

Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 15 July 2025

PRESENT: Councillor R. Townsend in the Chair and
Councillors: T. Kelt, B. Kenney, R. Kenney, J. Metters, and C. Thornicroft

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

By Chairman's Invitation: A. Best

ABSENT: Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Burgess, P. Leason, J. Powell and N. Powell

ENV26/001 **Apologies**

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

ENV26/002 **Declarations of Interest**

None made.

ENV26/003 **Request for Dispensations**

None received.

ENV26/004 **Representations from Members of the Public**

None received.

ENV26/005 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on 18 March 2025 (Minute Numbers ENV25/036 – ENV25/045), were approved as a correct record.

ENV26/006 **Environmental Sub-Committee Works Update**

The Chairman drew the Sub-Committee's attention to the Grounds Maintenance Works Update which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Chairman pointed out that the report had reduced in size as several of the previously listed items had been completed. He said the team were largely on top of outstanding projects and the new footpath improvement project had

been added which is intended to alleviate surface water from settling on the path. The Chairman reported that he was hopeful the work would be completed before the wetter weather set in.

ENV26/007 Crown Meadow

The Chairman provided the Sub-Committee with a further update on Crown Meadow:

Crown Meadow (General)

The Town Council was well underway with its marketing/publicity of Crown Meadow with its first article featured in the June/July edition of the Stone & Eccleshall Gazette. The article had also been published on the Town Council's Facebook page and website, and on 'A Little Bit of Stone'.

Numerous comments have been made by members of the public demonstrating the information had been noted and was well received.

A second article was recently published on the Town Council's Facebook page and website and 'A Little Bit of Stone' but would not feature in the Stone & Eccleshall Gazette this time due to a lack of editorial space and the need to publish an alternative Town Council article regarding the High Street. The Chairman said that he would be meeting with the Town Clerk and the Marketing and Events Organiser to look at a schedule for publishing articles about Crown Meadow over a twelve-to-eighteen-month time frame.

Site Visit with Biodiversity & Ecology Officer

The Chairman reported on a recent site walkabout with Stafford Borough Council's Biodiversity & Ecology Officer, the Vice Chairman of the Environment Sub-Committee, the Grounds Maintenance Contractor and Deputy Town Clerk. The overall conclusion drawn from the meeting was that the maintenance and renovation work done by the Town Council on Crown Meadow had been successful.

The Scrapes – A good amount of work had been undertaken on both scrapes one and two, involving removal of the invasive Willow saplings, pollarding the mature Willow (that had generated the saplings), and a huge dig out of Scrape Two to remove unwanted Willow saplings and to reinstate the depth of the Scrape. The group had discussed whether Scrape Two should be deepened further, from its current 60cm depth to one metre, to encourage it to retain more water. Some fauna and flora were noted to be thriving in the dryer conditions, but some species were showing signs the conditions were not right.

The Sub-Committee discussed the health and safety aspects of deepening the scrape and agreed this was an important consideration. It was however pointed out that the sides of the Scrape were stepped and there was only a couple of areas that were proposed be made deeper.

The Sub-Committee discussed introducing new species of wetland flowers to the renovated scrapes as there was space (following the cutting back of grasses) to add to the number and variety of flowers present. The Chairman said consideration would be given to the most suitable flower varieties for use, the costs and the time of year that new planting should take place, before reporting back to the Sub-Committee.

Himalayan Balsam – The Chairman reported that four Himalayan Balsam pulling sessions had taken place on the Meadow and a significant area had been cleared. He said that a good team had rallied and the pulling of the invasive plant in a controlled and organised way had yielded successful results.

Woodland between carpark and amphitheatre – The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that work may be needed to improve tree health and safety in this small area of woodland. There is a case for planting new trees, and in the amphitheatre to replace the dead and dying Cherry trees.

The Sub-Committee explored grant aid opportunities for the planting of new trees with the Queen's Green Canopy suggested as a starting point for investigation, along with the possibility of inviting members of the public to sponsor a tree (after establishing that the Town Council has the legal power to do this).

Connecting the Meadows – The Chairman reported that the Biodiversity & Ecology Officer during the Crown Meadow walkabout had talked about the work that had been done on the flood plain meadows that lie to the north and south of Crown Meadow. The idea of connecting the meadows with a nature walkway along the valley was briefly discussed. The Biodiversity & Ecology Officer advised the group that discussions had taken place in the past about connecting all three meadows which would require perhaps two footbridges across the River Trent and access through private land on the other side of the river. A member of the Sub-Committee pointed out that Staffordshire County Council had recently prepared the costs for footbridges at Burston so this might be a source of reference for possible costs.

A question was raised about how many Black Poplars were left in the area. It was suggested that although some had been lost it was the Silver Birch and Cherry trees that hadn't fared well during the previous spell of Meadow floodings, and Black Poplars are considered a resilient species for floodplains.

The Sub-Committee acknowledged the need to consider future proofing the planting on Crown Meadow to take account of the effects of climate change and the shift towards extremely hot and extremely wet weather.

ENV26/008 Membership of Working Group

RESOLVED: To make the following appointments to the Environment Sub-Committee Working Group for the municipal year 2025-26:

Environmental Working Group

All Members of the Environment Sub-Committee

Co-ordinator: Councillor R. Townsend

ENV26/009 Reports of Working Groups

Environmental Working Group

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the main activity of the Environmental Working Group had been to coordinate the removal of Himalayan Balsam through organised volunteer pulling sessions which had been very successful.

Chairman