

Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 20 June 2023

PRESENT: Councillor R. Townsend in the Chair and
Councillors: T. Kelt, J. Battrick, A. Burgess, K. Dawson, J. Powell and N. Powell

Officers: L. Trigg and T. Williams

By Chairman's Invitation: J. Hood

ABSENT: Councillors: B. Kenney, R. Kenney and J. Metters

ENV24/001 Apologies

Councillors: B. Kenney, R. Kenney and J. Metters

ENV24/002 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None received.

ENV24/003 Representations from Members of the Public

None

ENV24/004 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on the 21 March 2023 (Minute Numbers ENV23/029 – ENV23/037), were approved as a correct record.

ENV24/005 Covid-19 Reflection Orchard

The Chairman updated the Sub-Committee on the Covid-19 Reflection Orchard.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the trees were now planted, the vintage bench was refurbished and the wording for the plaque had been approved by the General Purposes Committee (on 23 May 2023).

He said the Town Council now had sight of some suitable brass plaques with embossed lettering that will sustain the demands of an outdoor and public environment. The next step was for the General Purposes Committee to consider these and their costings at its meeting on 4 July 2023.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that a small plaque would also be fitted to the bench to say how the Reflection Orchard came about and that it was funded by Stone Town Council.

ENV24/006 Environmental Sub-Committee Budget and Works Review

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that at the beginning of a new term of office he would for the benefit of new Sub-Committee Members go through the parameters of responsibility and budget.

The Chairman referred the Sub-Committee to the reports on 'Grounds Maintenance Works 2022-23' and 'Environment Report - Work in Progress' which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Grounds Maintenance Works 2022-23 was a comprehensive list of everything the Sub-Committee achieved and budgeted for in the last financial year, providing an oversight of the work that was done.

The first section of the report is the grounds contract illustrating the wide range of environmental tasks undertaken by the grounds maintenance contractor during the year. The work is continually under review to identify efficiencies and new requirements.

'Grounds Non-Contract' items are surprise/unexpected maintenance work that arises and the third section 'Crown Meadow improvements' includes planned and budgeted items (as long ago as two years).

The Sub-Committee were referred to the two allotments sites where there is a degree of contract work for maintenance and non-contract work for unexpected issues that arise.

The second report 'Environment Report - Work in Progress' contains a mixture of special projects that have a budget but are not contract related.

The Sub-Committee agreed that installation of the lock gate and replanting of Walton Roundabout should be delayed until the roadworks had been completed.

The Sub-Committee questioned whether the tree on Walton Roundabout was protected as it is a valuable asset.

The Chairman suggested looking at the town borders to establish what is planted and needs to be planted, taking account of environmental changes to climate and the weather.

The Chairman gave information about the hedgerow on the eastern part of Crown Meadow to the Angler's Car Park and invited new ideas for environmental initiatives for next year 2024-25.

The Sub-Committee discussed its work on environmental issues generally (climate,

waste management and recycling) and acknowledged that the process was not easy with the enormity of the topic and the Town Council's remit/budget. An action plan for the Town Council office had been devised and mostly fulfilled but reaching out to schools hadn't generated the responses hoped for.

ENV24/007 Crown Meadow and Allotments

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that it would be helpful to organise a visit to Crown Meadow and the allotment sites so that Members could see first-hand what the Sub-Committee was responsible for.

RESOLVED: That the Chairman identify some suitable dates for a site visit to Crown Meadow and the allotment sites.

ENV24/008 Crown Meadow Volunteer Group

The Sub-Committee considered the steps that were needed to progress the work of Crown Meadow Volunteer Group (following approval at the last meeting) and it was agreed that some dates needed to be obtained from the grounds maintenance contractor.

The Chairman gave an overview of the purpose of the Volunteer Group for the benefit of new Councillors whose sole aim was to assist the grounds maintenance contractor in removing willow saplings on the scrapes and other areas of Crown Meadow that are becoming overwhelmed.

ENV24/009 Commemorative Bench

The Sub-Committee considered a request from a member of the public to site a commemorative bench at Crown Meadow.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the individual had requested permission to have a memorial bench placed on 'the Meadow' (at their cost) in memory of a young relative who had committed suicide. The person loved animals and the enquirer thought it would be a lovely spot for people to enjoy the views surrounding the reserve. They would also like to inscribe the bench with some positive mental health messages given the number of young people who suffer mental health problems.

The Sub-Committee raised a question about whether the location was Crown Meadow, managed by Stone Town Council, or The Meadow, managed by Stafford Borough Council.

The Sub-Committee acknowledged that the only benches on Crown Meadow were owned by Stone Town Council and a decision to allow a privately funded one would need to be considered carefully as it would set a precedent and lead to further demand.

It was suggested that given the limited space, the locations for a set number of

benches should be agreed and limited. However, in this case the bench would not only help the family but also other people seeking solace on Crown Meadow.

RECOMMENDED: That the matter be deferred to a future meeting to enable additional information to be obtained from the applicant and the parameters for the Town Council to be explored.

ENV24/010 Membership of Working Groups

RESOLVED: To appoint the following members to working groups and to change the name of the previous Environmental Issues Working Group:

Environmental Working Group

Councillors: All Sub-Committee Members.

ENV24/011 Reports of Working Groups

Environmental Issues Working Group

The Chairman invited Councillor Kelt to address the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Kelt provided an update on the Stafford Climate Panel which is intended to link to the Stafford Borough Council Climate Change and Green Recovery Strategy.

He said the group discusses a lot of the topics the Sub-Committee discusses but, on a borough wide basis. A meeting took place last Monday and one of the reasons they met was to discuss the way forward in the light of two Borough Councillors leaving the group and a change of Cabinet following the local elections.

The original project streams looked at were recycling and waste, food and farming, biodiversity and information sharing which are specific project streams.

The latest project streams that have been suggested are allotments, solar and windfarm fact finding, 'Bee Friendly' status for various towns and council engagement specifically Stafford Borough Council.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that there was no news on the Veolia visit or Carbon Balloon Roadshow.

He said that he had received a list of recycling locations for harder recycling items within the Borough which he will issue to Sub-Committee members.

Chairman