

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 2 April 2024

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Best, A. Burgess, J. Davies, L. Davies, I. Fordham, J. Hood,
T. Kelt, B. Kenney, P. Leason, J. Metters, A. Mottershead and R. Townsend

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

ABSENT: Councillors: K. Dawson, J. Powell, N. Powell and C. Thornicroft

GP24/187 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: K. Dawson, J. Powell, N. Powell and
C. Thornicroft

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

GP24/188 Declarations of Interest

None

GP24/189 Requests for Dispensations

None

GP24/190 To receive the report of the County Councillors

County Councillor Jill Hood

The Chairman invited Councillor Hood to address the Committee.

Measles on the Increase

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that concerning, cases of measles were
rising in both the local area and wider Staffordshire, carrying the risk of serious
health problems for those who contract the virus.

The County Council has in response arranged five pop up Measles, Mumps and
Rubella vaccination clinics with information about their locations detailed on the
County's website.

Household Waste Recycling Centres

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that the County Council was proudly
celebrating two years of managing Staffordshire Household Waste Recycling
Centres of which there are 14 in the county. She said the sites were collectively
visited 1.6 million times a year by residents and since last year had recycled more
than 45,000 tonnes of waste with just 1% going to landfill.

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She said that a van permit scheme had been introduced at the centres to manage trade waste disposal and reduce queuing. The scheme came about as a direct result of Councillor Hood highlighting an observation made by a member of the public that the Stone facility was heavily used by businesses from outside the County's boundary. The outcome is that trade waste will now only be accepted from Staffordshire businesses.

Councillor Hood informed the Committee that Staffordshire's Household Waste Recycling service had introduced Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) to fuel its fleet vehicles. This is an eco-friendly fuel source to help the authority reduce its carbon emissions. HVO is made from a 100% renewable source and generates around 90% less carbon emissions than traditional diesel fuel.

Local Transport Plan

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that the County Council was developing a new Local Transport Plan for Staffordshire, and a programme of informal engagement will take place with residents and businesses from April to September 2024. The first draft of the Local Transport Plan will be prepared in September with a public consultation in October 2024. In December the Local Transport Plan will be taken to the County Council's Cabinet for approval.

Councillor Hood expressed her view that good public transport links were vital in communities, the lack of which leads to social isolation, mental health issues, GP appointments being inaccessible and adverse impacts on the local economy.

She informed the Committee that the County Council had set up an engagement page called 'Let's Talk Transport'. She urged Town Councillors to consult residents and businesses between now and September and to forward their feedback to the County Council.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP24/191 To receive the report of Borough Councillors

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee.

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that he had recently attended meetings of the Audit and Accounts Committee and the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.

Audit and Accounts Committee

The Committee received a report on the audits undertaken by the Internal Audit Section (who carry out inspections on various departmental operations and their accounts on a rolling basis) and put questions to the Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager.

The areas looked at involved the work of the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Section and the Climate Change Section.

Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Leason informed the Committee that the Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee had received a report from the Chief Inspector of

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Staffordshire Police who confirmed that cases of domestic violence had started to increase.

The Committee received a presentation on recycling and was given information about plans to broaden the recycling service to include weekly collections of food waste from 31 March 2026, plastic film (currently recyclable in supermarkets) from 31 March 2027 and Tetra Paks from 31 March 2026. These are mandatory national timescales which it was hoped would be reached sooner in the Borough.

The Committee received a report on the work of GPs and learned that in Staffordshire more appointments were being offered now than in 2019-20. In October 2023, GP appointments were 12.9% higher than in October 2019, and 8.5% higher than October 2022. A comprehensive report was given on what the GPs were doing in the way of offering night surgeries and other initiatives.

The Committee also received a report from Trading Standards.

GP24/192 Representations from Members of the Public

None

GP24/193 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 5 March 2024 (Minute Numbers GP24/171 – GP24/186), be approved as a correct record.

GP24/194 Minutes of Sub-Committees

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee meeting held on 19 March 2024 (Minute Numbers TTP24/037 – TTP24/046), that the draft minutes be noted, and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number TTP24/043 be adopted.
- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 19 March 2024 (Minute Numbers ENV24/037 – ENV24/044), that the draft minutes be noted.
- c) Estates Sub-Committee held on 19 March 2024 (Minute Numbers EST24/031 – EST24/037), that the draft minutes be noted.

GP24/195 Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor Elect

The Committee considered the appointment of a Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor Elect for the year 2024-25 and the arrangements for Mayor Making.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Philip Leason MBE JP is appointed as Mayor Elect for 2024-25 and Councillor Jason Metters is appointed Deputy Mayor Elect.

Both Councillor Leason and Councillor Metters thanked the Committee for its support with their appointments.

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GP24/196 Meeting Schedule for 2024-25

The Committee considered a proposed meeting and civic events schedule* for the period May 2024 to April 2025.

RESOLVED: To approve the meeting schedule for 2024-25 without amendment.

GP24/197 Bank Mandate

The Committee considered the need to update the Council's bank mandate and agree the addition of the new Deputy Town Clerk and removal of the previous Deputy Town Clerk and former Councillors.

RESOLVED: That the following changes to the Town Council's bank mandate be accepted and actioned:

- Removal of former Deputy Town Clerk, Rob Mincher, who has left the Town Council's employment.
- Removal of former Town Councillor, Mark Green, following the end of his term as a councillor.
- Addition of new Deputy Town Clerk, Rachel Edwards.

GP24/198 Town Council Payments

RESOLVED: To note the list* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 to 29 February 2024.

GP24/199 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 was not available to deliver a report.

50th Anniversary of Stone Town Council

Councillor Davies informed the Committee that he had consulted members of the working group on the content of a programme for marking the 50th Anniversary of Stone Town Council, after which a meeting would be arranged with the Heritage Centre Manager and other members of the team to pull something together.

Councillor Leason confirmed that he had written a note on the Anniversary of the Town Council that was published in 'A Little Bit of Stone'.

The Working Group will be looking to raise public awareness that good work had been done over the 50 year term and that the Town Council was looking forward to the future.

GP24/200 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.

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Stone ATC

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that a meeting of the Stone ATC had been arranged to take place on 9 April 2024.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that Councillor Thornicroft, who had been unable to attend the meeting, had sent him a written update on a recent Age Concern meeting, which Councillor Davies was asked to share.

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that the finances were reported to be in good order and running with a small surplus. Attendees at the coffee mornings were providing a lively discussion. The luncheon club was a victim of its own success in that it was often oversubscribed, and three new volunteer drivers had been recruited to operate the hospital driving scheme.

He said that staff had been invited by the County Council to its unsung heroes event (taking place on Friday 19 April 2024) in recognition of the contribution made by volunteers from Stafford and South Staffordshire. The Chairman reported that they had an excellent group of volunteers working for the charity.

Stafford & Stone Access Group

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

Stone Common Plot Trustees

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

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

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

West Midlands Railway and other rail matters

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that he had no new information to report.

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

GP24/201 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.

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GP24/202 **Confidential Minutes of Sub-Committees**

- a) Estates Sub-Committee meeting held on 19 March 2024, Minute Numbers EST24/031 and EST24/037.

RESOLVED: To note the minutes.

GP24/203 **Internal Audit 2024-25 Onwards**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk*, which included an extract from the JPAG Practitioners Guide relating to best practice guidance for internal audit.

RESOLVED:

1. To endorse the action of the Town Clerk in extending the contract of the current internal auditor by one year to cover the audit of the 2023-24 accounts.
2. To retain the current scope of internal audit work.
3. To authorise the Town Clerk to re-appoint the current internal auditor for a further period of three years.
4. To review the Council's internal audit provision again for the 2027-28 financial year.

CHAIRMAN

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