

Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 16 January 2024

PRESENT: Councillor R. Townsend in the Chair and
Councillors: J. Battrick, J. Davies, T. Kelt, B. Kenney, R. Kenney and J. Metters

Officers: L. Trigg and T. Williams

By Chairman's Invitation: I. Fordham

ABSENT: Councillors: A. Burgess, K. Dawson, J. Powell and N. Powell

ENV24/030 Apologies

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

ENV24/031 Declarations of Interest, Declarations under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and Requests for Dispensations

None received.

ENV24/032 Representations from Members of the Public

None

ENV24/033 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on the 24 October 2023 (Minute Numbers ENV24/021 – ENV24/029), were approved as a correct record.

ENV24/034 Environmental Sub-Committee Works Update

The Chairman drew the Sub-Committees attention to the Works Update (which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting) and provided an update on the following item:

Willow Removal

A huge number of Willow saplings have been removed from Scrape One by the grounds maintenance contractor, with help from the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust volunteer team.

The Willows have been replanted in a bogland area further along the river Trent.

ENV24/035 Budget 2024-25 – 2026-27

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Town Clerk* (issued with the agenda for the meeting) which considered the level of budget that the Sub-Committee may wish to recommend to the General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 6 February 2024 for the services under its control.

The Sub-Committee reviewed the standstill budget (initially considered by the General Purposes Committee on 5 December 2023) and the amounts included for each service. It also considered other areas of growth or savings to be taken into account when setting the budget for 2024-25 and future years.

The Sub-Committee considered whether it wished to recommend to the General Purposes Committee additional sums for inclusion in the budget.

The Chairman referred the Sub-Committee to his written report* (circulated to Members ahead of the meeting) which included several detailed proposals to address the following areas:

Anglers' Car Park – The condition of this well-used car park is poor and carries safety concerns for its users and their motor vehicles. Restoration of broken and collapsed fencing, resurfacing of the car park and repairs to the embankment on the amphitheatre side (which is encroaching onto to the car park) are needed along with the slight widening of the carpark entrance (achievable by moving the fence line) to make its shape rectangular and its access easier to use.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that a quotation of £2,860 has been received for the whole works and a budget of £3,100 would allow some adjustment on the increasing cost of materials. Regular maintenance would thereafter be needed from 2025-26 and onwards.

Scrape Two – Willow saplings are overwhelming the scrape and require removal to prevent loss of function, purpose, biodiversity and climate advantage. A restoration job is needed followed by regular maintenance from 2025-26 to keep it in good condition.

The Chairman suggested that £2,800 would make possible a major excavation job (as a one-off cost) with ongoing maintenance of £500 per annum for 2025-26 and 2026-27. He said the work was supported by the Biodiversity & Ecology Officer at Stafford Borough Council.

The Sub-Committee expressed the view that Crown Meadow should be promoted through digital technology such as a Town Council's Facebook page. The onsite signage is poor and the information boards old and tired.

Allotments – The cost of holding an allotment should increase by 10% this year rather than the standard 5% per annum to bring them in line with other allotment providers and to reflect their value in terms of what it means to be an allotment holder. The additional income would also generate more funds for ongoing maintenance and improvements.

Environmental Initiatives – The Chairman confirmed that an unspent sum of £1,190 (after spending on a hedge and an energy audit during the current year) will be carried forward from 2023-24 to 2024-25 and proposed that a further £2,000 be added to this sum on the basis that an environmental initiative could arise that the Council may wish to address in the coming year.

The Sub-Committee supported all budget proposals and their recommendation to the General Purposes Committee.

RECOMMENDED: That the budget figures included in the Clerks Report for the years 2024-25 and 2025-26 are accepted by the General Purposes Committee with the following additional budgetary provision:

- Restoration of the Anglers' Carpark (to the standards set out in the Chairman's report) with a budget of £3,100, an additional budget of £250 for proposed signage to deter long term parking, and ongoing maintenance costs of £500 to be included for 2025-26 and 2026-27.
- Restoration of Scrape Two (as set out in the Chairman's report) with a budget of £2,800 and annual maintenance of £500 per annum for 2025-26 and 2026-27.
- An allotment annual price increase of 10%.
- An Environment Initiatives budget of £2,000 to add to the carried forward sum of £1,190.

ENV24/036 Reports of Working Groups

Environmental Working Group

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

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the Environmental Working Group had not met but a meeting had been scheduled to take place in two weeks' time.

Chairman