

Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 19 March 2024

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

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

By Chairman's Invitation: J. Hood

ABSENT: Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Burgess, K. Dawson, B. Kenney, R. Kenney, J. Powell
and N. Powell

ENV24/037 Apologies

Councillors: J. Battrick, K. Dawson, B. Kenney, R. Kenney, J. Powell and N. Powell

ENV24/038 Declarations of Interest

None received.

ENV24/039 Request for Dispensations

None received.

ENV24/040 Representations from Members of the Public

None

ENV24/041 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on 16 January 2024 (Minute Numbers ENV24/030 – ENV24/036), were approved as a correct record.

ENV24/042 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. He provided an update on the following items:

Meeting with Grounds Maintenance Contractor

A meeting took place in March between the Grounds Maintenance Contractor, Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk.

The Grounds Maintenance Contractor has been seriously hampered by the wet weather and poor ground conditions but was aware of the jobs the Town Council were requiring.

Hedgerow

The ground was currently too wet to commence planting of the new hedgerow.

Climate

Councillor Hood drew attention to the effects of recent flooding and ground saturation on Crown Meadow, in particular that the pathway crossing the field has frequently been underwater. The Chairman added that the submerged pathway was causing walkers to circumnavigate the flooding which is causing damage and mud.

The Sub-Committee expressed concern about the effects of the growing wet weather conditions on Crown Meadow and the need to consider how to manage increasingly saturated ground and its effects in the future. It was acknowledged that thought needed to be given to developing a contingency plan for the effects of flooding.

Drug Paraphernalia

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Sub-Committee about her concerning find of drug paraphernalia when accompanying a group of school children to Crown Meadow to litter pick this week. The debris was located around the amphitheatre bench which was noted.

ENV24/043 Crown Meadow Update

The Chairman provided an update on Crown Meadow:

Crown Meadow Volunteers

Volunteers met for the first time after delays caused by prolonged wet weather conditions. Five Councillors joined forces (two weeks ago) for a couple of hours to litter pick and remove fly tipped debris. The removal of fly tipped debris was a heavier duty job and there was still more to do.

The Chairman thanked those who attended the session for their support and said that more volunteer sessions will be organised for litter picking and grounds maintenance in collaboration with the council's contractor.

Publicity and Information Sharing

The need had been identified to improve communication and awareness of Crown Meadow, the work done there and how the town's money had been spent.

The Chairman said that he had recruited the services of Dr David Emley, a renowned naturalist and photographer, who had volunteered his time to report on and photograph flora, fauna and anything related to the natural environment on Crown Meadow. The material he produces will be used to add content and interest to the Town Council's website, postings on the Town Council's Facebook page and information releases. The Chairman noted that work on this will progress with the office at a manageable pace and with the limited human resources in mind.

ENV24/044 Reports of Working Groups

Environmental Working Group

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

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that he had attended a meeting of the Stafford Board Community Panel on 5 February 2024. The subjects under discussion were:

- Sustainability Stafford (a new event to be held as part of the Big Green Week from 8 to 16 June, highlighting Community Council actions to address the Borough's Climate Change and Green Recovery targets)
- Nature Recovery Strategy (which is being developed by Stafford Borough Council's Ecologist. All District and Parish Councils along with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust will be involved in this strategy).
- Funding from last year's Biodiversity Net Gain Award (£250,000 is available this financial year to support the development).
- Mowing Regime Bee Friendly Status (which will be driven across the Borough).
- Local Energy Production (involving possible installation of solar panels at scale on large roofs).
- Repair Cafes (which continue to operate).

The next meeting will be held on 25 March 2024.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that he had also attended the Stafford and Stoke on Trent COP – Celebration of the Possible on 15 March 2024.

This was the first event of the group which was run by the Globe Group (related to the Climate Expo). The group brings together various organisations interested in climate and environmental action and solution providers. The event introduced the concept of 'donut economics' which was interesting as a macro concept.

Councillor Kelt said he had met many contacts including someone who was working with Stone schools on environmental matters (more on a therapy

basis). This was interesting given the Town Council's contact with schools and not getting very much interest in response.

The Chairman suggested the Sub-Committee discuss whether any of these things could be supported and used by the Town Council.

Councillor Kelt said that he would consider whether there were, although he believed the higher tiers of local government would take forward the work.

Chairman