

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 7 October 2025

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Best, J. Davies, L. Davies, K. Dawson, I. Fordham, J. Hood,
T. Kelt, B. Kenney, P. Leason, J. Metters, J. Powell, N. Powell, C. Thornicroft and
R. Townsend

Officers: L. Trigg (attended the meeting virtually on Teams), R. Edwards and
T. Williams

ABSENT: Councillors: A. Burgess and A. Mottershead

GP26/063 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor: A. Mottershead

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

GP26/064 Declarations of Interest

None

GP26/065 Requests for Dispensations

There were none

GP26/066 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.

GP26/067 To receive the report of Borough Councillors

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee.

Councillor Ian Fordham

Councillor Fordham informed the Committee that, since the Town Council's
meeting with the Stafford Borough Council Leader, Councillor Aiden Godfrey, a

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large amount of Borough Council Officers' and Members' time had been spent on planning for the restructure of local government.

He referenced the letter recently received from Group Leaders at Stafford Borough Council and drew the Committee's attention to the conclusion that a single southern unitary authority was the best option for residents of our area. This option was considered more financially sustainable, better able to attract investment, better equipped to compete with the city led North Staffordshire and West Midlands Authorities and avoid fragmented services.

Councillor Fordham informed the Committee that the preferred option would be made to Central Government by the end of November with the Government's response anticipated sometime during the spring of 2026.

GP26/068 Representations from Members of the Public

None

GP26/069 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 2 September 2025 (Minute Numbers GP26/048 – GP26/062), be approved as a correct record.

GP26/070 Minutes of Sub-Committees

RESOLVED:

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 16 September 2025 (Minute Numbers TTP26/010 – TTP26/016), that the draft minutes be noted.
- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 16 September 2025 (Minute Numbers ENV26/010 – ENV26/017), that the draft minutes be noted.

GP26/071 Local Government Reorganisation

The Committee considered the report* of the Town Clerk (which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting) on the Reorganisation of Local Government.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the report analyses the four options discussed amongst the authorities in the County in relation to their impact on Stone Town and the Town Council and ranks them in order of what would be best for the area. From this information the Town Clerk had drafted a potential response intended for the principal authorities in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent as the Town Council's contribution to the discussions on local government reorganisation.

The Town Clerk invited questions and noted a number of points that were raised by the Committee.

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The Committee asked the Town Clerk to stress that Stone Town Council was a unique town council and not a parish council. The Town Council is described in the response as the largest in Stafford Borough and the second largest in Staffordshire by net revenue budget 2025-26.

The Committee expressed its desire to hold on to the assets it held dear and to work to identify the assets it may wish to acquire post restructure.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council approves without amendment the Town Clerk's draft submission to the principal authorities in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent detailing Model A (as defined in the report) as the preferred option for dividing Staffordshire into unitary authorities. This would involve a north/south split of the County, with Stone included as part of the southern authority.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council authorises the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee, to enter into discussions with Stafford Borough Council with a view to protecting key assets into the future for the residents of Stone.

GP26/072 Budget Monitoring – August 2025

The Committee considered the report* of the Town Clerk which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- Notes the approved adjustments to the Council's budget set out at Appendix A.
- Notes the Council's performance against budget at the end of August 2025.

GP26/073 Heritage Centre Governance

The Committee considered the report* of the Town Clerk which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the Heritage Centre was currently governed by a steering group set up to oversee its establishment but the Heritage Centre had now moved on to a new stage. It was currently operating (although not yet fully), and receiving a significant number of visitors.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee there was still a case for a dedicated steering group to oversee the next stage of the development of the Centre, but with a revised brief to give a policy lead to officers in terms of how the Heritage Centre should develop and what the key policies and emphasis should be.

RESOLVED: That the Committee:

- Disband the current Heritage Centre Steering Group.
- Establish a new Heritage Centre Steering Group in line with the Town Clerk's report and enclosed terms of reference, and appoint the following Councillor Members to the Group for the year 2025/26: Two ex-officio members (Chairman of General Purposes Committee and Chairman of Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee), two other Councillor

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members of the current steering group (Councillor P. Leason and Councillor J. Davies) and one other Councillor.

- Adopt the terms of reference in the report appendix.

GP26/074 Nominations for SPCA Executive and AGM arrangements

The Committee considered an invitation to nominate a representative to stand for election to Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association's Executive. It was noted that the election will take place at the Association's AGM on the evening of Monday 24 November 2025 (with a closing date of Monday 10 November 2025 for nominations).

RESOLVED: To nominate Councillor Tom Kelt to stand for election for a second term, as a Stafford Borough and Stone Town representative to the SPCA Executive Committee.

The Chairman called for a second delegate to attend the Annual General Meeting and Councillor Metters indicated a wish to attend, if his commitments will allow.

GP26/075 Local Transport Plan Consultation

The Committee considered a Staffordshire County Council consultation seeking views on a new draft Local Transport Plan describing how Staffordshire's transport network should look, and the practical steps that should be taken to get there.

Full details of the consultation were provided with the agenda, via a link to Staffordshire County Council's website and the online survey.

The Committee agreed that Town Councillors would put forward their own individual comments to Staffordshire County Council via the Local Transport Plan survey.

GP26/076 Town Council Payments

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

GP26/077 Update from Working Groups:

Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group

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

Engagement with Young People

Consideration of disbandment of this working group will be listed for consideration at the next meeting.

GP26/078 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 took place on 24 September 2025 at the Heritage Centre and issues surrounding the reorganisation of Local Government were discussed at length. The next

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meeting of the Liaison Group would be held in January 2026 at which time it was hoped there would be greater clarity. Representatives were asked to consider areas where parishes could work together for mutual benefit.

Stone ATC

Councillor J. Davies advised the Committee that a meeting of 2352 (Stone) Squadron ATC had taken place on 6 October which he wasn't able to attend. He said the next event will be the 'Dining In' on 17 October 2025.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Thornicroft referred to Councillor Davies' report given at the last meeting.

Stafford District Access Group

Councillor Kelt reported on a recent meeting of the Access Group. The main points of discussion were wheelchair access on highways and footpaths and access to the rugby club. Also bus timetable and route information was discussed. The next meeting will take place on 8 December and Chief Inspector Giles Parsons will be in attendance.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Townsend advised the Committee that the next meeting was scheduled to take place in late November 2025.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Townsend advised the Committee that the next meeting of the Community Hub Liaison Group would be held in late November 2025.

SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that a meeting had taken place on 1 September which he could not attend. He said the agenda typically included items on policy, training, health and wellbeing and the general information that came through on email anyway. The key area of discussion was currently local government reorganisation with the main piece of advice being to agree the transfer of desirable assets from the Borough Council.

West Midlands Railway and other Rail Matters

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that a meeting took place on 25 September which he was not able to attend. The LNWR representative attended and congratulated Stone Station on their Open Day event. Sir Gavin Williamson MP has written to the Department for Transport regarding Stone Station's platform access to the trains.

It has been announced that West Midlands Trains and London Northwestern Railway will be taken back into public ownership in February 2026.

CHAIRMAN

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