place in the pre-election period for Borough Council elections, no Borough Councillor reports were considered by the Committee.

GP23/198 Representations from Members of the Public

Due to this meeting taking place in the pre-election period for Town Council elections, the Town Council's Scheme of Public Participation had been suspended.

GP23/199 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 March 2023 (Minute Numbers GP23/172 – GP23/192), be approved as a correct record.

GP23/200 Minutes of Sub-Committees

RESOLVED:

- a) Environment Sub-Committee held on 21 March 2023 (Minute Numbers ENV23/029 – ENV23/037), that the draft minutes be noted, and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers ENV23/035 and ENV23/036 be adopted.
- b) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 28 March 2023 (Minutes Numbers TTP23/037 – TTP23/042), that the draft minutes be noted.

GP23/201 Mayor Elect

The Committee considered the appointment of a Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor Elect for the year 2023-24.

RESOLVED: That the Council would not appoint a Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor Elect until the Annual Meeting on 16 May 2023.

GP23/202 Heritage Centre

The Committee considered an update on Stone Heritage Centre and the appointment of a main contractor for the building works.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that he and the Chairman (of the General Purposes Committee) had met with the architect and the newly appointed contractor, and the week commencing 17 April 2023 had been given as the start date for the work. They were still working on providing a date when the work would be complete, but this was expected to be during July 2023.

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GP23/203 Annual Review of Risk Management

The Committee received the report* of the Town Clerk on the Annual Review of Risk Management. The report had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the risks identified following the Covid-19 pandemic had been retained in recognition of the possibility that something similar could happen again in the future. The identified risks reflecting other changes/new activity occurring during the previous year had also been included in the report.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Review of Risk Management be accepted by the Town Council.

GP23/204 Covid-19 Commemorative Orchard

The Committee considered the wording of the plaque for the commemorative orchard at Crown Meadow.

The Chairman invited Councillor Townsend (Chairman of the Environment Sub-Committee) to address the Council.

Councillor Townsend advised the Committee that the orchard (containing six trees) had been planted, the Grounds Maintenance Contractor had almost finished refurbishing the bench and had offered to make a wooden plinth on which the plaque would be mounted. All that remained to be done was to take a decision on the wording for the plaque and to arrange an opening ceremony.

The Committee expressed the view that the word 'commemorative' should not feature on the plaque and that the word 'reflection' was much more appropriate. The Committee agreed that the orchard was intended as a quiet area for reflecting on all the good work that had been done through the Covid-19 pandemic as well as on the lives that had been lost.

RESOLVED: That the Committee revisit the words for the plaque after suggestions had been put forward to the Town Clerk by individual Councillors.

GP23/205 Cycle to Work Scheme

The Committee considered the report* of the Town Clerk (which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting) on the Cycle to Work scheme.

The Town Clerk reminded the Committee that the proposal put forward by the Environment Sub-committee to introduce a Cycle to Work scheme and to make it available to staff, had been agreed by the General Purposes Committee last year.

He said the scheme was effectively an interest free loan applied through salary sacrifice to reduce an employee's salary by the repayment value, with the benefit of also reducing their income tax and national insurance liability. The employer would make savings on employer national insurance.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that after looking at the detail of the scheme and the potential providers, he recommended the services of 'Green

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Commute Initiative'. He said the Committee needed to consider the maximum value of loan that would be made available and the maximum repayment term over which it could be paid back.

As applicants to the scheme were not allowed to be paid less than the minimum wage even after the salary sacrifice reduction, the repayment period could not be too short as this would penalise lower paid staff. In addition, he recommended the eligibility criteria should require new employees to have successfully completed their probationary period.

The Town Clerk reassured the Committee that the contract would include the requirement to repay the loan if an employee left the Town Council's employment before the end of the repayment term.

RESOLVED: That following the Committee's previous decision to offer a Bike to Work scheme to employees, it further approved:

- a. Adopting the following elements within the scheme:
 - i. Green Commute Initiative (GCI) is the Council's supplier.
 - ii. The level of loan offered by the council should be capped at £3,000.
 - iii. The maximum repayment period will be 36 months.
 - iv. Eligibility will be limited to staff who have successfully completed their probationary employment period.

- b. That the Town Clerk be authorised to:
 - i. Draw up the Bike to Work salary sacrifice agreement and related documentation for the scheme on the basis set out in the report.
 - ii. Enter into Bike to Work agreements with staff.
 - iii. Reduce the maximum loan and/or monthly payment limit below the specified sums if considered appropriate in individual cases.

GP23/206 Members' Motion under Standing Order 4

Due to this meeting taking place in the pre-election period for Town Council elections, no Members Motions were considered by the Committee.

GP23/207 Town Council Payments

RESOLVED: To note the lists* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 to 28 February 2023.

GP23/208 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.

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Engagement with Young People

Councillor Mrs Dawson confirmed that no meeting had taken place.

GP23/209

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 be held after the May 2023 parish elections.

Stone ATC

Councillor Davies informed the Committee that a meeting of the Air Cadets Welfare Committee had recently taken place. He said the shooting range will be up and running before too long and the Annual General Meeting had been set for Tuesday 25 April 2023. The current Officer Commanding was moving to another job in the Wing and a new officer will be leading the Squadron.

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 (on 3 April) with the main item of discussion being theatre access, particularly in relation to Stafford Gatehouse Theatre. The stairs are considered dangerous in the second chamber, and it has been suggested that HSE are asked to provide an independent view. Councillor Kelt said that he hoped those overseeing the construction of new theatres would follow the guidance provided by a manual written for new build theatres.

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that a second topic of discussion related to proposals for a minimum accessibility standard for large developments in the Local Plan. He said the Group was waiting for the next public consultation round to provide the opportunity for making comments/observations.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that no meeting of the Stone Common Plot Trustees had taken place.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

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

SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Green had not attended meetings of the SPCA Executive Committee.

Stone Traders Group Directors' Meeting

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that he had attended a constructive meeting of Stone Traders Group Directors' where he had learned about the initiatives for new events in the town. He said it will be good to see the results of the traders' joint endeavours, with the Town Council's support.

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.

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GP23/210 **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.

GP23/211 **Confidential Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 March 2023, Minute Numbers GP23/172, GP23/190, GP23/191 and GP23/192 be approved.

GP23/212 **Frank Jordan Centre**

The Town Clerk reported on discussions with Stone Community Hub.

CHAIRMAN