

# Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 6 February 2024

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

Officers: L. Trigg, R. Edwards and T. Williams

**ABSENT:** Councillors: A. Burgess, L. Davies, K. Dawson, B. Kenney, J. Metters and J. Powell

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### **GP24/151 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors: L. Davies, K. Dawson, B. Kenney,  
J. Metters and J. Powell.

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

### **GP24/152 Declarations of Interest and Declarations under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992**

Councillor A. Best declared a personal interest in agenda item 11e (Minute  
Reference: GP24/161d).

Councillor J. Hood declared a personal interest in agenda item 11a (Minute  
Reference: GP24/161a).

### **GP24/153 Requests for Dispensations**

None

### **GP24/154 To receive the report of the County Councillors**

#### **County Councillor Jill Hood**

The Chairman invited Councillor Hood to address the Committee.

#### Tree Planting

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that she had persuaded Persimmon to  
plant the missing trees on land near to their development off the Eccleshall Road  
and to lay a gravel path where the natural path had been made by residents. At  
present there are steps with no disabled access.

Councillor Hood said she was in talks with the Highways Department about the  
Crossings and officers were looking at funding opportunities through a Section 106  
agreement.

**County Councillor I. Parry**

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

**GP24/155 To receive the report of Borough Councillors**

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee.

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that Stafford Borough Council had approved its budget for 2024-25. He said that it was a positive budget providing the opportunity for improved services for residents and investment in the regeneration of town centres.

Councillor Hood advised the Sub-Committee that she and the Leader of the Council had visited a Stafford Borough Council scheme that would house six rough sleepers/homeless persons, offering them safety, security and multi-agency services including alcohol and substance addiction. It was hoped the scheme would, in the longer term, support their access into work and permanent accommodation.

She said she was proud of the officers who were giving people the opportunity to get off the streets.

**GP24/156 Representations from Members of the Public**

None

**GP24/157 Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 5 December 2023 (Minute Numbers GP24/135 – GP24/150), be approved as a correct record.

**GP24/158 Minutes of Sub-Committees**

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 16 January 2023 (Minute Numbers TTP24/026 – TTP24/036), that the draft minutes be noted, and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers TTP24/031 and TTP24/032 be adopted.

The recommendation of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number TTP24/033 was considered as part of Minute Number GP24/159 (agenda item 9).

- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 16 January 2024 (Minute Numbers ENV24/030 – ENV24/036), that the draft minutes be noted.

The recommendation of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number ENV24/035 was considered as part of Minute Number GP24/159 (agenda item 9).

- c) Estates Sub-Committee held on 16 January 2024 (Minute Numbers EST24/023 – EST24/030), that the draft minutes be noted.

The recommendation of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number EST24/027 was considered as part of Minute Number GP24/159 (agenda item 9).

**GP24/159 General Purposes Committee – Budget 2024-25 to 2026-27**

The Committee received the report of the Town Clerk\* (which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting) examining the 2024-25 to 2026-27 budget requirements for the specific services managed directly by the General Purposes Committee, including those which had previously been the responsibility of the former Management Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee recommends for consideration later in the meeting alongside the proposals from Sub-Committees, the adoption of the standstill Committee budget for 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27, as detailed in the Clerk's report, with the following amendments:

- a. The salaries budget should be increased by £900 in the current year and £3,600 in each subsequent year from 2024-25 to provide for the costs agreed in confidential minute GP24/150.
- b. A provision of £10,000 should be made in 2024-25 for improvements to the Market Square.
- c. The inflation provision should be reduced by £16,000 in the current year.

***At this point in the meeting the Chairman suggested entering a private session to consider the Confidential items on the agenda, before returning to open session for consideration of item 10 (Minute Number GP24/163) and other items listed, as the outcome of these confidential discussions may impact on the Council's budget decisions.***

**GP24/160 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 (Minutes GP24/161 and GP24/162).

**GP24/161 Confidential Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 5 December 2023, Minute Numbers GP24/135 and GP24/150 be approved.

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\* 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.

**GP24/162 Confidential Minutes and recommendations of the undermentioned Sub-Committee:**

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee Meeting held on 16 January 2024, Minute Numbers: TTP24/026 and TTP24/036.
  - i. The Committee noted the Confidential Sub-Committee minutes.
  - ii. The Committee considered the provision of Christmas Trees as set out in Confidential Minute TTP24/036.

Committee Members were referred to the Confidential report of the Town Clerk circulated to all Councillors with the agenda for the Sub-Committee meeting on 16 January 2024.

RESOLVED: That the proposal from the Council's Grounds Maintenance Contractor for the installation of Christmas trees for the 2024 and subsequent festive seasons be agreed.

***Upon completion of these Confidential items the Committee returned to open session and the press and public were invited to return.***

**GP24/163 Budget 2024-25 to 2026-27 for recommendation to the Council**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk\* (which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting) alongside the budget proposals from Sub-Committees and from this Committee.

RESOLVED: To recommend to the Council that:

1. The Standstill Budget included in the Clerk's report to this meeting should be adopted with the following amendments:
  - a. Environment:
    - i. A provision of £3,350 in 2024-25 for work at the Anglers' Car Park, plus £500 per annum subsequently for ongoing maintenance.
    - ii. The inclusion of £2,800 in 2024-25 for works on Scrape 2, with a provision of £500 per annum in subsequent years for the ongoing maintenance of Scrape 1 and Scrape 2.
    - iii. An increase in Allotment fees of 10% for 2024-25, which should produce additional income of £100 per annum.
  - b. Tourism and Town Promotion:
    - i. A one-off increase of £5,000 in the events budget for 2024-25 to provide for a late summer music event.
  - c. General Purposes:

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- i. The salaries budget should be increased by £900 in the current year and £3,600 in each subsequent year from 2024-25 to provide for the costs agreed in confidential minute GP24/150.
  - ii. A provision of £10,000 should be made in 2024-25 for improvements to the Market Square.
  - iii. The inflation provision should be reduced by £16,000 in the current year.
- 2. As a consequence of the above, the 2024-25 Council Tax for this Council's purposes should be £61.00 for a Band D property, an increase for the year of £2.85, with indicative Council Tax levels of £63.99 and £67.13 for the following two years. This would result in a precept on Stafford Borough Council for 2024-25 of £393,644. Local Council Tax Support Grant of £23,740 would be added to this.

#### **GP24/164 Grants to Local Organisations**

The Committee considered requests for grant aid from local organisations. Before consideration, the Town Clerk reminded the Committee that £1,500 remained within the Grants budget.

The following organisations met the eligibility criteria within the Council's grants policy:

- a. **Organisation: 1<sup>st</sup> Oulton Scout Group**  
**Amount Requested: £300**  
**Reason:** To purchase an outdoor cooking shelter, a stainless-steel table and a couple of electric cookers to enable cooking on camp.

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £300 to 1<sup>st</sup> Oulton Scout Group.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that Alleyne's Academy did not meet the Council's approved grants criteria and was moved to the section below (item c).

- b. **Organisation: Stone Lions Club**  
**Amount Requested: £500**  
**Reason:** Prostate screening

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £500 to Stone Lions Club

The following organisations did not meet the eligibility criteria within the Council's grants policy for the reasons stated, but a proposer and seconder came forward in each case to instigate a discussion about making an award of a grant.

- c. **Organisation: Alleyne's Academy**  
**Amount Requested: £390**  
**Reason:** To purchase a gazebo for the girls' go-kart team.  
**Ineligible due to:**
  - i. Turnover is over £100,000

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- ii. Predominantly funded from taxation

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £390 to Alleyne's Academy.

d. **Organisation: Christ Church First School**

**Amount Requested:** £240

**Reason:** To purchase portable halogen hobs for an extra-curricular cookery club

**Ineligible due to:**

- i. Turnover is over £100,000
- ii. Predominantly funded from taxation

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £240 to Christ Church First School.

The following organisation did not meet the eligibility criteria within the Council's grants policy for the reasons stated, but no proposer or seconder came forward to instigate a discussion about making an award of a grant. The application was therefore not considered due to its ineligibility.

e. **Organisation: De Caversmill Theatre Company**

**Amount Requested:** £500

**Reason:** To support the costs involved in entering the local 'One Act Play Festival' which gives cast members the opportunity to experience Competition Acting.

**Ineligible due to:**

- i. Level of reserves
- ii. Not Stone based or predominantly benefiting Stone residents.

**GP24/165 Review of Standing Orders**

The Committee undertook to review the Council's Standing Orders\* which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting. The document had been reviewed by the Town Clerk, who had not proposed any changes or revisions to its content.

RESOLVED: To defer consideration of the revised Standing Orders until the next meeting of the Committee in accordance with normal practice.

**GP24/166 Review of Financial Regulations**

The Committee undertook to review the Council's Financial Regulations\* which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting. The document had been reviewed by the Town Clerk, who had not proposed any changes or revisions to its content.

RESOLVED: To defer consideration of the revised Financial Regulations until the next meeting of the Committee in accordance with normal practice.

**GP24/167 Stone Heritage Centre - Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk which had been attached to the agenda for the meeting.

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The Town Clerk advised the Committee that following approval of the Rural England Prosperity Fund Grant in December 2023 the award (totalling £40,000) had been paid into the Council's bank account giving the Council the means to fit out the Heritage Centre to a higher standard than the original budget would have provided.

There were a number of undertakings requiring that: the award is spent by the end of the year, at least 500 visitors attend the centre by 31 December 2024, a plaque is installed in recognition of the award and the budget originally earmarked for the project is used in addition to the grant.

RESOLVED: That the Council accepts the Rural England Prosperity Fund award (to be added to this year's budget with any unspent value rolled over to the new year) and authorises the Town Clerk to place orders/pay invoices in respect of the grant funded purchases for the Heritage Centre.

**GP24/168 Town Council Payments**

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

**GP24/169 Update from Working Groups:**

**Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group**

Councillor Kenney advised the Committee that the Group had met (on 5 February 2024) to discuss the fitting for the Heritage Centre. He said the meeting had given an exciting insight into the history and heritage held in Stone. He said the people supporting the work of the steering group were extremely knowledgeable and will add much value to the development of the Heritage Centre.

**Engagement with Young People**

Councillor Dawson was not available to provide a report.

**50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Stone Town Council**

Councillor Davies informed the Committee that the marking of the Town Council's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary would align nicely with developments at the Heritage Centre.

**GP24/170 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 would be arranged soon.

**Stone ATC**

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that a welfare meeting of Stone ATC was taking place this evening.

**Age Concern Stone & District**

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

**Stafford & Stone Access Group**

Councillor Kelt informed the Committee that a recent meeting had taken place and was attended by County Highways officers. The next meeting will take place on 4 March 2024.

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**Stone Common Plot Trustees**

Councillor Townsend advised the Committee that the next meeting would be held on 22 February 2024.

**Stone Community Hub Liaison Group**

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

**SPCA Executive Committee**

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

**Stone Traders Group Directors' Meeting**

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that she had attended a very positive meeting where Mr Stant, the current Chairman, was to be put forward to stand again.

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that the group currently had 42 members with new members coming on board. The Traders Group had discussed extending the membership to businesses beyond the High Street but decided not to.

The Group had expressed its disappointment that the new no entry sign at the top of the High Street was not deterring traffic from entering. Councillor Hood said that a highways officer had made it very clear that the rules which restricted access included Saturdays and Sundays.

The Group had asked for the Town Council's diary of events which she anticipated will be available at the beginning of March 2024.

**CHAIRMAN**