

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 21 May 2024

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

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

ABSENT: Councillors: A. Burgess, T. Kelt, B. Kenney, R. Kenney, A. Mottershead, J. Powell,
N. Powell and R. Townsend

GP25/001 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: T. Kelt, B. Kenney, R. Kenney,
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.

GP25/002 Declarations of Interest

None

GP25/003 Requests for Dispensations

None

GP25/004 To receive the report of the County Councillors

County Councillor Jill Hood

The Chairman invited Councillor Hood to address the Committee.

High Street open and close times

Councillor Hood informed the Committee about the County Council's public
consultation on a proposal to extend the pedestrianised zone times in the High
Street from the existing Monday to Friday 10am to 4.00pm to Monday to Sunday
10:00am to 4:30pm.

The proposed extension will make the High Street a safer environment for children
when they come out of school at the end of the school day.

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that the wording on the road sign at the
top of the High Street would be amended to read 'No vehicles 10:00am to 4:30pm
except for access 4:30pm to 10:00am'. As road signage is governed by regulation,
she said there will be no reference to the days of the week as the times for each
day are the same.

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Councillor Hood said she was hoping the Council would support an extension of time to the pedestrianised zone to prevent motor vehicles from accessing the High Street at inappropriate times. She informed the Committee that if successful she would be speaking to the Head of Highways to request proactive enforcement during the first few weeks of the order coming into operation, focussing primarily on Saturdays and Sundays.

Councillor Hood advised the Council that she had met with Councillor Fordham and officers of the County Highways Department to discuss highway issues including inappropriate on street parking in different parts of the town as well as unauthorised access into the High Street.

The Traffic & Network Manager had provided her with statistics collected over a three-week period detailing the number of visits made by highways officers to Stone (total 45), their observations of inappropriate use of the highway (total 111) and parking notices issued (total 21).

Councillor Hood appealed to Town Councillors to support the High Street consultation by expressing their views and conveying its detail to members of the public and High Street traders.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP25/005 To receive the report of Borough Councillors

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee but there was no report on this occasion.

GP25/006 Representations from Members of the Public

None

GP25/007 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 2 April 2024 (Minute Numbers GP24/187 – GP24/203), be approved as a correct record.

GP25/008 Minutes of Sub-Committees

There were no sub-committee minutes.

GP25/009 Sub-Committee Terms of Reference

The Committee considered the terms of reference for the Council's Sub-Committees, Steering Groups and Working Groups, a copy of which had been attached to the electronic version of the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised the Council that changes had been made to remove reference to the Management Sub-committee, to clarify the reporting of minutes,

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quoracy rules and the position of ex-officio members, and the status of Mayor's Sub-Committee decisions.

RESOLVED: That the Terms of Reference for the Council's Sub-Committees, Steering Groups and Working Groups be accepted with the addition of a requirement to appoint a co-ordinator when new working groups were set up in the future, whose role was to convene the meetings and give reports to the parent (sub-)committee.

RESOLVED: That the Committee appoints working group co-ordinators to the existing working groups, at a future meeting.

GP25/010 Appointment of Members, Chairmen and Vice Chairmen to the following Sub-Committees:

RESOLVED: To appoint the following Chairmen, Vice Chairmen and Members to the Sub Committees for the municipal year 2024-25:

Tourism & Town Promotion

Chairman: Councillor J. Hood

Vice Chairman: Councillor A. Mottershead

Members: Councillors: A. Best, A. Burgess, J. Davies, L. Davies, K. Dawson, B. Kenney and J. Powell

Co-opted Member: J. Cook

Environment

Chairman: Councillor R. Townsend

Vice Chairman: Councillor T. Kelt

Members: Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Burgess, B. Kenney, J. Metters, J. Powell, N. Powell and C. Thornicroft

Estates

Chairman: Councillor A. Best

Vice Chairman: Councillor J. Powell

Members: Councillors: J. Battrick, L. Davies, I. Fordham, J. Hood, A. Mottershead, N. Powell and C. Thornicroft

Mayor's Charity

Chairman: Councillor P. Leason

Vice Chairman: Councillor J. Metters

Members: Councillors: J. Davies, L. Davies, I. Fordham, T. Kelt, R. Kenney, R. Townsend and J. Powell

In addition, the Town Mayor and the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee are ex-officio members of all committees and sub-committees where they are not members in their own right, as set out in Standing Orders.

GP25/011 Appointment to Steering/Working Group

RESOLVED: To make the following appointments to Town Council Steering and Working Groups for the municipal year 2024-25:

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

No appointments were made to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

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Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group

Councillor Members: R. Keney (Chairman), P. Leason (Vice Chairman), J. Davies and J. Hood

Co-opted Members: S. Nuttall, S. Booth, T. Cockin and H. Frost

Engagement with Young People

Members: Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Best, K. Dawson and J. Metters and J. Powell

GP25/012 Appointment to Outside Bodies

RESOLVED: To make the following appointments of Council representatives on outside bodies:

Stone ATC (Town Mayor plus 1 member)

Councillors: P. Leason and J. Davies

Age Concern Stone & District (2 members)

Councillors: J. Davies and C. Thornicroft

Stafford & Stone Access Group (1 member)

Councillor T. Kelt

Trustees of the Town Hall Charity (all members)

All Councillors

Stone Community Hub Group (3 members)

Councillors: J. Battrick, J. Hood and J. Powell

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group (1 member)

Councillor J. Davies

NOTE: Current membership of the following bodies will continue until the stated dates, or until retirement by an individual member, even if the members cease to be members of the Council

Stone Common Plot Trustees (5 Members for a four-year term)

Currently Councillor C. Thornicroft (term runs to May 2026) and Councillors:

A. Burgess, J. Hood, T. Kelt and R. Townsend (terms run to May 2027)

Richard Vernon Trust (3 members for a four-year term)

Currently Councillors: J. Davies, P. Leason and J. Powell (all members' terms run to May 2027)

SPCA Executive Committee (1 member for a two-year term)

Currently Councillor: T. Kelt (to December 2025)

Stone Traders Group Directors' Meeting (Councillors attend on a rotating basis)

Councillors: A. Burgess, I. Fordham, J. Hood and T. Kelt

West Midlands Railway and other rail matters

Councillor T. Kelt

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GP25/013 **80th Anniversary of D-Day**

The Committee considered the report* of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee's 80th Anniversary of D-Day Working Group which had been distributed with the agenda for the meeting.

The General Purposes Committee had been asked to consider the report of the working group directly, rather than through the recommendations of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee, as the Sub-committee was not scheduled to meet until after the commemoration had taken place.

The Chairman invited Councillor Davies to address the Committee.

Councillor Davies outlined the Working Group's considerations and recommendations for marking the D-Day 80 Commemoration in Stone, in accordance with the content of the report.

He informed the Committee that the Working Group believed the recommended programme of a flag raising service on 6 June, a beacon lighting, if possible, (which Councillor Leason was looking into) and a short service at the flagpole on 9 June (to mark the anniversary of the first of the men in Stone who died), were appropriate ways of marking the anniversary in the town given that a large D-Day 80 commemoration was in the planning by Stafford Borough Council.

RESOLVED:

1. That a flag raising ceremony takes place at the flagpole in Stone High Street on 6 June at 11:00 with a short service delivered by Rev Paul Kingman. The flag will continue flying until 10 June.
2. That, if possible, a beacon lighting will take place in Stone on the evening of 6 June 2024.
3. That a commemoration event will take place at the High Street flagpole on 9 June at 13:00 (with similar arrangements to the Texas flag raisings).

GP25/014 **Heritage Centre**

The Committee considered an update on Stone Heritage Centre.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that digital networking and CCTV were now installed, and the installation of Broadband was in progress after an initial delay caused by the requirement for a postal address (an official listing in the Post Office database) before an order could be placed.

He said that artifacts could not be brought on the premises for cataloguing until the CCTV system was fully active and footage accessible.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the first event at the Heritage Centre would be taking place on 10 June when the Stafford Photographic Society will be using the Heritage Centre as the venue for their photographic exhibition. In preparation for this day the Deputy Town Clerk had been arranging the health and safety provisions so that members of the public can legally be accepted into the building.

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Councillor Leason advised the Committee that he and the Heritage Centre Manager had visited the County Museum Store in Stafford and produced a list of items that may be loaned to the heritage centre by Staffordshire County Council.

GP25/015 Staffordshire County Council Consultation

The Committee considered a Staffordshire County Council consultation on a proposal to extend the 'no vehicles' restriction in the High Street to 4.30pm.

An email from the County Engineer had been attached to the agenda for the meeting. Due to Copyright restrictions the drawing referred to in the email had been sent separately to Councillors.

The Chairman invited Councillor Hood to address the Committee.

Councillor Hood asked the Committee for suggestions on how the Town Council was going to contribute to stopping vehicles travelling down the High Street, expressing the view that new signage would not on its own have the desired effect. She said she was hoping that raising the profile of the issue on social media and in newspaper articles generally would make people recognise that unless they are traders loading or unloading, they should not be driving down the High Street.

The Committee discussed how stopping unauthorised vehicular access into the High Street might be better achieved and suggested lockable gates and/or Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) would be more effective than the current system.

The Committee acknowledged that the biggest issues occurred between 4:30pm and 10:00am when the High Street was frequently used as a car park and a collection point for takeaways. The Police had previously advised Councillors that the collection of takeaways was not a legitimate use of the High Street.

The Committee agreed that enforcement action should be applied to cyclists and scooter riders who often travel at dangerously fast speeds.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council supports the County Council's proposal to extend the pedestrianised zone in the High Street from 10:00am to 4:30pm daily and the installation of new signage.

RESOLVED: That the County Council is asked to consider the following actions to manage the inappropriate use of the High Street:

1. To arrange regular enforcement visits.
2. Enforcement should include speeding cyclists and scooter riders.
3. Installation of a more effective barrier/gate or traffic management control system, preferably Automatic Number Plate Recognition.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council enlist the Police and Fire Commissioner's support in addressing inappropriate use of the High Street.

GP25/016 Town Council Payments

RESOLVED: To note the list* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 March to 30 April 2024.

GP25/017 Update from Working Groups:

Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group

It was confirmed that the Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group had not met.

Engagement with Young People

Councillor Dawson advised the Committee that although the Working Group had not met, she had contacted a staff member from St Dominic's Primary School about the planning arrangements for the engagement with young people in Town Council business.

50th Anniversary of Stone Town Council

Councillor Davies informed the Committee that it had become evident that a lot of what the working group were considering was historically aligned with the purpose and work of the Heritage Centre and therefore did not require separate arrangements for an event marking the 50th Anniversary of the Town Council.

He suggested leaving the story of Stone Town Council's creation (from Stone Urban District Council and associated Stone Rural District Council) to the Heritage Centre Manager who will incorporate its history into future displays.

The Committee agreed that the working group be closed.

GP25/018 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 of the Liaison Group had been arranged to take place on Wednesday 29 May 2024 at the Frank Jordan Centre at 3pm where the Development Manager would be in attendance to talk about planning enforcement. He extended the invitation to all Town Councillors who were welcome to attend.

Stone ATC

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that he had attended the last Civilian Welfare Committee Meeting which showed the Squadron to be in very good health with good numbers of cadets and lots of plans for the upcoming year. The next meeting will be the AGM on 11 June 2024.

Age Concern Stone & District

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

Stafford & Stone Access Group

Councillor Kelt was not available to give a report.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that he had attended a meeting of the Common Plot Trustees, and the AGM, both on Wednesday 15 May 2024. The Treasurer reported that it had been a quiet year with a small surplus on

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expenditure and a reasonable level of reserves to cover future exceptional costs such as repairs and replacements of machinery.

The Chairman had reported that the trustees had put some suggestions to Stafford Borough Council in respect of use of the play plot (opposite Christ Church School) and were waiting for a response.

Requests continue to be made to trustees for the scattering of ashes on the Plot which were being treated sympathetically. The illegal removal of wood was continuing, and the incidents reported to the Police. Repairs to the lower wooden path had been delayed due to bad weather.

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that the Town Mayor, Councillor Leason, had taken the chair for the re-election of the trustees. The Mayor thanked the Trustees for maintaining a wonderful asset in the town.

All trustees nominated were re-elected.

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 was not available to provide a report.

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 was not available to provide a report.

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

GP25/019 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.

GP25/020 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee held on 2 April 2024, Minute Numbers GP24/187, GP24/202 and GP24/203 be approved.

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GP25/021 Insurance Renewal

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk* exploring the renewal of the Council's insurance arrangements beyond 31 May 2024.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- a. Accepts the offer of a three-year agreement with Zurich from 1 June 2024 at the price stated in the report, updated by the appropriate index-linking percentages and changes to the insurance schedule in future years.
- b. Authorises the Town Clerk to obtain insurance valuations for the Council's three main operational buildings, and to review the need for any future updates to the value of Council assets.
- c. Approves a virement from the Council's inflation contingency to meet the additional costs set out in this report.
- d. Agrees to change the public sector contracts regulations figures in Standing Orders and Financial Regulations from £25,000 to £30,000, and consequently agrees to take the change into account when letting the Insurance contract.

GP25/022 Staffing Matters

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk* (which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting) relating to a staffing matter.

RESOLVED: That the Committee authorises the Town Clerk to action the recommendations in the report.

CHAIRMAN

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