



Town Clerk

Les Trigg

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15 Station Road
STONE
ST15 8JP

2 November 2023

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** will be held in the **Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone**, on **TUESDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2023 at 7:05pm**, or on the rising of the Council meeting, if later.

The agenda is set out below and I trust you will be able to attend.

Les Trigg
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies for absence, and to consider the approval of any reasons given for absence under Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

2. Declarations of Interest

3. Requests for Dispensations Received

4. To receive a report from County Councillors representing Stone Town

- County Councillor Mrs J. Hood
- County Councillor I. Parry

5. To receive a report from Borough Councillors representing Stone Town

6. Representations from Members of the Public

To consider representations from members of the public on items to be considered at this meeting, in accordance with the Council's scheme of public participation.

7. Minutes of Previous Meetings

- a) To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 3 October 2023, Minute No's GP24/094 – GP24/109 (attached).
- b) To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 17 October 2023, Minute No's GP24/110 – GP24/117 (attached).

8. Minutes of Sub-Committees

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 17 October 2023, Minute Numbers TTP24/017 – TTP24/025 (attached)
 - i. To consider the draft minutes
- b) Estates Sub-Committee held on 17 October 2023, Minutes Numbers EST24/015 – EST24/022 (attached)
 - i. To consider the draft minutes
- c) Environment Sub-Committee held on 24 October 2023, Minutes Numbers ENV24/021 – ENV24/029 (attached)
 - i. To consider the draft minutes

9. HS2

An update on the current HS2 position as it affects Stone area will be provided by Trevor Parkin of the Stone Railhead Crisis Group.

10. Budget Monitoring – September 2023

To receive the report of the Town Clerk (attached).

11. Heritage Centre

To consider an update on the Heritage Centre.

12. Town Council Payments

To receive a list of payments made by the Council during the period 1 to 30 September 2023 (attached).

13. Update from Working Groups:

- a) Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group
- b) Engagement with Young People Working Group
- c) 50th Anniversary of Stone Town Council

14. To receive reports from Town Councillors on attendance at meetings as a representative of the Town Council

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group – J. Davies (Notes enclosed)

Stone ATC – Town Mayor & one vacancy – J. Davies

Age Concern Stone & District – Cllrs J. Davies and C. Thornicroft

Stafford & Stone Access Group – Cllr T. Kelt

Stone Common Plot Trustees – Cllrs: A. Burgess, J. Hood, T. Kelt, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group – Cllrs: J. Battrick, J. Hood and J. Powell

SPCA Executive Committee – M. Green

Stone Traders' Group Directors Meeting – Cllrs: A. Burgess, I. Fordham, J. Hood and T. Kelt (Councillors attend on a rotating basis)

15. 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.

16. Confidential Minutes

To approve the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee held on 17 October 2023, Minute Numbers GP24/110, GP24/115, GP24/116 and GP24/117 (attached).

17. To consider the Confidential Minutes and recommendations of the undermentioned Sub-Committees:

- a) Estates Sub-Committee Meeting held on 17 October 2023, Minute Numbers: EST24/015, EST24/021 and EST24/022 (attached)
 - i. To consider the draft Minutes

Members of the public are welcome to attend the General Purposes Committee meeting as observers and/or to make representations to the committee in accordance with the Council's scheme of public participation. Details of the scheme are displayed in the Council's notice boards and website.

Please access the Council Chamber from the rear of the building.

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 3 October 2023

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: A. Best, A. Burgess, I. Fordham, J. Davies, K. Dawson, J. Hood, T. Kelt,
B. Kenney, P. Leason, A. Mottershead, J. Powell, N. Powell and C. Thornicroft

Officers: L. Trigg and T. Williams

ABSENT: Councillors: J. Battrick, L. Davies, J. Metters and R. Townsend

GP24/094 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: J. Battrick, L. Davies, J. Metters and R. Townsend

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

GP24/095 Declarations of Interests

None

GP24/096 Requests for Dispensations

None

GP24/097 To receive the report of the County Councillors

County Councillor Jill Hood

The Chairman invited Councillor Hood to address the Committee.

Stone & District Swimming Club

Councillor Hood informed the Committee that on Saturday 23 September she had been delighted to present awards to the young swimmers at Stone and District Swimming Club's Awards Evening and felt very proud of the youngsters' achievements and enthusiasm.

Councillor Hood emphasised the importance of learning to swim and asked that Stone Town Council write to the Swimming Club in recognition of the adult volunteers who dedicate many hours of their time teaching the youngsters and getting their skills to a competent level. She also asked that the young members are congratulated for their achievements.

Highways

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that she had met with representatives of the Highways team and had expressed concern about vehicular parking in the High Street. She said the Civil Enforcement Team had apologised that the High Street

* 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.

had been omitted from their regular patrol areas list which had been rectified and future visits would be taking place and include Sundays. The Civil Enforcement Team confirmed that their last 25 visits to Stone High Street had resulted in 11 parking charge notices.

Walkway

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that she was looking into whose responsibility it was to maintain the walkway linking the A34 and Stone Business Park (near the Stone House Hotel) which was well used by cyclists and pedestrians. While waiting to find out whether it was a County or Borough Council responsibility, Lion Mike Ward had very kindly strimmed its entire length.

Walton Roundabout

Councillor Hood said she was pleased to advise the Committee that the Walton roundabout roadworks were almost finished and gave thanks to the men and women who had worked through the night in all weathers. She apologised for the disruption and thanked residents for their patience, especially in the Manor Rise area of Walton. Although not her division she had tried to help as much as possible, liaising with Highways and residents.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP24/098 To receive the report of Borough Councillors

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee.

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that he had attended the Borough Council's Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 5 September 2023.

A report had been given by Freedom Leisure on its various schemes and projects including plans to install solar panels at Stone Leisure Centre.

He said that a decision had not been taken about the venue to stage future Shakespeare productions, whether this be Stafford Castle or the Gatehouse Theatre.

A presentation had been given by Streetscene who were commended by Borough Councillors for the quality of their flower displays throughout the Borough.

A report was given on the disposal of waste food but there were no plans to start a collection scheme.

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that future charges would apply to the Westbridge Park car park which was going to become a pay and display.

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that food banks came within her communities portfolio and she would be chairing a Food Bank Forum on 11 October 2023. Having visited as many food banks as time would allow, she appealed to Councillors for donations as they were in desperate need of support with supplies.

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GP24/099 Representations from Members of the Public

None

GP24/100 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 5 September 2023 (Minute Numbers GP24/075 – GP24/093) be approved as a correct record.

GP24/101 Minutes of Sub-Committees

There were no minutes of sub-committees.

GP24/102 Engagement with Young People

The Committee considered the report* of the Engagement with Young People Working Group which had been attached to the agenda for the meeting.

The Chairman invited Councillor Dawson to address the Committee and she advised that significant detail had been added to the engagement with young people proposal.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that he and Councillor Dawson had discussed the detail of the scheme, seeking to anticipate some of the operational issues and how they may be dealt with to ensure the project was workable.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council:

- a. Adopt a Youth Ambassador scheme on the basis set out in the report.
- b. Approve a supplementary estimate of £2,500 to cover the initial setup costs of the scheme.
- c. Include an additional provision of £600 per annum in future budgets to cover the ongoing costs of the scheme.

GP24/103 Planning Application Validation Criteria Consultation

The Committee considered a Stafford Borough Council consultation seeking views on its Planning Application Validation Criteria which sets out the information needed to assess planning applications.

An email from Stafford Borough Council and a copy of the Local Validation Requirements had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting. A link to the Local Validation Requirements had also been provided.

The Committee concluded that it would not be appropriate to revisit the Borough Council's disappointing decision some years ago to decline Town and Parish Councils the opportunity to be represented in Planning Committee meetings.

The Committee acknowledged that the Planning Application Validation Criteria was based on a national template and aimed to speed up the validation process

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and reduce the number of refusals. The criteria were more clearly documented and should be welcomed.

The view was expressed that the presentation of existing and proposed diagrams/plans should be standardised, so they are displayed side by side to enable comparison.

The view was also expressed that the Planning Department were not always successful in working with applicants to make good weaknesses in applications as there were examples where applications have lapsed because the Planning Department had taken a long time to respond.

GP24/104 Heritage Centre

The Committee considered an update from the Town Clerk on the Heritage Centre project.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the new Heritage Centre Manager, Paul Castrey, was very enthusiastic about starting his role on Monday 9 October 2023. Paul will be based in the office initially and be attending all future Heritage Centre Steering Group meetings.

He also advised the Committee that the formal handover from the builder to the Council was expected to take place next week, subject to the availability of both architect and contractor. When handover had taken place Town Councillors would be invited to visit the Centre to see the work done.

The Town Clerk reminded the Committee of its agreement (on 1 August 2023, Minute Number GP24/066) to submit an Expression of Interest for a Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant of £40 000 to support the fit-out of the Heritage Centre.

Since that time, the Town Council had been invited by Stafford Borough Council to make a full grant submission and, following on from that submission, several queries related to the application had been received.

One of those queries was related to the Town Council's commitment to still put the same amount of its own funds into the project if the grant was awarded.

In order to provide assurance to the Borough Council for purposes of assessing the Town Council's grant application, the Town Clerk asked the Committee to re-affirm its commitment to spending the current £35,000 Centre fit-out budget at the Centre regardless of any grant received. This would mean, for example, that if the full £40,000 grant requested was awarded, the fit-out budget would change to £75,000 (£35,000 existing budget plus £40,000 grant) or if the grant was reduced to (say) £35,000, the fit-out budget would change to £70,000 (£35,000 existing budget plus £35,000 grant).

RESOLVED: To re-affirm the Committee's commitment to spending the existing £35,000 fit-out budget at the Heritage Centre regardless of the level of any grant received from the Rural England Prosperity Fund, with any grant awarded added to the existing budget in full.

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GP24/105 Town Council Payments

The Committee raised a question about payments relating to gas services/supply at the Heritage Centre. The Town Clerk confirmed that the Sage report picks up payments but not income and a credit note had been received.

RESOLVED: To note the list* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 to 31 August 2023.

GP24/106 Update from Working Groups:

Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that the Steering Group had not met.

Engagement with Young People

Councillor Dawson confirmed that following consideration of the Working Group's report earlier in the meeting (Minute Number GP24/102) her next port of call was to get in touch with the schools.

50th Anniversary of Stone Town Council

Councillor Davies informed the Committee that he had spoken to a past member of Stone Rural District Council who had cast doubt about whether the Town Council was formerly created on 1 April 1974 which was something that needed to be investigated.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the Town Council could be considered to have been formed in 1973 because there was a shadow council in existence prior to the creation of the actual Council on 1 April 1974.

GP24/107 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 a meeting of the Liaison Group would be held on Wednesday 1 November (face to face) at which Highways representatives would be in attendance to talk about highway repairs and maintenance. He said that Town Councillors were welcome to attend.

Stone ATC

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that a meeting of Stone ATC had taken place on 12 September 2023. The organisation was doing extremely well with a waiting list of new cadets eager to join.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that Age Concern Stone & District had not met.

Stafford & Stone Access Group

Councillor Kelt informed the Committee that a meeting took place last week where the main points of discussion included access to various retail units in Stafford which had changed. There was also a discussion about replacing the theatre seating in the side theatre which is a health and safety issue.

A toilet competition has been proposed involving a review of all toilets in the

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Borough and a prize awarded to the best one.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Burgess advised the Committee that the Trustees had a meeting scheduled to take place next week.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that no meeting had taken place.

SPCA Executive Committee

Mr M. Green was not available to give a report.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that new members would be elected to the Executive Committee at the SPCA AGM on 30 October 2023.

Stone Traders Group Directors' Meeting

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that meetings were programmed every six weeks, but he had no meeting date to share.

The meeting was temporarily suspended and then reconvened after the Planning Consultative Committee meeting and confidential section of the Town Council meeting had taken place.

GP24/108 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.

GP24/109 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 5 September 2023, Minute Numbers GP24/075, GP24/092 and GP24/093 be approved.

CHAIRMAN

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Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 17 October 2023

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Best, A. Burgess, I. Fordham, J. Davies, L. Davies,
K. Dawson, J. Hood, T. Kelt, B. Kenney, J. Metters, J. Powell, N. Powell and
C. Thornicroft

Officers: L. Trigg and T. Williams

ABSENT: Councillors: P. Leason, A. Mottershead and R. Townsend

GP24/110 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: P. Leason, A. Mottershead and
R. Townsend

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

GP24/111 Declarations of Interests

None

GP24/112 Requests for Dispensations

None

GP24/113 Representations from Members of the Public

None

**The meeting was temporarily suspended and reconvened after the Tourism &
Town Promotion Sub-Committee and the Estates Sub-Committee meetings had
taken place.**

GP24/114 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.

GP24/115 Waiver of Standing Orders

RESOLVED: To waive Standing Order 8.1 to enable consideration of the next item
on the agenda.

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GP24/116 High Street Christmas Trees

The Committee re-considered the provision of High Street Christmas trees following its earlier decision at its meeting on 5 September 2023 (Minute GP24/093) not to outsource the putting up and removal of Christmas trees throughout the town.

GP24/117 Staffing Matter

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

RESOLVED: To re-appoint to the post of Deputy Town Clerk following the resignation of the current postholder, on the basis of the job description and person specification enclosed in the Town Clerk's report.

CHAIRMAN

Stone Town Council – Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 17 October 2023

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

Co-opted Member: J. Cook

Officers: L. Trigg and T. Williams

By Chairman's invitation: L. Davies

ABSENT: Councillors: P. Leason and A. Mottershead

TTP24/017 **Apologies**

Councillors: P. Leason and A. Mottershead

TTP24/018 **Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation**

None

TTP24/019 **Representations from Members of the Public**

None

TTP24/020 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee meeting held on 15 August 2023 (Minute Numbers TTP24/009– TTP24/016), were approved as a correct record.

TTP24/021 **Calendar of Events**

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

- Classic Car Event (Saturday 23 September 2023)
The Chairman reported that the Classic Car event had been a remarkable success and very well attended all through the day.

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- Opening of Covid-19 Commemorative orchard (Tuesday 10 October 2023)
The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the Opening of the Covid-19 commemorative orchard had been a pleasant and very well attended event that included a good representation of the town.

She reported on the moving words of Reverend Cartlidge and the Town Mayor and that it had been lovely to see the Grounds Maintenance Contractor, Mick Plant, in attendance and for everyone to admire the quality of his restoration work on the bench.

The Chairman said she hoped people would take a moment to sit and reflect on this awful and most unusual time.

- Remembrance Commemorations (Saturday 11 & Sunday 12 November 2023)
The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that a meeting had been set to talk about the final arrangements for Remembrance and she hoped that everyone would be available on 11 and 12 November to attend the commemorations.

Councillor Davies confirmed that Remembrance Sunday would conclude outside St Michael's Church at the end of the Service as the parade would not be reassembling to proceed to Market Square.

- Christmas Lights Switch-On (Thursday 23 November 2023)
The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the Christmas Lights Switch-On was traditionally a great day in the town and the organisation of this year's event was well underway. The Marketing and Events Organiser was making good progress with the arrangements, securing the school choirs, the compere and Warwick's Funfair.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that a minimum of eight stewards (in addition to those who already support the event) were needed to help on the night as Stone Lions were only able to look after lost children. As steward support was critical to the event being possible a deadline date was set for volunteers to put their names forward. He said that on the day, the role would commence at 4.30pm for a briefing in the Council Chamber and the duties were usually finished by around 8pm.

- Texas Flag Raising (Friday 29 December 2023)
Councillor Davies informed the Sub-Committee that this was the small-scale commemoration where the Texas State Flag was raised 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.

Events to be agreed in 2024

- Town Council's 50th Anniversary on 1 April 2024

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Councillor Davies advised the Sub-Committee that this was a sweet and sour occasion as the Town Council existed to serve the local community but had lost valuable powers after the reorganisation of local Government.

Councillor Battrick put himself forward to be involved in the arrangements.

- St George's Day Re-enactment (Saturday 20 April 2024)
The Sub-Committee confirmed its wish for a St George's Day Re-enactment to be held in 2024 and suggested a booking was made with the knights.
- Floating Market (provisionally 25, 26, 27 May 2024)
Councillor Davies advised the Sub-Committee that he attended the Floating Market which was very good.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the organisers were very keen to come to Stone in 2024 but were unable to confirm availability just yet.

- 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings (Thursday 6 June 2024)
The setting up of a working group to consider the arrangements for marking the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings were listed separately on the agenda (Minute Number TTP24/022).
- Puppet Tree Jamboree (July 2024)
The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that Mr Leech of Peplum Puppets was keen to arrange a Puppet Tree Jamboree in 2024.

It was suggested the Jamboree did not take place on the same weekend as the Stone Rocks Festival at Christ Church Academy.

- Music Festival (July 2024)
The Sub-Committee agreed in principle to the Town Council arranging a Music Festival in 2024 and acknowledged that there was a lot to organise as the biggest and most expensive event of all.

The Town Clerk suggested that consideration be given to rebranding the Music Festival in line with that of the Coronation Event, rather than continuing with its usual format.

The Sub-Committee were aware that Stone Traders were considering a music festival next year and dates would need to be co-ordinated.

The Sub-Committee noted that the Food and Drink Festival would be taking place in Westbridge Park on the first weekend in July 2024.

- Florence Brass Band Concert & Burma Star Commemoration (August 2024)
The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that she hoped this event could take place again next year as it was a great concert and a special commemoration in

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Stone that attracted a mixture of age groups. She said the band were remarkable, and the cream teas very well received.

The Florence Brass Band Concert was agreed in principle to take place again in 2024. The suggestion was made that the Gurkha Signal Squadron on the camp be invited to attend.

- Any other suggested new events for 2024 and 2025

The Chairman invited the Sub-Committee to consider alternative events to Stone by the Sea. She said that while visiting BOD recently two ladies had been performing circus tricks and coaching children who were testing their skills. She observed how interactive the activities were and that children of all age groups were attracted to the circus tricks.

Other ideas suggested by the Sub-Committee were a dancing event, a beer festival (although not possible), a literary festival and firework display.

The Town Clerk raised the point that anything replacing Stone by the Sea would likely have a financial implication and this would need to be considered.

TTP24/022 D-Day 80

The Sub-Committee considered the membership of a working group to mark the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings on Thursday 6 June 2024.

Councillor Davies offered to put some thoughts for a commemoration together and said he would look at the names of those involved in the D-Day Landings (on the war memorial) and would make enquiries as to whether the guys on the camp were available.

The Chairman suggested displaying the pictures (previously displayed at the Queen's Platinum Jubilee) in the heritage centre.

TTP24/023 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 project was in progress (as things were changing all the time) and that she would like to have the Heritage Centre Manager involved from the outset.

Market Strategy Working Group

The Chairman reported that no meeting of the Market Strategy Working Group had taken place.

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TTP24/024 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.

TTP24/025 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential Minutes of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee, held on 15 August 2023 (Minute Numbers TTP24/009 and TTP24/016), be approved as a correct record.

Chairman

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Stone Town Council – Estates Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 17 October 2023

PRESENT: Councillor J. Powell in the Chair and
Councillors: A. Best, J. Battrick, J. Davies, L. Davies, I. Fordham, J. Hood,
R. Kenney, N. Powell and C. Thornicroft

Officers: L. Trigg and T. Williams

By Chairman's invitation: No Councillors

ABSENT: Councillors: P. Leason and A. Mottershead

EST24/015 Apologies

Councillor: P. Leason and A. Mottershead

EST24/016 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None received.

EST24/017 Representations from Members of the Public

None received.

EST24/018 Minutes of Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the Estates Sub-Committee meeting held on the 15 August 2023 (Minute Numbers EST24/008 – EST24/014, be approved as a correct record.

EST24/019 Frank Jordan Centre

The Sub-Committee considered an update on the Frank Jordan Centre.

The Town Clerk distributed some images of the Stonefield room and the Walton suite showing how they now look after improvement and redecoration prompted by the move of Stone Community Hub to the Christchurch Suite. The work had been undertaken by caretaker, David Littlehales, who has worked hard and done a very good job.

The Town Clerk said he was pleased to report that no hirers had been lost due to

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withdrawal from hire of the Christchurch Suite and new availability on the Walton Suite and Stonefield Room.

He said the Walton Suite was finished and already in use apart from the need to bring the kitchen into use and install LED lighting.

The Stonefield Room (which used to be the Hub's old food bank) also needed LED lighting but would soon be available for hire, enabling the Marketing and Events Co-ordinator to market the facilities.

A pulldown projector screen will be installed in the Stonefield Room which is ideal for meetings of up to eight people. The Town Clerk suggested that pictures of the Stonefield area or Stonefield Park be put up on the walls to remove their bareness.

EST24/020 Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED: 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.

EST24/021 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential minutes of the Estates Sub-Committee meeting held on the 15 August 2023 (Minute Numbers EST24/008, EST24/013 and EST24/014), be approved as a correct record.

EST24/022 Update on Stone Station

The Town Clerk provided an update on Stone Station in respect of roof repairs and extended use of the lease.

Chairman

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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

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Committee of the Council's current financial position compared with its budget for the year, and to recommend action in any areas of concern.

Background

2. The Council's budget was approved in February 2023. Good financial management requires the Council to:
 - a. Keep the amount of the budget that it requires under review,
 - b. Monitor spending and income against budget projections, and,
 - c. Take appropriate action to ensure that the Council's financial stability is maintained.
3. This one of a series of regular reports which are presented to the General Purposes Committee on a broadly quarterly basis. The reports consider the Council's financial position at the end of the most recent month available at the time the report is written. On this occasion, the report considers the position as at the end of September 2023.
4. The report will first look at any adjustments proposed to the budget for 2023-24. It will then highlight any areas where net spending differs from that planned in the budget and focus on the income received from the Council's major income generating activities.

Adjustments to 2022-23 Budget

5. The meeting of the Council on 6th June 2023 considered the final accounts for 2022-23 and approved a number of unspent budgets to be rolled over into the current year. These rollovers have now been added to the approved budget of the Council.
6. Appendix A sets out the agreed budget adjustments and the consequent changes to the current approved budget.

Comparison of Budget with Actual Spending and Income

7. Appendix B sets out a comparison of the budget to date with spending up to the end of June 2023. The budget to date has been estimated with reference to spending patterns in previous years and other available information, but is a fairly broad estimate with a significant margin for error in most areas of the budget. Nevertheless it is a good starting point for identification of potential problems.

8. Committee members should note that positive numbers in the table reflect expenditure or an adverse variance (overspend), whereas negative numbers represent income or a favourable variance (underspend).
9. Overall, at the end of September 2023, net spending was £388,947 compared with a budget up to that time of £413,174 – a net underspending to date of £24,207. Significant variations are identified below.
10. The only significant adverse variances are:
 - a. Accommodation (£1,120): This relates to the increased cost of the Council's 2022-23 office rental from Stafford Borough, which was not notified to the Council until after the year-end creditor had already been estimated and included in the accounts for 2022-23. On the basis of the charge for last year, this budget will need to be increased further when reviewed in early 2024.
 - b. Administration (£1,919): This budget is expected to overspend this year due to the spreading of the cost of the office IT refresh over four years via the rollover reserve. The current adverse variance is within the anticipated amount.
11. Significant favourable variances are:
 - a. Frank Jordan Centre (£9,945): This favourable variance is partly due to a large payment in advance by a Centre user and the quarterly billing for October to December 2023 being included within the figures, but also reflects increased usage.
 - b. Stone Station (2,754): This variance is largely due to September income being higher than expected.
 - c. Bus Shelters and Street Furniture (£1,065): This underspending is due to invoices for work done not yet being received.
 - d. Grounds Maintenance (£4,666): Similarly to Bus Shelters and Street Furniture above, this underspending is due to invoices for work done not yet being received.
 - e. Salaries and Employment Costs (£5,665): The April 2023 pay award has not yet been agreed, and so this budget is underspent as a result.
 - f. Interest (£1,949): The increased income is due to a higher level of interest rates than anticipated when the budget was prepared.
12. It can thus be seen at this stage that costs are generally under control, though actual net spending varies from the estimated approved budget to date in some areas.

Income from Major Income Generating Activities

13. Income from the Frank Jordan Centre, Stone Station and the Town Market together represents almost 10% of the Council's total income. Virtually all of the remaining income is fixed in advance of the year (Precept/Concurrent Functions Allowance), but this 10% can vary within the year in accordance with the Council's success with letting its community centres and market stalls.

14. With this in mind, Members need to closely monitor these income items to ensure that its budget remains in balance.
15. Attached at Appendix C are a set of graphs showing a comparison of income received to date with the level anticipated for each month. Whilst it must be remembered that the way the income has been profiled is still quite crude, the graphs are showing a position where income is a above target for the Frank Jordan Centre, Stone Station and the Town Market.

Recommendations

16. The Committee is recommended to:
 - a. Note the approved adjustments to the Council's budget set out at Appendix A.
 - b. Note the Council's performance against budget at the end of September 2023.
 - c. Consider any action it wishes to take in the light of the information within this report.

Stone Town Council

Budget Adjustments 2023-24

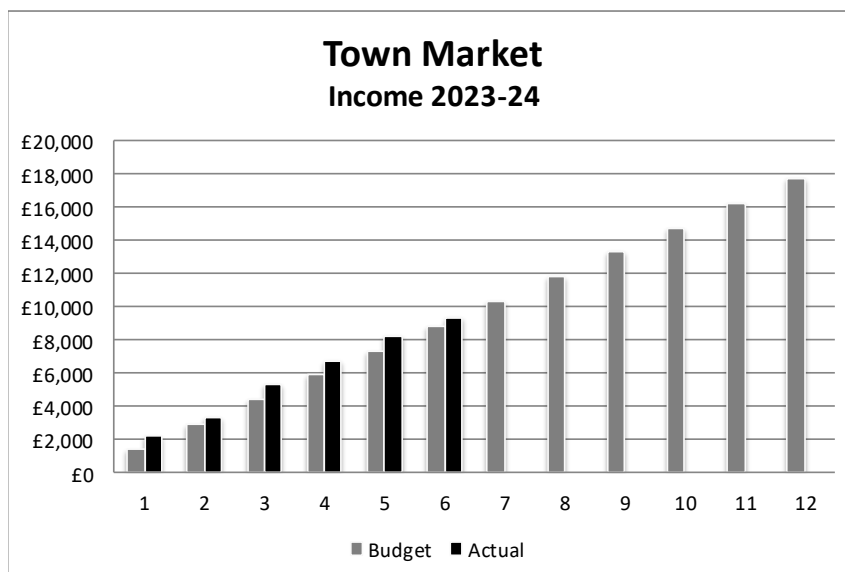
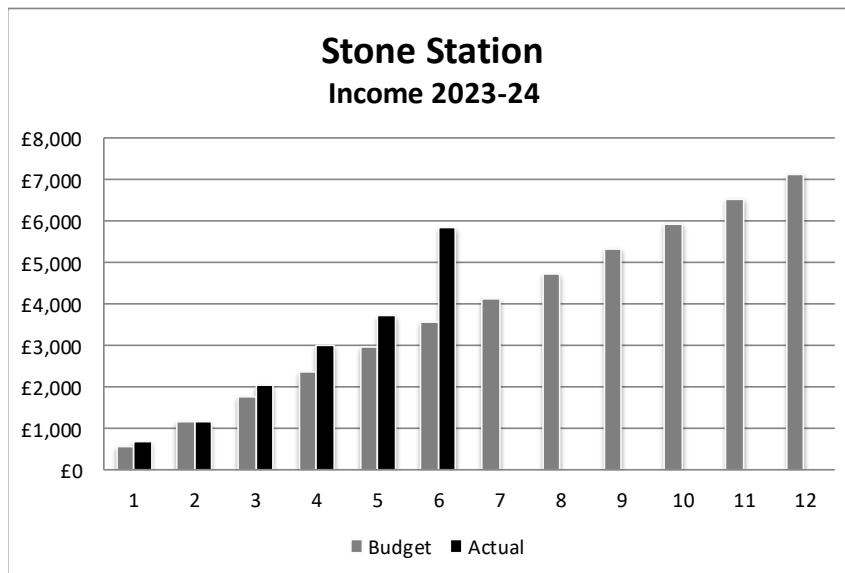
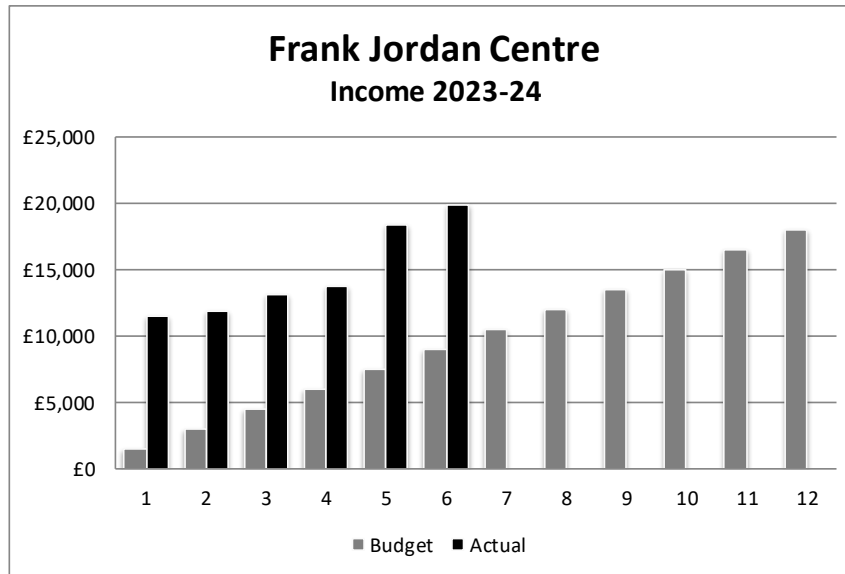
	Contribution to (from) Reserves £	Stone Station £	Grounds Mainten'ce £	Crown Meadow Imp'ments £	Env'mentl Initiatives £	Admin £	Stone Heritage Centre (Capital) £
Council 6th June 2023							
Rollover re Stone Station	-30,000	30,000					
Rollover re Grounds Maintenance	-2,600		2,600				
Rollover re Crown Meadow Improvements	-525			525			
Rollover re Environmental Initiatives	-2,750				2,750		
Rollover re Administration	4,000					-4,000	
Rollover re Stone Heritage Centre (Capital)	-273,689						273,689
TOTAL	-305,564	30,000	2,600	525	2,750	-4,000	273,689
Original Budget	-59,315	11,320	24,610	0	0	38,250	0
Current Budget	-364,879	41,320	27,210	525	2,750	34,250	273,689

Stone Town Council

Budget Monitoring Statement 2023-24

Revenue Account to End of Period 6 Sep-23

	Original Budget £	Current Budget £	Budget to Date £	Actual to Date £	Variance to Date £	Budget Remaining £
Major Income Generating Activities						
Frank Jordan Centre						
Income	-18,050	-18,050	-9,025	-19,822	-10,797	1,772
Expenditure	18,600	18,600	9,300	10,152	852	8,448
Net	550	550	275	-9,670	-9,945	10,220
Stone Station						
Income	-7,120	-7,120	-3,560	-5,864	-2,304	-1,256
Expenditure	18,440	48,440	9,220	8,770	-450	39,670
Net	11,320	41,320	5,660	2,906	-2,754	38,414
Town Market						
Income	-17,740	-17,740	-8,870	-9,328	-458	-8,412
Expenditure	11,110	11,110	5,555	5,828	273	5,282
Net	-6,630	-6,630	-3,315	-3,500	-185	-3,130
Other Activities						
Stone Heritage Centre	25,000	25,000	0	0	0	25,000
Bus Shelters & Street Furniture	3,960	3,960	1,980	915	-1,065	3,045
Street Lighting	960	960	0	0	0	960
Dog & Litter Bins	760	760	380	419	39	341
Joules Clock	0	0	0	0	0	0
Town Electricity Supply	790	790	395	326	-69	464
Building Maintenance	10,000	10,000	0	0	0	10,000
Grounds Maintenance	24,610	27,210	15,381	10,715	-4,666	16,495
Crown Meadow Improvements	0	525	525	475	-50	50
Allotments	230	230	-1,663	-1,018	645	1,248
Environmental Initiatives	0	2,750	0	0	0	2,750
Christmas Lights	21,660	21,660	8,660	8,220	-440	13,440
Tourism & Town Promotion	26,750	26,750	17,000	16,229	-771	10,521
Grants to Outside Bodies	4,000	4,000	2,000	1,970	-30	2,030
Salaries & Employment Costs	198,700	198,700	96,200	90,535	-5,665	108,165
Accommodation	5,470	5,470	300	1,420	1,120	4,050
Insurances	7,000	7,000	8,167	8,049	-118	-1,049
Administration	38,250	34,250	25,250	27,169	1,919	7,081
Audit & Legal Fees	1,550	1,550	-1,000	-67	933	1,617
Town Council Elections	30,000	30,000	0	0	0	30,000
Allowances - Mayor & Deputy Mayor	3,190	3,190	1,595	1,513	-82	1,677
Regalia & Presentations	230	230	115	72	-43	158
Civic Activities	2,000	2,000	1,600	2,089	489	-89
Remembrance Sunday & War Memorials	1,800	1,800	0	0	0	1,800
Miscellaneous	2,000	2,000	1,000	246	-754	1,754
Interest	-1,500	-1,500	-1,020	-2,969	-1,949	1,469
Neighbourhood Plan	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stone Heritage Centre (Capital)	0	273,689	233,689	232,903	-786	40,786
Inflation Contingency	48,880	48,880	0	0	0	48,880
Total	461,530	767,094	413,174	388,947	-24,227	378,147
Precept & Financing	402,215	402,215	201,108	201,088	-20	
Contribution from (to) Reserves	59,315	364,879	212,066	187,859	-24,207	



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Stone Town Council - Payments

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The table below lists payments made by the Council in the period identified, for the Committee's information.

The table includes payments by cheque, direct debit, PayPal, payment card, telephone banking and online banking. It excludes salary and related payments, payments from the Mayor's Charity, and transfers between the Council's bank accounts. All amounts exclude VAT.

Payment Date From : 01/09/2023

Payment Date To : 30/09/2023

<u>Payment Date</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Supplier</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount (£)</u>
01/09/2023	wp-INV03083172	Water Plus	Water Usage STN July/Aug 2023	101.99
01/09/2023	wp-INVO2472832	Water Plus	MR Allots 16/05/23 to 16/06/23	46.64
01/09/2023	14980	Cress Security	Intruder Alarm annual service / maint 01/9/23 to	105.80
04/09/2023		Stafford Borough Council	SBC Rates FJC Sep 2023	279.00
04/09/2023		Stafford Borough Council	SBC Rates STN Sep 2023	180.00
04/09/2023		Stafford Borough Council	SBC Rates Mkt Sq Sep 2023	21.00
05/09/2023	5434355	British Gas	Elec Supply Amphitheatre Jul/Aug 23	12.40
05/09/2023		Trudy Williams	Photo frames for Mayors Cadet Certificates	18.33
05/09/2023	SINV00612332	J G Fenn Ltd	2 x Black Ink Cartridges and stapler	281.71
05/09/2023	540411045647	Mr David Littlehales	Wood stain and varnish for Walton Suite refurb	117.70
05/09/2023	17082023	Mr David Littlehales	Architrave for Walton Suite refurb	16.42
05/09/2023	540410116791	Mr David Littlehales	Paint for Walton Suite refurb	43.77
05/09/2023	025493	R Mountfords	Paint and materials for Walton Suite refurb	50.96
06/09/2023	11256	CAM-TEC LTD	CCTV Maint Contract YE 19/09/24	385.00
06/09/2023	V02141955737	EE	EE Mobiles	13.72
06/09/2023	V02141955737	EE	EE Mobiles	13.73
08/09/2023	wp-INV02838866	Water Plus	MR 23/06/23 to 23/07/23	14.96
08/09/2023	74455	Robert Mincher	Pack of batteries	2.08

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Stone Town Council - Payments

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<u>Payment Date</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Supplier</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount (£)</u>
11/09/2023	5464972	British Gas	Elec Usage 30 High St Jul/Aug 23	23.02
11/09/2023	5465371	British Gas	Elec Usage 61 High St Jul/Aug 23	33.99
12/09/2023	1000112032	Staffordshire County Council	Pre Employment Medical PC	45.00
12/09/2023	4846	CommuniCorp	Local Councils Update Annual Sub Clerks and Councils	110.00
12/09/2023	121643	B Hygienic Ltd	FJC Hygiene Contract YE Aug 24 Disposal Units, Air	644.00
14/09/2023	98	MJ Plant	Removal of wind damaged tree adjacent to Angler's Car	990.00
14/09/2023	94	MJ Plant	Hub Move - removal and disposal of old plastic chairs, 2	120.00
14/09/2023	96	MJ Plant	Marquees set up July 2023	652.50
14/09/2023	92	MJ Plant	Crown Meadow annual grass cutting and removal	520.00
14/09/2023	90	MJ Plant	Aug 23 Grounds maint amphi, CM, MR Allots, Abbey St,	1,682.00
14/09/2023	97	MJ Plant	Marquees set up Aug 2023	1,075.00
14/09/2023	93	MJ Plant	Dig out shared drain with Dentists, unblock down pipe,	120.00
14/09/2023	280723	JB Window Cleaner	Window Cleaning July 2023	25.00
14/09/2023	91	MJ Plant	Hedge Cutting at MR Allot	105.00
14/09/2023	280723	JB Window Cleaner	Window Cleaning July 2023	65.00
14/09/2023	89	MJ Plant	July 23 Grounds Maint amphi, CM, MR Allot, Abbey St	1,682.00
14/09/2023	184912	Prism Solutions	Line Rental	53.90
14/09/2023	SI-26079	Signs 2000	Update Honours Board	30.00
14/09/2023	184912	Prism Solutions	Line Rental	52.90
15/09/2023	5103	Christmas Plus	Hire of Festive Display 2023/24	6,650.00
15/09/2023	47641	Panda Press (Stone) Ltd	Banners x 3 - Classic Car Event	171.00
15/09/2023	INV219025193	Zoom Video Comm Inc	ZOOM Subscription Sep/Oct 2023	25.98
15/09/2023	14678	All Print Equipment Ltd	Photocopier Usage - Aug 2023 adjustment for estimated	0.65
15/09/2023	7070293204	Stafford Borough Council	Temp Road Closure - Classic Car Event	127.00
18/09/2023	713412023408697	Pozitive Energy	Gas Usage STN Aug 2023	87.60

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Time: 14:23:00

Stone Town Council - Payments

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<u>Payment Date</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Supplier</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount (£)</u>
19/09/2023	713402023405134	Pozitive Energy	Gas Usage FJC Aug 2023	54.26
20/09/2023	7070293246	Stafford Borough Council	Qtr Charge for installn of bollards 010723 to 300923	457.97
20/09/2023	7070293243	Stafford Borough Council	Qtr Charge Bin Emptying Amphi Mon & Fri Jul-Sep 23	52.73
20/09/2023	7070293244	Stafford Borough Council	Qtr Charge Bin Emptying - 4 x Canal & 2 x W/Bridge	156.97
20/09/2023	CD-223857498	Culligan	Water Cooler Rental Sep 2023	19.05
20/09/2023	23287	West Midlands Employers	WMEmployers Corp Mship Bronze Service 23/24	500.00
20/09/2023	STO00067626	West Midlands Employers	WMJobs Advert Marketing & Events Organiser	440.00
21/09/2023	30463999242	Prism Solutions	Domain Registration stoneheritagecentre.org.uk	29.99
25/09/2023	183764	Prism Solutions	Prism IT Managed Service Oct 2023	951.13
25/09/2023	713412023408697	Pozitive Energy	Gas Usage STN Aug 2023	87.60
25/09/2023	743014903/001/09	Virgin Media Business	Broadband Usage Sep/Oct 2023	50.00
25/09/2023	wp-INVO3294347	Water Plus	Water Usage FJC Aug/Sep 23	81.10
25/09/2023	713382023408697	Pozitive Energy	Elec Usage FJC Aug 23	202.71
25/09/2023	025513	R Mountfords	Paint for refurb of Stonefield Room at FJC	55.18
26/09/2023	10031819	Chubb Fire	FJC Fire Exting Service 23/24	336.01
26/09/2023	10031779	Chubb Fire	STN Fire Exting Service 23/24	235.88
28/09/2023	5606882	British Gas	Elec Usage Heritage Centre Aug/Sep 23	138.34
28/09/2023	SOT1118355	Veolia ES (UK) Ltd	FJC Waste Collection Aug 2023	111.99
29/09/2023	141840478	The Arch Rent Collectors	STN Rent 29/09/23 to 24/12/23	1,184.25
				<u>21,941.91</u>

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group

Notes of the meeting held Virtually (on Zoom) on Wednesday 26 July 2023

PRESENT: Councillors: J. Davies (Stone Town Council & Hilderstone Parish Council) in the Chair and
Mr P. Jones (Eccleshall Parish Council), Mrs G. Wyatt (Sandon & Burston Parish Council), Mrs S. Haine (Stone Rural Parish Council) and Mrs S. Hughes (Yarnfield & Cold Meece Parish Council),

Also:

Mr L. Trigg (Clerk to Stone Town Council) from item L24/008

Mrs T. Williams (Assistant Clerk to Stone Town Council)

L24/001 Chairman's Welcome

The Chairman welcomed attendees to the meeting after a six-month break that accommodated the parish elections in May 2023.

L24/002 Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received from Councillors.

Apologies were received from:

Mr D. Croxford (Clerk to Salt & Enson Parish Council)

Ms G. Keiher-Knapper (Clerk to Fulford Parish Council)

Mrs S. Stokes (Clerk to Chebsey Parish Council)

Mr J. Fraser (Clerk to Yarnfield & Cold Meece Parish Council)

Ms K. Leger (Clerk to Barlaston Parish Council)

L24/003 Declarations of Interest

None received.

L24/004 Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

The Chairman, Councillor Jim Davies, was re-elected as Chairman to the Liaison Group for the term 2023-24.

Councillor Peter Jones was re-elected as Vice-Chairman for the term 2023-24.

L24/005 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 25 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

L24/006 Heritage Centre

The Chairman postponed this item until the Town Clerk had arrived at the

meeting.

L24/007 Meecebrook Garden Settlement

The Chairman invited the Liaison Group to share updates on the proposed Meecebrook Garden Settlement.

Mr Fraser (Clerk to Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council) had confirmed at the last meeting in January that the Parish Council had submitted a detailed consultation response to Stafford Borough. Chebsey and Eccleshall Parish Councils had also put forward their own consultation responses.

Representatives of Yarnfield & Cold Meece and Eccleshall Parish Councils confirmed that there were no updates on the Meecebrook Garden Settlement at present and no replies to the consultation responses had been received from the Borough Council.

L24/008 Parish Council Events – Insurance Cover for first aid provision

The Chairman advised the Liaison Group that this item had been requested by Parish Clerk, John Fraser of Yarnfield & Cold Meece Parish Council, but unexpectedly he had not been able to attend the meeting.

The Liaison Group continued with the discussion as it was a useful and relevant topic for everyone and Mr Fraser had provided an outline of the issues he had encountered in securing first aid insurance cover which the Chairman and Councillor Mrs Hughes shared with the Group.

Yarnfield & Cold Meece Parish Council had celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III in May 2023 with a Community Picnic and in view of the numbers attending (around 300) had decided that a first aider should be on hand.

Preparations for events in previous years had involved recruiting appropriately trained volunteers from the community but this year a question about first aid insurance was raised by one of the volunteers. They had initially believed the company who trained them (through Staffordshire Fire & Rescue) would include the insurance for the three years that their first aid certificate was valid, but this turned out not to be the case.

The Parish Council had approached Stone and Eccleshall First Responders for support, but they were not able to assist because their insurance, provided by the Ambulance Service, did not cover the event. The Parish Council's insurance provided by BHIB did not cover any volunteer first aiders either.

An approach was made to other local providers of first aid training and the only company that provided insurance cover as part of the package was St John Ambulance.

The costs of purchasing first aid services are proportionately expensive for a small village and before returning to speak to BHIB and NALC (to suggest this was a reasonable thing for parish council insurance to cover), Mr Fraser had wanted to know what arrangements other town and parish councils put in place for first aid provision.

Sandon & Burston – The annual fete is arranged by an organising committee that is independent of the Parish Council. Details on provision for first aid services were not known. The Parish Council itself does not organise events that are large enough to require first aid services.

Stone Rural - The Parish Council does not organise events that are large enough to require first aid services.

Eccleshall – The Parish Council organises large events and the arrangements for first aid provision are put in place by the Parish Clerk.

Stone Town – Volunteer arrangements are made in respect of Civic Sunday and Remembrance Sunday as Stone Community First Responders have in previous years agreed to be on standby in the town and representatives of St John Ambulance have attended the events as guests and brought their first aid bag with them.

First aid provision is not made for smaller events if the risk assessment indicates the risks are low or low attendances expected. The Police sometimes support events, and they are first aid trained.

For other larger public events first aid services are purchased and come with their own insurance cover. The cost of these for the duration of a five-to-six-hour event is around £150.

The Town Clerk advised the Liaison Group that first aid cover was not included in the Town Council's insurance policy.

In respect of stewards (not first aiders) volunteers were covered by the Town Council's insurance policy through completing a volunteer agreement, and Councillors and staff taking on the role of steward were covered by the insurance policy automatically. Some organisations such as Stone Lions volunteers had their own insurance cover.

The Liaison Group agreed that parish councils needed to be happy that public events were appropriately covered by first aid although getting cover at low cost could prove difficult. The costs of services provided by organisations such as St John Ambulance may have to be factored into the event or volunteers investigate purchasing their own personal indemnity insurance which the Parish Council could then reimburse.

The Liaison Group agreed that the need for first aid and the level of provision can be determined through risk assessment. First aid services might not be needed for smaller events or in some instances where the Police are in attendance. The normal everyday emergency services are also on hand through 999 to provide emergency first aid support.

L24/009 Heritage Centre

The Town Clerk advised the Liaison Group that the building contract was about to come to an end. The contract appeared to be on schedule and the work done to a high standard.

He said that he had advertised the new Heritage Centre Manager post and was hoping for a good response from job applicants.

The Chairman advised the Liaison Group that the Heritage Centre Steering Group was looking at what could be displayed in the Heritage Centre. The Group was considering stories from the wider surrounding community as well as from within the boundary of the town. For example, the Yarnfield camp had a huge impact on Stone during the war.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that there were two major display rooms, and the proposal was to open the Heritage Centre with the small room to begin with (hopefully later this year) which will concentrate on the story of Stone. The larger room will open around springtime in 2024 when the collection of artifacts will be ready for display. There are other rooms including a visitor information area and classroom area with interactive displays and activities for children. The Town Council is currently looking at sources of grant funding.

The Steering Group will be asking for suggestions on the displays to supplement the core history of Stone as there will be a permanent display and a rotating display. The Town Council has very kindly been offered a vintage fire engine, but the vehicle is too large to be accommodated in the building.

L24/010 Elections – 4 May 2023

The Chairman invited the Group to share lessons learned from the parish elections.

In Hilderstone five candidates stood for seven seats which resulted in huge savings compared to the costs of a contested election. One additional Councillor has so far been co-opted.

Eccleshall has two parish wards with one contested where eleven candidates stood for eight seats. Out of fifteen Councillors in total they were short of one Councillor.

In Stone Town a small number of Councillors changed with eighteen Councillors in total elected by poll.

The Liaison Group had noted that a contested election had taken place in Chebsey.

The Town Clerk advised the Liaison Group that the legal responsibility for paying election costs lay with the Borough Council and the Borough choose to bill the parishes.

Yarnfield & Cold Meece Parish Council didn't have an election in 2023 (which was an advantage for the finances) but did have a contested election when the Council was set up, costing over £4,000 paid by instalments of £1,000 a year.

The Group agreed that contested parish elections were good for democracy and ensured a turnover of people, although in some cases it was a relief not

to have the associated costs.

The Town Clerk said that one of the biggest issues with the cost of the elections was the Borough Council not giving advice on what the costs would be until January of the following year when the Town Council was well into the process of setting the budget for the new year. There have in the past been huge, unexpected increases with charges currently totalling over £30,000.

The Liaison Group agreed that Parish Councils needed to make sure they were not subsidising the Borough Council. The charges are considerable when a single parish ward in Stone can cost around £9,000 when the election is standing alone and not taking place alongside a Borough election (where costs can be shared).

L24/011 Coronation of King Charles III – 6 May 2023

The Chairman invited the Liaison Group to share information on their King Charles' Coronation celebrations in May 2023.

Eccleshall Parish Council had some good feedback on events they had organised which included the Picnic in the Park and High Street Festival. People appeared to enjoy the celebrations and had a good time.

L24/012 50th Anniversary of Town and Parish Councils

The Chairman invited parish representatives to share their plans for marking the 50th Anniversary of Town and Parish Councils following their creation by the Local Government Act 1972 which reformed local government in England and Wales on 1 April 1974.

In Stone town a working group had been set up to consider the best way of marking the milestone birthday of Stone Town Council. This may include looking back at the Town Council's achievements.

Sandon and Eccleshall representatives advised the Group that they hadn't yet discussed the anniversary and the Chairman suggested everyone keep in touch with good ideas for marking the occasion.

L24/013 Ongoing Items of Interest

The Chairman advised the Group that a set of guidance points/constitution for the Liaison Group would be circulated for consideration of updates at the next meeting.

a. Planning including Neighbourhood Plans

The Chairman invited the Liaison Group to share updates on planning matters and neighbourhood plans.

Yarnfield & Cold Meece Parish Council – Has reapplied for the public house the 'Labour in Vain' to be designated an Asset of Community Value and the application has been successful, after the initial refusal.

The brewery has since been granted planning permission for 3 x 3 bed houses to be built in the car park of the pub. This means that if the community need to buy the asset, it will include three plots with planning permissions for houses.

The Parish Council is concerned that the planning approval will affect the viability of the pub. The community has been granted 20 car parking spaces (including those needed by residents, pub staff and customers) but there is no disabled parking provision and there are fears about overspill onto Yarnfield Lane.

The pub had been designated an Asset of Community Value prior to planning permission being granted which was worrying news for other communities in the same position.

Hilderstone – The Roebuck was still operating with ownership seeming to be settled.

The Town Clerk advised the Liaison Group that there were five pieces of land (mostly open spaces left over from the development of housing estates) that had been put up for sale by auction (on 2 August 2023). However, three of the plots were protected with Local Green Infrastructure status in the Stone Neighbourhood Plan.

The Town Clerk has written to the auctioneers to inform them that the land will not achieve planning permission and asked that the sales particulars be updated to reflect this information.

b. HS2

The Chairman invited updates on HS2.

Councillor Mrs Hughes confirmed the Stone Railhead Crisis Group were still working hard with lots of contact with politicians. They were giving advice to people elsewhere in the region such as Cheshire where another infrastructure base was in the planning.

She said that although HS2 had supposedly stopped working they had not collected the road furniture left in the area. They have been asked to move numerous signs off Yarnfield Lane but have failed to do so.

The Chairman expressed concern about what was happening in Marston and Hopton where eyesores in the countryside had been left with no reassurance they were going to be restored.

The Group talked about an example where HS2 had not maintained property it had acquired (that was not going to be demolished) and would not let a prospective buyer purchase, which seemed disgraceful at a time of housing shortage. There doesn't seem to be an overall policy in respect of managing the properties purchased by HS2 which have been left to deteriorate.

c. Highways, Traffic and Parking

The Chairman invited updates on highways, traffic, and parking matters.

In Stone – It was good to see work underway on Walton roundabout although temporarily causing traffic congestion in the town.

In Eccleshall – Sunken drains and missing road surfaces are as big a problem as potholes.

In Hilderstone – A T-junction patched to a good standard about five months ago has now been completely resurfaced which is unfathomable.

In Sandon & Burston – The main concern is the A51 and speed of traffic and road signage. In seeking a resolution, County Councillor Parry advised at a recent parish meeting that he had commissioned a survey earlier in the year which logged the volume of traffic travelling through the village. Surprisingly the results had illustrated there wasn't an increase in the volume of traffic on the A51 since the last survey (five years ago) but it had only counted the number of vehicles and not type or size.

The Parish Council is now recording every incident on the road including the issues experienced in getting across the road from Burston to Sandon and ongoing concerns around the shop and the nursery. It has been looking at speed indicator devices (SID) but the County Council does not believe they will be effective.

The A51 has been resurfaced between Stone and Sandon with white lines painted on, but some central markings and hatchings are missing, presenting danger if used as an overtaking lane.

The narrow bridge and give way sign in Sandon has a tendency to get obscured by overgrown foliage which is the landowners responsibility to keep clear.

Eccleshall – The High Street has been resurfaced to a very poor standard of workmanship and the contract was given back to the same company to do it again.

The Liaison Group questioned whether Staffordshire County Council had a policy on quality control to make sure contractors were working to a minimum standard.

Stone Rural – The Kibblestone Road, Oulton, which is covered in potholes should be treated as a priority given the safety risks to cyclists who must cycle in the middle of the road to avoid falling off their bikes.

Yarnfield – There is a series of potholes in Yarnfield Lane, and people have sustained serious damage to their vehicles with ongoing

difficulties in obtaining reimbursement from the Council for the costs.

In Yarnfield some of the pavements are in very poor condition with many years of waiting for something to be done. The needs of the disabled and parents with prams have been overlooked although the County say the footpaths are within safety limits.

On the Meece Road there are numerous markings on the whole stretch of road, but no repairs are being followed up.

The Group suggested that money could be spent on HS2 but not on existing transport infrastructure.

The Group agreed that a highways representative be invited to attend the next meeting of the Liaison Group to share information on the following:

- The process for dealing with jobbing repairs from their initial report to the defect being actioned.
- The process for dealing with programmed/preventative work.
- The prioritisation process for jobbing repairs and programmed work.
- Quality control and the process for making sure work is undertaken to a specified standard by contractors.
- Whether there are standard specifications for resurfacing and other road works.
- Highways budgetary information.

d. Policing

The Chairman invited updates on Policing matters but there was nothing to report.

e. Leisure and Recreation

The Chairman invited updates on matters relating to leisure and recreation.

The Group noted that things are happening on Westbridge Park and looks forward to the redevelopment being completed (completion date not known).

The Town Council confirmed that it was consulted on the design and was relatively positive about the Borough Council's final proposals for the park.

Sandon – Councillor Mrs Wyatt (Chairman of Stone Community Hub) advised the Liaison Group (wishing to publicise more broadly), that the Community Hub supported surrounding villages with the food bank as well as the town itself.

Hilderstone – Has reported the shrinking of the soft surface material

in their play area to the Borough Council as maintenance was required.

Yarnfield has experienced the same problem which may be the nature of the material and be better used in one continuous sheet rather than small areas under individual items of play equipment. Feedback will be shared from the Borough Council on the recommendations when received.

f. Commercial and Retail Activity

The Chairman invited updates on matters relating to commercial and retail activity.

In Stone more shops appeared to have closed than opened but the arrival of Sanctuary in the town was good news. Shops incorporating leisure and recreational facilities/activities seemed to be the way forward and needed to be encouraged.

The last bank in Stone – Lloyds Bank – was scheduled to close in April 2024. There are plans to replace it with a Banking Hub and Lloyds has said it would delay its closure if there was any delay in setting up the hub by the Post Office. The Banking Hub will be owned by the Post Office with bank representatives in attendance from time to time.

It was not known which building the Hub was going to be sited in, although logically it would be the Lloyds Bank building.

In Eccleshall a new Italian restaurant had opened, and the old National Westminster Bank building (empty for 8 years) was going to be converted to a dentist practice.

g. Future Governance

The Chairman advised the Group that this item was waiting in abeyance for the day when governance or constitutional changes occurred. It also provided an opportunity to consider whether joint services were having an impact.

It was noted that Staffordshire Moorlands and High Peak District Councils were sharing services in the same manner as Stafford Borough Council and Cannock Chase Council.

The Group received the news that all Stafford Borough Council planning officer posts had now been filled.

L24/014 Joint Calendar of Events

The Chairman invited attendees to forward their events for inclusion in the joint calendar which currently included just Stone events.

Details for the Sandon Fete and Car Show would be added to the calendar in due course.

The Eccleshall Show will take place on Saturday 2 September 2023.

The Group commented that technology for event management and the making of payments was getting more complex.

L24/015 Date of Next Meeting

The Liaison Group agreed that the next meeting would be held face to face in Stone on Wednesday 1 November 2023 at 3.00pm.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance before closing the meeting.