

# Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 2 September 2025

**PRESENT:** Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and  
Councillors: A. Best, A. Burgess, J. Davies, K. Dawson, J. Hood, P. Leason, J. Metters,  
J. Powell, N. Powell and R. Townsend

Officers: R. Edwards and T. Williams

**ABSENT:** Councillors: J. Battrick, L. Davies, I. Fordham, T. Kelt, B. Kenney, A. Mottershead  
and C. Thornicroft

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### **GP26/048    Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors: J. Battrick, L. Davies, I. Fordham, T. Kelt,  
B. Kenney, A. Mottershead 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.

### **GP26/049    Declarations of Interest**

None

### **GP26/050    Requests for Dispensations**

There were none.

### **GP26/051    To receive the report of the County Councillors**

The Chairman invited County Councillors to address the Committee:

#### **County Councillor Jill Hood**

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that she had no report on this occasion.

#### **County Councillor Andrew Mynors**

Councillor Mynors was not in attendance at the meeting.

### **GP26/052    To receive the report of Borough Councillors**

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee.

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Councillor Jon Powell

Councillor Powell gave a report on a Borough Council Economic Development & Planning Scrutiny Committee meeting (held on 19 August 2025) which included a presentation on water and wastewater discharge management.

Councillor Powell advised Councillors that the big message he had taken from the meeting was in the operation of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs), or spills. These are pipes connecting the sewage system to water courses and in Stone expel wastewater into the River Trent and its subsidiaries in times of heavy rain or flooding. Solids are by design supposed to be retained in the pipework and non-solids allowed to release into the River Trent and Scotch Brook.

The Website: [www.Sewagemap.co.uk](http://www.Sewagemap.co.uk) shows where the spills are located and records indicate that on one day at the end of August 2025 there were three out spills into the River Trent. Councillor Powell expressed concern because the river and its banks are used daily by dog walkers, the Canoe Club, fishermen and everyone else who enjoy living in Stone.

**GP26/053     Representations from Members of the Public**

None

**GP26/054     Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 1 July 2025 (Minute Numbers GP26/033 – GP26/047), be approved as a correct record.

**GP26/055     Minutes of Sub-Committees**

RESOLVED:

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 15 July 2025 (Minute Numbers TTP26/001 – TTP26/009), that the draft minutes be noted.
- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 15 July 2025 (Minute Numbers ENV26/001 – ENV26/009), that the draft minutes be noted.
- c) Mayor's Charity Sub-Committee held on 15 July 2025 (Minute Numbers MC26/001 – MC26/006), that the draft minutes be noted.

**GP26/056     National Pay Award 2025-26**

The Committee considered the report\* of the Town Clerk (which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting) on the outcome of the 2025-26 national pay award negotiations for local government staff and its impact on the Council.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council accepts the recommendations of the Town Clerk and adopts the new 2025-26 salary levels for staff on national local government pay scales.

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The Committee considered Stafford Borough Council's proposals for the reorganisation of local government in Staffordshire.

The consideration followed a public survey launched across Cannock Chase, Stafford Borough, and other Southern and Mid Staffordshire areas of the County, whose councils were working collectively towards a business case to submit to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). A copy of the survey had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting and residents, businesses, partners and organisations had been encouraged to participate in the shaping of the LGR in the county. A link to further information on devolution and local government reorganisation had also been provided.

The Chairman introduced the leader of Stafford Borough Council, Councillor Aiden Godfrey, who had kindly attended the meeting to brief the Committee on the current situation with local government reorganisation in Staffordshire and the Borough Council's preferred option.

Councillor Godfrey shared information on the background to LGR following publication of the White Paper outlining change. He referred to a series of meetings held locally between various districts and borough councils including Stoke on Trent City Council and the County Council with the purpose of formulating a proposal(s) on what the structure of local government should look like in Staffordshire.

A summary of Councillor Godfrey's report included the following points:

- The recommendation that a North unitary authority and a South unitary authority be set up in Staffordshire to take over from the nine existing district and borough councils.
- The North unitary authority would comprise Staffordshire Moorlands, Newcastle under Lyme and Stoke on Trent.
- The South unitary authority would comprise Stafford, South Staffordshire, Lichfield, Cannock, Tamworth and East Staffordshire.

Both North and South groups had been crafting proposals for submission to Central Government.

- The White Paper made clear that any new unitary authority must be sustainable. The Government has given a population guideline of 500,000 as a baseline minimum for a unitary authority to be economically viable and sustainable in the long term. All six district/boroughs in the south of Staffordshire come in at just over 600,000 people which was seen as positive.
- More recently South Staffordshire and Lichfield had developed the view that there should be two smaller unitary authorities in the south of the county rather than one big one. If split the populations of each would be around 309,000 and 318,000 which was substantially less than the Government's recommended size.

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- A North unitary authority driven by what was Stoke on Trent City Council, Newcastle Under Lyme Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council was considered a powerful force. Two smaller authorities positioned in between north Staffordshire and the powerful West Midlands, was seen as having the potential to struggle for funding. It was suggested that Staffordshire's funding would be diverted to Stoke on Trent.
- A single unitary authority in the south was considered more a financially secure and stable option than the proposal for two authorities. It would have access to higher levels of Government funding, attract more investment, be robust with political and financial muscle and less likely to fragment.
- The six districts in the south will have places like Burton on Trent, Stafford, Cannock and South Staffordshire (near to Wolverhampton) which are big economic areas. These areas combined will have some power and authority.
- A proposal has been put forward by Staffordshire Moorland District Council to take Stone, as well as Meir, Meir Heath and parts of Uttoxeter to join them with Moorlands, Newcastle and Stoke on Trent. The Leader did not support breaking the boundaries of Stafford Borough.
- Putting Stone into the North unitary authority was not considered beneficial to the town and may lead to it being used as a dumping ground for meeting development targets. Stone would struggle to compete with Stoke on Trent for funding.
- No consideration had yet been put into the structure of a strategic/combined authority. The formation of a strategic authority was thought to be more complicated still as Staffordshire is down on the numbers the Government says a strategic authority should look after. The favoured idea presently is to join forces with Shropshire.
- The Leaders and Chief Executive Officers of the district councils in the south meet on a regular basis with a company they have commissioned to consider the financing of the North and South options. A report should identify the most financially viable options.

At the end of the presentation several questions were asked by Councillors which provided clarification on the information Councillor Godfrey had given.

The Chairman advised the Committee that, although the survey had closed (Monday 1 September 2025) and the Borough Council had been unable to extend the deadline, engagement around LGR would continue. Stafford Borough Council will be in consultation with the Town Council up to the final submission to Government in November 2025.

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Town Clerk had suggested compiling a paper for consideration (by the Committee) at the next meeting when a final response on the reorganisation of local government in Staffordshire, could be considered.

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The Committee agreed to this course of action.

At the end of the item, on behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Councillor Godfrey for attending the meeting.

**GP26/058     Planning Application Validation Criteria Consultation**

The Committee considered a Stafford Borough Council consultation seeking views on its Planning Application Validation Criteria setting out the information needed to assess planning applications.

An email from Stafford Borough Council and a copy of the 'Planning Application Validation Guidance and Local Validation Criteria' had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting. A link to the Local Validation Criteria Consultation had also been provided.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised the Committee that (whether or not a collective response was compiled) Town Councillors could complete the consultation independently.

The Committee agreed that Town Councillors put forward their individual comments to the Town Clerk in order that a draft collective response can be compiled (only with these responses) for consideration at the next meeting. The consultation close date is 17 October 2025.

**GP26/059     Heritage Centre**

The Committee considered an update on Stone Heritage Centre.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised the Committee that she had received an update from the Heritage Centre Manager detailing the following information:

- On 11 and 12 July the Heritage Centre successfully hosted a popular 'Sketch in Stone' exhibition, a showcase of paintings, sketchbooks and several 3D objects depicting the character of Stone.
- On 14 August he welcomed his 1000<sup>th</sup> visitor this year and since opening in June 2024 had received over 1960 visitors; numbers that had continued to exceed expectations.
- The recent VJ Day 80 exhibition ran from 14 to 30 August and received 135 visitors. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive with one moved visitor expressing their thanks with the comment 'thank you for showing that you care'.
- As part of the National Railway 200 Celebrations the Heritage Centre will host a display in early September. In collaboration, a special walk and talk led by Councillor Philip Leason and Mr Steve Booth had been organised for 13 September 2025.
- Future talks by Shaun Farrelly and Chris Westwood are scheduled for November and December 2025.

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- The Society for Staffordshire Artists will start to exhibit their work from 18 September, showcasing artistic interpretations of Stone and its surrounding areas.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed the Committee that the Heritage Centre Manager continued to work on the development of 'The Story of Stone'.

**GP26/060    Town Council Payments**

RESOLVED: To note the list\* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 June to 31 July 2025.

**GP26/061    Update from Working Groups:**

**Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group**

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that a Steering Group meeting would be arranged soon.

**Engagement with Young People**

Councillor Dawson had nothing to report on this occasion.

**GP26/062    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 J. Davies advised the Committee that a meeting of the Liaison Group would be held on 24 September 2025 at the Heritage Centre at 3pm and the SPCA County Officer would be attending along with Clerks and elected members of surrounding parishes.

Councillor Davies invited Town Councillors to join the meeting which would provide a briefing/discussion on Local Government Reorganisation.

**Stone ATC**

Councillor J. Davies advised the Committee that the next meeting of 2352 (Stone) Squadron ATC will take place on 11 September 2025. Unfortunately, he and the Town Mayor will not be available to attend due to the RAF Tactical Supply Wing Battle of Britain Dinner on the same evening.

**Age Concern Stone & District**

Councillor Davies reported on an Age Concern Stone & District meeting he had attended with Councillor Thornicroft. Topics of discussion included:

- The finances which were in good order. A charity donation of £1,200 had been received from a 75K Peak Ultra Marathan fundraising event.
- The office computers needed updating due to the ending of support for Windows 10.
- A call for new volunteers had been made through ALBOS after longstanding volunteers had given their notice. The opening hours may be affected until new staff are in post.
- The Lunch Club was oversubscribed, and Club members were off to Llandudno in September.
- Mr Ravenscroft had been appointed a Trustee to the charity.

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**Stafford District Access Group**

Councillor Kelt was not available to give a report.

**Stone Common Plot Trustees**

Councillor Townsend advised the Committee that a meeting of the Stone Common Plot Trustees, which included a Plot walkabout, had taken place on Sunday 31 August 2025.

The newly formed Resources Sub-Committee had met to look at how the Common Plot could attract funding into the future.

**Stone Community Hub Liaison Group**

Councillor Townsend advised the Committee that a meeting of the Stone Community Hub Liaison Group took place on 28 July 2025. Most issues raised were operational in nature and the Town Council office were supporting efforts to resolve these.

The Community Hub was coming to the end of a 12-week pilot scheme aimed at attracting a wider and new demographic of clients.

The Hub was well supported with food donations enabling it to continue with its food bank offering. More tinned and packaged foods welcomed.

The Hub is now more rigorously assessing clients using a standardised assessment process to match need with available services.

Councillor Townsend said that funding would always be an issue and the Hub were actively looking at new opportunities.

**SPCA Executive Committee**

Councillor Kelt was not available to give a report.

**West Midlands Railway and other Rail Matters**

Councillor Kelt was not available to give a report.

**CHAIRMAN**

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