

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 9 December 2025

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

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

ABSENT: Councillors: A. Best, A. Burgess, K. Dawson, B. Kenney and A. Mottershead

GP26/092 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: A. Best, A. Burgess, K. Dawson,
B. Kenney and 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.

GP26/093 Declarations of Interest

None

GP26/094 Requests for Dispensations

There were none

GP26/095 To receive the report of the County Councillors

The Chairman invited County Councillors to address the Committee.

County Councillor Jill Hood

Councillor Hood informed the Committee that County Councillor Ian Cooper had
resigned his leadership of Staffordshire County Council but would be continuing as
an Independent County Councillor for Tamworth.

County Councillor Andrew Mynors

Councillor Mynors was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP26/096 To receive the report of Borough Councillors

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee.

* Items marked with an asterisk refer to reports or papers circulated with the agenda or distributed at the meeting. They are attached as an appendix to the signed copy of the Council minutes.

Councillor Philip Leason

Councillor Leason reported on a Community Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee he had attended on 4 December 2025 where the annual report of waste management company, Veolia, had been presented.

He provided the Committee with facts and figures on the company's waste, recycling and garden collection rates which were marginally lower, and lower still for garden waste, than last year. He also said that Veolia ran a number of projects for schools including the offer of free fruit trees and strawberry plants for planting.

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that Freedom Leisure had given a report with information about Stone Leisure Centre. He said that fitness membership had increased by 44 this year, the learning to swim programme had seen an increase of 3, gym visits had rocketed by an enormous 12,979, and group exercise classes were more popular by around 200 this year.

Councillor Leason reported that the Borough Council was introducing a food waste collection service commencing from April 2026. The Cabinet had agreed the purchase of caddies and plastic liners as well as the literature for issue to residents.

The working group had expressed concern about the use of plastic liners as a small percentage of the plastic was not getting removed and had gone through to the recycling process.

Councillor Ian Fordham

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that the Borough Council's recommendations for the reorganisation of local government had been approved by Cabinet and submitted to central Government. The Council would now await Government feedback which was expected in March or April 2026.

Councillor Jill Hood

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that when Homes Plus closed their housing waiting list there were 2,000 people registered. Following a new call for people to express their interest in securing rented accommodation only 64 people had come forward. A paper was scheduled to be presented to Cabinet on 11 December 2025.

Councillor Hood said she was very pleased to report that there were currently no homeless people in Stone as the Borough Council had found permanent homes for them all.

GP26/097 Representations from Members of the Public

None

GP26/098 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 4 November 2025 (Minute Numbers GP26/079 – GP26/091), be approved as a correct record.

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GP26/099 Minutes of Sub-Committees

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 18 November 2025 (Minute Numbers TTP26/017 – TTP26/023), that the draft minutes be noted.
- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 18 November 2025 (Minute Numbers ENV26/018 – ENV26/025), that the draft minutes be noted.
- c) Estates Sub-Committee held on 18 November 2025 (Minute Numbers EST26/001 – EST26/010), that the draft minutes be noted.

GP26/100 Budget 2026-27 to 2028-29 Overview

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk* (which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting) commencing the process for examining the budget and precept level for the financial year 2026-27 for recommendation to the Council.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the figures in the report set the scene for the budget preparation. They were based on a standstill position (after looking at potential levels of inflation and fees and charges) and represented the continuation of the Council's existing activity and policies.

The Town Clerk reminded the Committee of the budget process, beginning with the Committee's consideration of the overall position of the Council followed by each of the sub-committees considering (in January 2026) the details of their own budgets and any changes they might want to make. The budget details for all sub-committees would then be brought back together at the next meeting of the General Purposes Committee for determination of the budget recommendation to the Council.

The Council would determine the budget and precept to be requested from Stafford Borough Council in February 2026.

The Committee did not propose any further recommendations in addition to those detailed in the Town Clerk's report.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee notes the standstill budget position for 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29 and the issues related to setting the precept, and:

- a. Authorises the reallocation of the inflation contingency, in accordance with the figures in the Town Clerk's report.
- b. Asks each sub-committee to consider its financial needs for the next three years and report back to the next meeting of the General Purposes Committee with its budget proposals.
- c. Agrees to consider its own budgets at the next meeting of this Committee.

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- d. Did not give any specific instructions to sub-committees to which they would need to have regard while preparing their proposed budgets.

GP26/101 Town Council Payments

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

GP26/102 Update from Working Groups:

Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that a meeting of the new Heritage Centre Steering Group would be arranged in the New Year.

GP26/103 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 called when more information was available on the direction that Local Government was moving in. Additional information would enable discussions to progress on the implications for town and parish councils.

Stone ATC

Councillor J. Davies advised the Committee that he had been unable to attend the last meeting of Stone ATC on 18 November 2025 (same evening as Town Council meetings). The next meeting would be taking place on 13 January 2026.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that there had been no meeting.

Stafford District Access Group

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that a meeting had taken place on 8 December 2025 and Chief Inspector Giles Parsons had attended. Most of the discussion was related to the use of e-scooters and e-bikes and the problems they cause.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that he had attended a meeting of Stone Common Plot Trustees on 12 November 2025 where reports had been given on the following:

The play plot trip rail had been installed, a new water metre had been installed at the plot house, tree work had been undertaken (including installation of a metal access gate), and next year's grazing rights charges agreed by Trustees. The Chairman said he would like to organise a small working party to undertake pond improvements and cut back ivy (which had since been done).

Councillor Thornicroft advised that a funding sub-committee had reported on the current funding arrangements and were looking at new and alternative funding opportunities.

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Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Townsend advised the Committee that he had attended the Hub's Annual General Meeting which was well attended. The Group had appointed a new trustee, reported on the continued popularity of their services, talked about funding/ways of securing new funding, and how they could broaden their customer base to offer more services to a wider group of people in Stone.

SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Kelt informed the Committee that a normal meeting of the Executive Committee had taken place (since the last General Purposes Committee meeting), as well as the Annual General Meeting on 24 November 2025.

The AGM contained the usual items and was followed by presentations from various groups/organisations who had an interest in the local council sector.

West Midlands Railway and other Rail Matters

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that a meeting had taken place with representatives of Network Rail, Sir Gavin Williamson MP, and Town Council representatives to discuss the maintenance of Stone Station, and afterwards items related to the train timetable and routes.

He said Network Rail were very positive and willing to assist with items that were the train operating company's responsibility.

Councillor Kelt had been unable to attend the last meeting of the Rail Users Group but had noted from the agenda that the track of Stone Station had been moved a few inches closer to the platform, although it still necessitated a large step off. There was the possibility that a Harrington Hump would be installed for disabled access.

CHAIRMAN