

Stone Town Council – Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee

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

PRESENT: Councillor J. Hood in the Chair and
Councillors: A. Mottershead, A. Best, A. Burgess, K. Dawson, J. Powell and C. Thornicroft

Co-opted Member: J. Cook

Officers: L. Trigg and T. Williams

By Chairman's invitation: No Councillors

ABSENT: Councillors: B. Kenney, R. Kenney and P. Leason

TTP24/001 Apologies

Councillors: B. Kenney, R. Kenney and P. Leason

TTP24/002 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation

None

TTP24/003 Representations from Members of the Public

None

TTP24/004 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee meeting held on 25 March 2023 (Minute Numbers TTP23/037 – TTP23/042), were approved as a correct record.

TTP24/005 Calendar of Events 2023

The Committee considered the Town Council's Calendar of Events for 2023-24 and gave updates on events that had already taken place:

- St George's Day Re-enactment (Saturday 22 April 2023)
The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the St George's Day Re-enactment had been very successful and enjoyed by all who had attended. The only criticism received was that it didn't go on for long enough, but the costumes are heavy and the routines physically taxing for the re-enactment

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team.

The audience participation was a new addition to the format this year which enhanced the show. The Sub-Committee agreed that if held next year, there should be no first prize for fancy-dress as a parade and big cheer from the crowd would recognise all children as winners.

Mr Cook advised the Committee that ALBOS live streamed the event enabling people who couldn't attend in person to enjoy the performance. People coming into town made comment that there was nothing like this where they lived.

The Chairman thanked Town Councillors who volunteered on the day.

The Sub-Committee concluded that the St George's Day Re-enactment should be included in the events programme next year.

- King Charles III Coronation (Sunday 7 May 2023)

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the event had been very successful and ran like clockwork. Attendances had been wonderful giving a big boost to trade in the town. Kath Stanway had been an excellent compere and the acts had been first class.

The Sub-Committee suggested the Town Council could consider improving signage to direct people on foot from the railway station to the town.

The Committee concluded that Stone could be proud of the part it played in the coronation celebrations, both in honour of King Charles and for the benefits brought to the town.

- Floating Market/Waterside Events (Saturday 27, Sunday 28 and Monday 29 May 2023)

Councillor Davies advised the Sub-Committee that the floating market had been very attractive with canal boats setting up their stalls. A lot of families were there enjoying themselves and stallholders were delighted with the turnout. They expressed hope the market would return to Stone next year.

Reports were given that the day represented an average Saturday in the town centre as people hadn't made their way over to the High Street. The suggestion was made that stalls could be set up on the amphitheatre on that day.

The Sub-Committee concluded that it would like to see the waterside event returning again in 2024.

- Christmas Lights Planning

The Chairman reported on a meeting between the Town Clerk and a representative from the Christmas lighting contractor to consider the options for the lighting display in December 2023. This exercise was part of a three-year refresh.

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Councillor Hood suggested extending the lights along Adies Alley (a main thoroughfare from the car parks) as well as the alleyway at the side of the Crown Hotel. She asked whether the Walton tree on the island could be restrung and additional large baubles put on the Plane tree.

She said that feedback received from members of the public on the Walton lights had been pleasing.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that several options were available to enhance the Christmas lights in 2023. The Town Council could keep the same displays or add new ones.

The Town Clerk issued a paper to Sub-Committee members with three options for enhanced displays. Option 1 would cost £700 more than the baseline cost of the existing lights, Option 2 would cost £1,400 more than the baseline and Option 3, £2,500 more.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that there was scope in the budget for some new lights (which are hired now rather than purchased) but the baseline cost of standing still was not clear and further clarification was needed.

Mr Cook advised the Sub-Committee that he had received no bad feedback about the lights and the baseline measure was considered good quality.

The Chairman asked Councillors to let her know if there were any options that Councillors particularly liked or strongly disliked. A preference was expressed for new displays to be brightly coloured and twinkling.

She said that someone had expressed a preference for having a Christmas tree in Market Square but there were concerns about safety and misuse/damage when the town already had a beautiful, illuminated Plane tree and thirty plus small Christmas trees fitted to the walls of High Street buildings.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that he would bring back a fully costed report when all the information he needed was available.

- Puppet Festival (Saturday 8 July)

The Chairman reported that Mr Leech had been working very hard to arrange the exciting Puppet Tree Jamboree on Saturday 8 July, which was supported by the Council.

He would be holding workshops with school children, Stone Scout & Guide Band would be leading the parade, the Town Mayor will be in attendance and lots of children joining in.

The Chairman said she would be grateful for volunteers to assist on the day.

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- Florence Brass Band Concert & Burma Star Commemoration Sunday 13 August 2023)

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that arrangements were in place but asked whether an ice cream van could be sourced.

She said the band would be playing a medley of tunes and the Burma Star commemoration would take place. The arrangements for this latter event were being made independently from the Town Council. The grounds maintenance contractor would-be asked to take seats to the park, and she hoped to have a budget for cream teas.

- Stone by the Sea (Wednesday 9 to Saturday 12 August 2023)

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that Stone by the Sea was a popular and free event for children which would be taking place in Market Square over three days in August.

- Classic Car Event (23 September 2023)

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that he was having some difficulty in communicating with the County about waiving the car parking restrictions in the town centre on 23 September. He has also been following up with Stafford Borough Council on issues relating to the Public Spaces Protection Order. The way the High Street works on a day-to-day basis doesn't lend itself easily to the Classic Car event.

A proposal to hold a scooter event on the following day was continuing to be followed up.

- Christmas Lights Switch-On (Thursday 23 November 2023)

The Sub-Committee agreed that Kath Stanway should be asked to comper the Christmas Lights Switch-On.

The Christmas Card Competition would take place once again and someone would be invited to switch on the lights with the Town Mayor.

The Chairman invited new ideas to be put forward and a request was made for a virtual production with the return of the drone. A number of residents with mobility issues had requested a video for people to watch from home. It was acknowledged that a preference for this option would require speedy action.

- Texas Flag Raising (Friday 29 December 2023)

The Chairman invited Councillor Davies to explain the reasons for raising the Texas State Flag which in December is a minor event to mark the Anniversary of Texas joining the Union in 1845. The main event on the first Saturday in March (to coincide with the Farmers' Market) marks the anniversary of Texas gaining independence from Mexico in 1836.

He said the event could start to be built up again after Covid-19 with the Florence Brass Band and Stone Choral Society invited to attend.

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The Sub-Committee suggested considering a rodeo bull in town and inviting Harley-Davidson groups to attend.

- Any other suggested new events for 2023-24
Town Council's 50th Anniversary on 1 April 2024
Councillor Davies advised the Sub-Committee that a commemoration to mark the Town Council's 50th anniversary would provide an opportunity to learn what was happening in 1974, what Stone was doing at that time and to reflect on whether the town had improved since losing local powers of governance. It also provided the opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the Town Council over the last 50 years.

Councillor Davies said that he intended to ask Stone Area Parish Liaison group representatives what their councils were doing to mark the occasion.

The Sub-Committee agreed that a working group should be set up to consider the detail and ask the Historical Society to share research on how things were in 1974, what the issues were and the process by which Stone town, Stone Rural and Stafford rural areas were consumed into the larger Stafford Borough Council.

RECOMMENDED: The Sub-Committee agreed that membership of the working group should be determined by the General Purposes Committee.

Councillor Davies informed the Sub-Committee that the Trafalgar Dinner would be held at the Mill on Saturday 28 October 2023, providing an opportunity to link John Jervis of St Vincent and what he did leading up to the battle of Trafalgar.

TTP24/006 Rebekah Refurbishment

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that Tony Panter had been doing a remarkable job on the refurbishment of Rebekah, and a local lady would be doing the artwork. She said that Canal Cruising had donated the specialist paint and Peter had built the framework. The boat was now safe but still required a welding job to restore her to her former glory.

It was suggested that the Council pay for the boats planting (the costs of the compost were covered). Stone in Bloom would then consider taking on Rebekah's longer-term maintenance.

The Chairman asked whether the grounds maintenance contractor could restore the low railings which needed to be fixed to the side so the boat was properly railed off.

The Sub-Committee agreed that Rebekah was important to local people and a great entrance to the town when maintained. The Sub-Committee expressed its grateful thanks to all involved in this wonderful community effort to get the refurbishment work underway.

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TTP24/007 Membership of Working Groups

RESOLVED: To appoint the following Members to working groups:

Remembrance Plaques Working Group

Councillors: J. Davies, L. Davies and P. Leason.

Market Strategy Working Group

Councillors: J. Davies, J. Hood, R. Kenney, A. Mottershead and C. Thornicroft.

Also: J. Cook

TTP24/008 Reports from Working Groups

The Chairman invited representatives from each Working Group to address the Sub-Committee:

Remembrance Plaques Working Group

Councillor Davies advised the Sub-Committee that the Remembrance Plaques Working Group had experienced delays for several reasons but there was now a pottery manager at Oak Tree Farm and the project should begin to progress.

Market Strategy Working Group

The Chairman reported that an informal meeting had taken place where most of the working group had attended. Some very good ideas were put forward which will be developed and reported on in due course.

Chairman

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