

Introduction

1. This report sets out the Council's accounts for 2024-25. It compares the final outturn figures with the original budget for the year and the forecast produced as part of the budget process.
2. The proposed financial submission to the Council's external auditors is also attached for approval.

Background

3. The Council's financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March. It is required to keep its accounts for that period in accordance with legal requirements, to report them for approval by the Council within three months of the year end, and to submit an annual return to its external auditors to a similar timescale.
4. The Council is also required to employ the services of an internal auditor, who examines the accounts, reviews the Council's internal control, completes the internal audit section of the annual return, and may produce a report identifying any areas of concern to Members. This internal audit has been performed by Sandie Morris, who will be reporting independently to the Council, as required.
5. Subject to certain limited requirements, councils which turn-over less than £6.5 million per annum are not expected to comply with the accounting standards required of larger local authorities and have more freedom to determine their own form of accounts, subject to national recommendations on proper practices.

Accounts 2024-25

6. The Council's net revenue spending for 2024-25 was £400,301. This can be seen in detail in the Income and Expenditure Account set out at Appendix 1. The resulting effect on the Council's balance sheet can be seen at Appendix 2.
7. This net spending of £400,301 compares with £562,226 in the previous year, an approved budget of £605,328 and a forecast made at the time the 2025-26 budget was prepared of £532,760. This is set out in more detail in Appendix 3.
8. Explanations of the major variations between the original budget and the forecast were included in a series of budget reports to this Committee and its Sub-Committees during

December 2024 and January 2025. Details of the major variations from the forecast that was made at the time the 2025-26 budget was prepared are set out later in the report.

9. In a number of cases identified below, spending was originally anticipated and provided for in 2024-25, but that expenditure has been delayed until the current year. In such cases I have recommended that the budgets be rolled forward to the new financial year to meet the costs when they are incurred. A figure of £113,682 has been contributed to the Rollover Reserve to allow this transfer between years to happen. The details of the makeup of this reserve are set out in the explanation of variances below.

Explanation of Variances from Forecast

10. Appendix 3 shows that the Council's net expenditure for 2024-25 was £132,459 less than forecast at the time the budget was prepared in January. Of this, £113,682 relates to budgets rolled over into the current financial year, leaving a true variance of £18,777 underspent.
11. Details of significant variances from forecast and proposals for rollover are set out below:
12. **Frank Jordan Centre (net £3,486 underspent)** – This was mainly due to additional income, particularly from supporting the Banking Hub.
13. **Stone Station (net £2,746 underspent)** – This is largely due to the final phase of the Council planned work on roof repairs not taking place, offset by a claim for rent arrears at the Station which was not anticipated when the budget was prepared. The £5,000 budget to complete the roof repairs has been rolled forward into 2025-26.
14. **Stone Heritage Centre (£12,246 underspent)** – The forecast spending at the Heritage Centre was a contingency sum at this stage.
15. **Town Market (net £1,241 overspent)** – The overspending was due to stall set-up costs being higher than budgeted.
16. **Bus Shelters and Street Furniture (£1,223 underspent)** – Some recurring maintenance tasks and repairs were not undertaken in the year, including painting benches and washing bus shelters. A sum of £690 has been rolled forward to 2025-26.
17. **Building Maintenance (£20,000 underspent)** – This unspent provision has been rolled forward into 2025-26.
18. **Grounds Maintenance (£2,545 underspent)** – Anticipated work on installing signs, a Tilling Drive cut, replanting of borders, replacement of the lock gate and bridge painting were not undertaken in 2024-25. £2,515 has been rolled forward into the 2025-26 budget to cover the cost of these items.
19. **Crown Meadow Improvements (£1,981 underspent)** – This was largely due to the pathway project not being undertaken within the year. A sum of £1,560 has been carried forward to allow this to be undertaken in 2025-26.

20. **Allotments (£3,223 underspent)** – This relates to an unused contingency provision (£1,000), a hedge cut at Mount Road (£175) and an underspending against the provision for asbestos removal (£1,825). These latter two amounts totalling £2,000 have been rolled forward into 2025-26.
21. **Environmental Initiatives (£1,190 Correction)** – £1,190 has been rolled forward into 2025-26 via the rollover reserve.
22. **Christmas Lights (£3,847 underspent)** – The underspending relates to the elimination of an overprovision for electricity costs in 2023-24 and not needing the contingency provision included in the budget.
23. **Grants to Outside Bodies (£1,611 underspent)** – This underspending has been rolled forward into 2025-26.
24. **Insurances (£1,271 underspent)** – The underspending largely relates to an unused provision for potential increases in premiums due to the revaluation of the Community Centres and Heritage Centre.
25. **Administration (£7,194 underspent)** – Expenditure against this budget is irregular between years due mainly to IT lifecycles. The underspend has been rolled forward into 2025-26.
26. **Stone Heritage Centre Capital (£71,922 underspent)** – This underspending is due to the whole of the project budget being provided in 2024-25, with unspent amounts being rolled forward to meet costs in 2025-26.

Audit Submission

27. The completed financial statement to be submitted to the Council's external auditors is attached at Appendix 4 and the summary year-end bank reconciliation which will accompany it is at Appendix 5. It should be noted that the net expenditure shown in the audit return is £1,030.84 different than set out in other parts of this report. This is because the Mayor's Charity Fund is required to be included within the accounts for external reporting purposes, but it is excluded from internal income and expenditure reports for the sake of clarity.

Recommendations

28. The Council are recommended to:
- a. Approve the Council's Accounts for 2024-25 as set out in this document, including the use of the rollover reserve to allow the transfer of budgets between financial years and the proposed use of those budgets in 2025-26.
 - b. Note the variances between the forecast outturn for 2024-25 and the actual outturn, and the reasons identified for the major variances.
 - c. Approve the financial statement for submission to the Council's external auditors.

Stone Town Council

Income and Expenditure Account 2024-25

2023-24			2024-25	
£	£		£	£
Income				
36,585		Frank Jordan Centre	55,973	
9,478		Stone Station	6,279	
16,167		Town Market	14,089	
-		Crown Meadow Improvements	-	
4,380		Allotments	4,379	
1,010		Tourism & Town Promotion	6,665	
-		Salaries & Employment Costs	-	
1,025		Administration	117	
1,291		Civic Dinner & Hospitality	1,292	
-		Miscellaneous	-	
6,035		Interest	6,640	
40,024		Stone Heritage Centre (Setup)	-	
	115,996	Total Income		95,433
Expenditure				
26,688		Frank Jordan Centre	22,737	
19,247		Stone Station	33,933	
-		Stone Heretage Centre	7,754	
14,430		Town Market	11,950	
-		Car Parking	-	
2,078		Bus Shelters & Street Furniture	3,497	
1,039		Street Lighting	940	
839		Dog & Litter Bins	864	
-		Joules Clock	100	
703		Town Electricity Supply	660	
22,776		Grounds Maintenance	20,455	
975		Crown Meadow Improvements	7,959	
1,452		Allotments	1,756	
-		Environmental Initiatives	-	
22,869		Christmas Lights	20,153	
24,568		Tourism & Town Promotion	35,255	
3,900		Grants to Outside Bodies	2,389	
200,116		Salaries & Employment Costs	228,007	
7,020		Accommodation	8,087	
6,893		Insurances	9,289	
43,240		Administration	29,303	
1,183		Audit & Legal Fees	2,063	
27,786		Town Council Elections	-	
2,924		Allowances - Mayor & Deputy Mayor	2,941	
235		Regalia & Presentations	601	
3,859		Civic Dinner & Hospitality	3,579	
2,449		Remembrance Sunday & War Memorials	2,893	
515		Miscellaneous	492	
-		Neighbourhood Plan	-	
240,436		Stone Heritage Centre (Setup)	38,078	
	678,222	Total Expenditure		495,734
	562,226	Total Net Expenditure		400,301
Financing				
369,163		Precept	393,644	
21,552		Council Tax Support Grant	23,740	
11,461		Concurrent Functions Allowance	11,461	
154,676		Transfer from (to) Earmarked Reserves	37,206	
	556,852	Total Financing		466,051
	-5,374	Net Surplus for Year		65,750

Stone Town Council

Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2025

2023-24			2024-25	
£	£		£	£
Current Assets				
9,961		Debtors	4,897	
2,340		Payments in Advance	3,177	
2,017		VAT Recoverable	2,175	
381,176		Cash at Bank and In Hand	424,133	
	395,495	Total Current Assets		434,381
Current Liabilities				
13,538		Creditors	32,080	
12,071		Receipts in Advance	2,639	
7,847		Payroll Taxation	8,049	
	33,456	Total Current Liabilities		42,767
	<u>362,039</u>	Total Net Assets		<u>391,614</u>
Represented by				
201,989		General Fund Balances	267,740	
158,468		Earmarked Reserves	121,262	
1,581		Mayor's Charity Fund	2,612	
	<u>362,039</u>	Total Reserves and Balances		<u>391,614</u>

Stone Town Council

Comparison of Actual 2024-25 with Budget and Forecast

Appendix 3

Actual 2023-24 £		Actual Compared With Approved Budget			Actual Compared With Forecast Outturn		
		Budget	Variance	Report	Forecast	Variance	Paragraph
		2024-25 £	2024-25 £		2024-25 £	2024-25 £	
-9,897	Frank Jordan Centre	-14,880	-18,356		-29,750	-3,486	12
9,768	Stone Station	43,080	-15,426		30,400	-2,746	13
0	Stone Heritage Centre	45,000	-37,246		20,000	-12,246	14
-1,738	Town Market	-6,100	+3,961		-3,380	+1,241	15
2,078	Bus Shelters & Street Furniture	7,500	-4,003		4,720	-1,223	16
1,039	Street Lighting	1,000	-60		940	+0	
839	Dog & Litter Bins	900	-36		860	+4	
-	Joules Clock	-	+100		-	+100	
703	Town Electricity Supply	700	-40		650	+10	
-	Building Maintenance	20,000	-20,000		20,000	-20,000	17
22,776	Grounds Maintenance	23,600	-3,145		23,000	-2,545	18
975	Crown Meadow Improvements	11,735	-3,776		9,940	-1,981	19
-2,928	Allotments	2,425	-5,048		600	-3,223	20
-	Environmental Initiatives	1,190	-1,190		-	-	21
22,869	Christmas Lights	23,260	-3,107		24,000	-3,847	22
23,558	Tourism & Town Promotion	31,000	-2,410		28,500	+90	
3,900	Grants to Outside Bodies	4,000	-1,611		4,000	-1,611	23
200,116	Salaries & Employment Costs	236,340	-8,333		228,100	-93	
7,020	Accommodation	6,900	+1,187		8,240	-153	
6,893	Insurances	10,700	-1,411		10,560	-1,271	24
42,215	Administration	36,380	-7,194		36,380	-7,194	25
1,183	Audit & Legal Fees	1,500	+563		1,860	+203	
27,786	Town Council Elections	-	-		-	-	
2,924	Allowances - Mayor & Deputy Mayor	3,400	-460		2,940	+1	
235	Regalia & Presentations	200	+401		700	-99	
2,569	Civic Dinner & Hospitality	2,500	-213		2,600	-313	
2,449	Remembrance Sunday & War Memorials	2,000	+893		2,500	+393	
515	Miscellaneous	1,000	-508		800	-308	
-6,035	Interest	-3,300	-3,340		-6,400	-240	
-	Neighbourhood Plan	-	-		0	-	
200,412	Stone Heritage Centre (Capital)	103,298	-65,220		110,000	-71,922	26
-	Town Centre Improvements	10,000	-10,000		-	-	
-	Inflation Contingency	-	-		-	-	
562,226		605,328	-205,027		532,760	-132,459	

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2024/25 for

Stone Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2025 £	
1. Balances brought forward	523,301	362,038	<i>Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.</i>
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	369,163	393,644	<i>Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.</i>
3. (+) Total other receipts	149,009	131,665	<i>Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.</i>
4. (-) Staff costs	200,116	228,007	<i>Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.</i>
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	<i>Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).</i>
6. (-) All other payments	479,319	267,727	<i>Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).</i>
7. (=) Balances carried forward	362,038	391,613	<i>Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. Must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).</i>
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	381,176	424,133	<i>The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.</i>
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	293,300	315,865	<i>The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.</i>
10. Total borrowings	0	0	<i>The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).</i>

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	N/A	
11a. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	✓			<i>The Council, as a body corporate, acts as sole trustee and is responsible for managing Trust funds or assets.</i>
11b. Disclosure note re Trust funds (including charitable)	✓			<i>The figures in the accounting statements above exclude any Trust transactions.</i>

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2025 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Date

12/05/2025

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

DD/MM/YYYY

as recorded in minute reference:

MINUTE REFERENCE

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

SIGNATURE REQUIRED

Stone Town Council

Summary Bank Reconciliation as at 31st March 2025

BANK RECONCILIATION

Balance per bank statements as at 31 March 2025

	£	£
Current Account	1,500.00	
Business Reserve	422,632.97	
National Savings Account (Closed 5 Nov 2024)	<u>0.00</u>	
		424,132.97

Less: unpresented cheques at 31 March 2025

None	<u> </u>	0.00
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Add: unbanked cash at 31 March 2025

None	<u> </u>	0.00
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Net balances as at 31 March 2025 **424,132.97**

CASH BOOK

Opening Balance 1 April 2024 **381,175.98**

Add: Receipts in the year	573,639.48	
Less: Payments in the year	<u>530,682.49</u>	
		42,956.99

Closing balance per cash book as at 31 March 2025 **424,132.97**