

Stone Town Council

Minutes of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 13 February 2024

PRESENT: Councillor J. Davies in the Chair and
Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Burgess, L. Davies, J. Hood, T. Kelt, R. Kenney,
J. Metters and C. Thornicroft

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

ABSENT: Councillors: A. Best, K. Dawson, I. Fordham, B. Kenney, P. Leason,
A. Mottershead, J. Powell, N. Powell and R. Townsend

Prayers

Before the meeting began Reverend Jim Cartlidge led prayers.

C24/079 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: A. Best, K. Dawson, I. Fordham,
B. Kenney, P. Leason, A. Mottershead, J. Powell and R. Townsend

C24/080 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None received.

C24/081 Representations from Members of the Public

None

C24/082 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held on 5
December 2023 (Minute Numbers C24/072 – C24/078), be approved as a
correct record.

* 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.

C24/083 Committee Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) The draft minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 5 December 2023 (Minute Numbers GP24/135 – GP24/150), were noted.
- b) The draft minutes of the Planning Consultative Committee meeting held on 5 December 2023 (Minute Numbers PC24/043 – PC24/048), were noted.
- c) The draft minutes of the Planning Consultative Committee meeting held on 16 January 2024 (Minute Numbers PC24/049 – PC24/054), were noted.
- d) General Purposes Committee meeting held on 6 February 2024 (Minute Numbers GP24/151 – GP24/170), were noted. The recommendations included in minute GP24/163 were to be considered as part of agenda item 6 (Minute Number C24/084).

C24/084 To consider the Council's Budget for 2024-25 to 2026-27 and to set the Precept and Council Tax for the Year

The Town Council considered the Town Clerk's budget report*, which reflected the recommendations of the General Purposes Committee on 6 February 2024.

The Town Council considered a Proposal* on the 'Revenue Budget 2024-25 to 2026-27' including the budget, precept and Council Tax for 2024-25, indicative budgets for 2024-25 and 2026-27, and recommendation for the wording of the Council Tax leaflet.

RESOLVED:

That in respect of the Town Council's budget for 2024-25 to 2026-27:

1. The Budget recommended by the General Purposes Committee on 6th February 2024, as included in the draft minutes at Council agenda item 5(d) and set out in the Clerk's report to this meeting, is agreed.
2. 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 £393,644.59. Local Council Tax Support Grant of £23,739.50 would be added to this.

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3. The wording for the 2024-25 Council Tax leaflet should be:

“Stone Town Council provides services for the people and town of Stone.

These services include the provision of community facilities, such as the Frank Jordan and Stone Station community centres, allotment sites at Newcastle Road and Mount Road, and the Crown Meadow Nature Reserve and amphitheatre.

The 2024-25 budget includes additional funding to provide further improvements at Crown Meadow, support for a late summer music event which would also provide an opportunity to celebrate any local Olympic successes, and funds to improve the Market Square. This is in addition to the opening of a new Heritage Centre within the extensive redevelopment at Crown Wharf.

Investing in and working to promote a vibrant town and encourage visitors is a key Town Council priority. In order to support this, the Council organises regular events such as the Town Market and monthly Craft Market together with town centre events such as the Puppet Festival, the Classic Car event and the St Georges Day celebration. Christmas lights are provided in the High Street and at Walton, with the Council’s annual switch-on event being one of highlights of the town year. The High Street environment is enhanced by the Council’s provision of hanging baskets and bunting along the High Street, and recently refurbished noticeboards and fingerposts throughout the town.

The Council provides bus shelters, benches and dog bins throughout the area and takes responsibility for the upkeep of many local amenities and planted areas. It also provides grants and other support to help charitable and community organisations such as the Stone Community Hub, supports various festivals, and Council staff supply regular support and advice to local residents.

By considering the impact of every planning application, the Council seeks to develop and conserve the town, and its approved Neighbourhood Plan helps the Council to shape and protect the future of Stone.

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At its monthly meetings the Council welcomes questions from the public and sets aside time to listen and respond. Assistance with public questions will gladly be given by the Council's staff."

4. The Clerk is authorised to seek tenders/quotations, place orders and make payments in accordance with this budget, the Council's policies, and Financial Regulations.

C24/085 **Local Government Transparency Code 2015**
Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

The information for Quarter ending 31 December 2024 was noted.

C24/086 **Six Month Attendance Rule**

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

The report considered the waiver of the six-month Councillor attendance rule as defined by Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 to prevent the automatic disqualification of Councillor Jonathan Powell upon failing to attend any meeting of the Council for a consecutive 6-month period, due to a temporary work secondment outside the area.

The Town Council agreed to approve Councillor Powell's absence from meetings from January to June 2024, and noted that the effective date for disqualification for non-attendance of meetings would change from 4 June 2024 to 4 December 2024.

RESOLVED: That the Council agrees to waive the requirements of Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of Councillor Jonathan Powell, for the requested period of January to June 2024.

C24/087 **Civic Announcements**

The Civic Announcements, which had been previously circulated, were noted.

The Town Mayor drew the Council's attention to his upcoming engagements and in particular his Charity Quiz Night on Friday 8 March 2024 which should be a good evening as Neil Norman of Age Concern Stone & District will be taking on the role of Quizmaster.

The Town Mayor asked for Town Councillors' support by attending the fundraising evening.

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C24/088 Town Mayor's and Deputy Town Mayor's Reports of Engagements

The Town Mayor's and Deputy Town Mayor's reports of engagements, which had been previously circulated, were noted.

The Town Mayor informed the Council of his engagement highlights which included a visit to St Mary's Home on Christmas morning and the Induction of Reverend Paul Kingman as the Rural Dean (on 21 January 2024). The Bishop of Stafford was in attendance and expressed his pleasure that the town was represented on the occasion.

The Town Mayor advised the Council that just before Christmas he had received a surprise invitation to participate in a Teams meeting with Bagnacavallo and its twin towns in Europe who sent their best wishes. He had subsequently been in contact with Gabriella Foschini, Chairman of the 'Amici di Nereshaim' (Bagnacavallo Twinning Committee), who was looking forward to the resumption of active relations between Stone and Bagnacavallo.

The meeting was suspended and then reconvened after the Planning Consultative Committee meetings had taken place.

C24/089 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.

C24/090 Confidential Minutes

- a) The confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee held on 5 December 2023, Minute Numbers GP24/135 and GP24/150 were noted.
- b) The Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee held on 6 February 2024, Minute Numbers GP24/151, GP24/161 and GP24/162 were noted.

TOWN MAYOR

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