

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 5 March 2024

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

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

ABSENT: Councillors: A. Burgess, A. Mottershead, J. Powell, N. Powell and R. Townsend

GP24/171 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: A. Mottershead, J. Powell, N. Powell 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.

GP24/172 Declarations of Interest

None

GP24/173 Requests for Dispensations

None

GP24/174 To receive the report of the County Councillors

County Councillor Jill Hood

The Chairman invited Councillor Hood to address the Committee.

Pingle Lane

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that she had reached the final stages in her investigations to establish who owns Pingle Lane and the outcome is that there is no registered owner. She said that ancient law dictated that each householder living on, and whose home was accessed from Pingle Lane, is responsible for the shared costs.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP24/175 To receive the report of Borough Councillors

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee.

* 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.

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that Stafford Borough Council had approved its Council Tax rise which involved a 2.99% increase.

GP24/176 Representations from Members of the Public

None

GP24/177 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 6 February 2024 (Minute Numbers GP24/151 – GP24/170), be approved as a correct record.

GP24/178 Minutes of Sub-Committees

There were no sub-committee minutes.

GP24/179 Review of Standing Orders

The Committee undertook to review the Council's Standing Orders* which had been presented at the last meeting of the Committee and circulated electronically with the agenda for this meeting. The document had been reviewed by the Town Clerk who did not propose any changes.

RESOLVED: That no changes were required to the Town Council's Standing Orders.

GP24/180 Review of Financial Regulations

The Committee undertook to review the Council's Financial Regulations* which had been presented at the last meeting of the Committee and circulated electronically with the agenda for this meeting. The document had been reviewed by the Town Clerk who did not propose any changes.

RESOLVED: That no changes were required to the Town Council's Financial Regulations.

GP24/181 Annual Review of Risk Management

The Committee received the report* of the Town Clerk on the Annual Review of Risk Management. The report had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the Council was required to consider risks on an annual basis and the report had been updated to take account of the Heritage Centre and a few other smaller details.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Review of Risk Management be accepted by the Town Council.

GP24/182 Town Council Payments

RESOLVED: To note the list* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 to 31 January 2024.

* 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.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the Town Council supported a number of lighting pillars in the town and the annual costs of maintaining them had been included in the payments list.

GP24/183 Update from Working Groups:

Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group

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

Engagement with Young People

Councillor Dawson advised the Committee that she had nothing to report on this occasion.

50th Anniversary of Stone Town Council

Councillor Davies informed the Committee that his was looking to co-ordinate the marking of the Town Council's 50th Anniversary with the opening of the Heritage Centre.

GP24/184 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 no meeting had taken place since the welfare meeting of Stone ATC on 6 February 2024.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that a meeting was scheduled on Friday 8 March 2024.

Stafford & Stone Access Group

Councillor Kelt informed the Committee that a meeting had taken place on 26 February 2024 which was attended by representatives from Stafford Gatehouse Theatre. He said there were some issues with the seating arrangements in the little theatre making access difficult for less able people (for various reasons) and there were health and safety concerns. Different options were considered but changes were unlikely as the seating was newly installed.

The group was still looking at the Best Toilet Awards in the Borough.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that a recent meeting had taken place but she was unable to attend.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that the Liaison Group were considering a suitable date for a meeting.

SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that he was not aware that any recent meeting had taken place.

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Stone Traders Group Directors' Meeting

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

West Midlands Railway and other rail matters

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that this was a new item on the agenda to enable the reporting to the Council of important issues raised by regular railway and stakeholder meetings.

Councillor Kelt reported on a meeting that has taken place in February 2024 between West Midlands Trains/London Northwestern Railway and the stakeholders.

He said that attendees had considered how the new timetable scheduling introduced in December 2023 was performing. The main concerns expressed were that passengers to Birmingham must now change at Stafford to the Cross-Country Service. The delay that used to exist when it was just West Midlands Trains has been reduced but in one direction the six-minute change over across the footbridge could become problematic. When queried the train operating company were unwilling to discuss the issue because they had discussed it many times before and nothing had changed.

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that other service improvements were in the pipeline but there was no date given or assurances they would happen. This included reopening stations at Barlaston, Wedgwood and Trentham which could bring about another look at direct journeys to Birmingham because there will be more interest from members of the public wanting to take trains from these stations.

Councillor Kelt informed the Committee that the next meeting would be held on 14 May 2024, and that a Stone Station Open Day would be taking place on 13 March 2024 where everyone was welcome to attend.

GP24/185 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.

GP24/186 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 6 February 2024, Minute Numbers GP24/151, GP24/161 and GP24/162 be approved.

CHAIRMAN