

Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 24 October 2023

PRESENT: Councillor R. Townsend in the Chair and
Councillors: A. Burgess, T. Kelt, B. Kenney, R. Kenney and J. Powell

Officers: L. Trigg and T. Williams

By Chairman's Invitation: No Councillors

ABSENT: Councillors: J. Battrick, J. Davies, K. Dawson, J. Metters and N. Powell

ENV24/021 Apologies

Councillors: J. Davies, K. Dawson and N. Powell

ENV24/022 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None received.

ENV24/023 Representations from Members of the Public

None

ENV24/025 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on the 15 August 2023 (Minute Numbers ENV24/012 – ENV24/020), were approved as a correct record.

ENV24/026 Environmental Sub-Committee Works Update

The Chairman gave updates on the following items:

Asbestos Removal

This item was carried forward for discussion later in the agenda.

Crown Meadow

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the Covid-19 Orchard Opening on Crown Meadow on Tuesday 10 October 2023 had been successful.

The footbridge from Westbridge Park to Crown Meadow was scheduled for its annual clean up and repaint which hopefully would be done before the end of the year.

The work on Scrape One to cut back grasses to allow new growth and diversity was to be scheduled later in the season.

The removal of willow saplings in Scrape One had been delayed because of the late season growth. A small volunteer group was ready and waiting to carry out the task.

The grounds maintenance contractor was now moving to a quiet period of routine work and should be able to schedule the willow removal soon.

Walton Roundabout

Now that the County Highways improvement works on Walton roundabout were finished the Grounds Maintenance Contractor would be able to schedule replanting and maintenance of the existing trees and shrubs.

Town Borders

Arrangements will be made for a walkabout and inspection of the town borders with the Grounds Maintenance Contractor to see what needs to be done to remove overgrowth and plant some new shrubs.

Lock Gate

Restoring the lock gate will be revisited after being held up by the Covid-19 pandemic and the improvements to Walton Roundabout.

Hedgerow

The planting of a new hedgerow running from Angler's carpark to the corner of the wooden fence to meet the hedgerow already planted has been planned and budgeted. The hedgerow will consist of a mix of five British species.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that there was an opportunity to talk to the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) next week about whether financial or other help was available for the project.

ENV24/027 Asbestos Policy

The Chairman updated the Sub-Committee on the removal of asbestos at the Newcastle Street allotments.

He informed the Sub-Committee of a survey undertaken on the asbestos sheeting which showed that it was very low risk to health because it was low risk material and located outdoors. The report concluded that the Council were under no obligation to remove it with urgency although it was wise to remove it when resources allowed. It also recommended that further surveys be undertaken annually to keep the position under review.

The Town Clerk had a copy of the survey available at the meeting for Sub-Committee members to view.

The Chairman said the Town Council could now feel more comfortable that the asbestos can be removed gradually within budget and that monies had been set aside to do as much as possible with the opportunity to come back to Council if additional resources were needed.

In the interim the Office had drafted a revised tenancy agreement that expressly stated asbestos was not permitted on the allotment sites.

ENV24/028 Reports of Working Groups

Environmental Working Group

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

Councillor Kelt provided an update on a Climate Expo held at Keele which involved several talks, exhibitions and keynote speaker, Chris Packham. He said there was lots of advice about how to proceed with what appeared to be retractable environmental issues such as 'we are too small but are interested in looking at things like communal energy' etc.

The Stafford Climate Panel had met (since the last Sub-Committee meeting), but the planned sustainable fashion show has not gone ahead. There was a discussion about a potential forum for businesses and traders to look at what can be done (by them) to make themselves more sustainable. Councillor Kelt said that he was trying to contact the Secretary of Stone Traders Association to talk about how to take the idea forward. Another discussion took place on local community-based energy production which was in its early stages.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that a set of Council Climate Action Score cards had been published by the Climate Emergency Action Group. The score cards were for the monitoring of a Council's (County and Borough) progress against its action plan, assessed using a variety of soft evidence, some self-reporting and taking genuine evidence from the press and other official documents. He said that Stafford Borough scored 30% which was average.

The Panel had agreed with the Borough that they would assist with monitoring and advising on where best to place their actions. There were several categories and the categories they have some control over such as transport and waste reduction had produced the worst score of 2% and 8%. The scores are helpful in showing the way forward and highlighting where investigations need to be undertaken to improve.

The Sub-Committee expressed the wish to invite Borough representatives to Stone Town Council to find out more about their current environmental activities. Knowing about the work they do might allow the Town Council to support the programmes and disseminate them out into the community.

The Chairman suggested inviting representatives to the Sub-Committee where the translatable elements into Town Council activities could be taken forward to the General Purposes Committee.

Councillor Kelt said that he would have the opportunity to network at a meeting he will be attending in a couple of weeks.

ENV24/029 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 item of business.

ENV24/030 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee, held on 15 August 2023, (Minute Numbers ENV24/012 and ENV24/020), be approved as a correct record.

Chairman