



# Stone

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## Town Council

**Town Clerk**

Les Trigg

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15 Station Road

STONE

ST15 8JP

24 February 2026

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** will be held in the **Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone**, on **TUESDAY 3 MARCH 2026 at 7:05pm**, or on the rising of the Council meeting, if later.

Les Trigg  
Town Clerk

### **AGENDA**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

To receive apologies for absence, and to consider the approval of any reasons given for absence under Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

**3. Requests for Dispensations Received**

**4. To receive a report from County Councillors representing Stone Town**

- County Councillor J. Hood
- County Councillor A. Mynors

**5. To receive a report from Borough Councillors representing Stone Town**

**6. Representations from Members of the Public**

To consider representations from members of the public on items to be considered at this meeting, in accordance with the Council's scheme of public participation.

**7. Minutes of Previous Meetings**

- a) To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 3 February 2026, Minute Numbers GP26/104 – GP26/118 (attached).

**8. Minutes of Sub-Committees**

There are no sub-committee minutes.

**9. Stone Town Policing**

To receive a verbal Police report and consider policing issues in Stone.

**10. Review of Standing Orders**

To undertake a review of the Council's Standing Orders.

By convention, consideration of the attached Standing Orders document will be deferred until the next meeting of this Committee. The document circulated has already been reviewed by the Clerk, who is not proposing any changes other than updating of the Procurement Act 2023 contract thresholds.

A copy of the Town Council's Standing Orders is attached to the electronic version of this agenda.

**11. Review of Financial Regulations**

To undertake a review of the Council's Financial Regulations.

By convention, consideration of the attached Financial Regulations document will be deferred until the next meeting of this Committee. The document circulated has already been reviewed by the Clerk, who is not proposing any changes other than updating of the Procurement Act 2023 contract thresholds.

A copy of the Town Council's Financial Regulations is attached to the electronic version of this agenda.

**12. Annual Review of Risk Management**

To receive the report of the Town Clerk (attached).

**13. Review of Councillor Code of Conduct**

To undertake a review of Councillor Code of Conduct. A copy of the document, updated for dates only, is attached to the agenda.

The Code has been reviewed by the Town Clerk, who is not proposing any changes.

**14. IT Policy**

To consider the attached IT policy.

**15. Local Government Reorganisation**

To receive the report of the Town Clerk (attached).

An invitation to participate in a public consultation on the reorganisation of Local Government, from Stafford Borough Council, is also attached.

**16. Town Council Payments**

To receive a list of payments made by the Council during the period 1 to 31 January 2026 (attached).

**17. Update from Working Groups:**

To receive updates from Working Group co-ordinators:

- a) Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group (Chairman: R. Kenney)

**18. To receive reports from Town Councillors on attendance at meetings as a representative of the Town Council**

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group – Cllr J. Davies

Stone ATC – Town Mayor & one Cllr – Cllrs: J. Metters and J. Davies

Age Concern Stone & District – Cllrs: J. Davies and C. Thornicroft

Stafford & Stone Access Group – Cllr T. Kelt

Stone Common Plot Trustees – Cllrs: A. Burgess, J. Hood, T. Kelt, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group – Cllrs: J. Battrick, J. Powell and R. Townsend

SPCA Executive Committee – Cllr T. Kelt

West Midlands Railway and other rail matters – Cllr T. Kelt

Members of the public are welcome to attend the General Purposes Committee meeting as observers and/or to make representations to the committee in accordance with the Council's scheme of public participation. Details of the scheme are displayed in the Council's notice boards and website.

Please access the Council Chamber from the rear of the building.

# Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

## Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 3 February 2026

**PRESENT:** Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and  
Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Best, I. Fordham, J. Hood, T. Kelt, B. Kenney, P. Leason,  
C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

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

**ABSENT:** Councillors: A. Burgess, J. Davies, L. Davies, K. Dawson, J. Metters, A. Mottershead  
J. Powell and N. Powell

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### **GP26/104** Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: A. Burgess, J. Davies, L. Davies,  
K. Dawson, J. Metters, A. Mottershead, J. Powell and N. Powell

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

### **GP26/105** Declarations of Interest and Declarations under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that as Councillor Townsend was a Council  
appointed representative to Stone Community Hub Liaison Group he did not need  
to declare an interest in agenda item 11d. (Minute Number GP26/114) – Grants to  
Local Organisations, and was able to speak and vote at the meeting.

Councillor R. Kenney and Councillor Hood advised the Committee that although  
they were members of St Michael's Hall Committee they did not have any  
involvement in the finances and were not required to declare an interest in agenda  
item 11e. (Minute Number GP26/114) – Grants to Local Organisations.

Councillor Hood declared a personal interest in item 11f. – Grants to Local  
Organisations, but stated that she was intending to seek a dispensation under the  
next agenda item.

### **GP26/106** Requests for Dispensations

The Committee considered a request for a dispensation from Councillor Hood in  
relation to agenda item 11f. – Grants to Local Organisations.

Councillor Hood had in advance of the meeting requested a dispensation\* to allow  
her to speak and vote in consideration of the grant application from Alleyne's  
Academy, as she was a school governor.

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\* 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.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Hood be granted a dispensation to speak and vote on agenda item 11f. (Minute Number GP26/114) – Grants to Local Organisations: Alleyne's Academy.

**GP26/107 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 Staffordshire County Council had invited County Councillors to put out a call to residents about a service improvement plan that was underway jointly with Staffordshire Enhanced Partnership. The plan included a review of the County's bus services for the purpose of identifying how well they were operating, whether they were meeting the needs of communities and whether there were gaps in service that needed to be addressed.

Councillor Hood asked that Town Councillors inform their contacts (stressing the imminent close date of Friday 6 February 2026) and expressed her hope that something positive would come out of the review for Stone and the surrounding areas.

**County Councillor Andrew Mynors**

Councillor Mynors was not in attendance at the meeting.

**GP26/108 To receive the report of Borough Councillors**

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee.

Councillor Jill Hood

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that the Borough Council's Housing Options Team was aware that a homeless person was sleeping in the bus shelter in Walton. Housing Officers had done everything in their power to persuade the person to accept accommodation but the offer of help had been declined.

Councillor Philip Leason

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that the Borough Council was implementing a food waste service from April 2026 but a lot of negative comments had been received, particularly in respect of costs. He said the Borough Council was implementing a government funded strategy and not a local initiative. Borough Councillors were in support of the new service.

**GP26/109 Representations from Members of the Public**

None received.

**GP26/110 Minutes**

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 9 December 2025 (Minute Numbers GP26/092 – GP26/103), be approved as a correct record.

**GP26/111 Minutes of Sub-Committees**

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 13 January 2026 (Minute Numbers TTP26/024 – TTP26/033), that the draft minutes be noted, and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number TTP26/030 be adopted.

The recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number TTP26/032 was considered as part of Minute Number GP26/101 (agenda item 10).

- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 13 January 2026 (Minute Numbers ENV26/026 – ENV26/034), that the draft minutes be noted.

The recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number ENV26/031 and ENV26/032 had been fed into the budget discussion which formed part of Minute Number ENV26/033.

The recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number ENV26/033 was considered as part of Minute Number GP26/101 (agenda item 10).

- c) Estates Sub-Committee held on 13 January 2026 (Minute Numbers EST26/011 – EST26/018), that the draft minutes be noted.

The recommendation of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number EST26/016 was considered as part of Minute Number GP26/101 (agenda item 10).

**GP26/112 General Purposes Committee – Budget 2026-27 to 2028-29**

The Committee received the report of the Town Clerk\* (which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting) examining the 2026-27 to 2028-29 budget requirements for the specific services managed directly by the General Purposes Committee, including those which had previously been the responsibility of the former Management Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee recommends for consideration later in the meeting alongside the proposals from Sub-Committees, the adoption of the standstill Committee budget for 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29, as detailed in the Clerk's report, with the following adjustments:

- a. An increased inflation provision of £208 in 2026-27, £248 in 2027-28 and £364 in 2028-29 for the Council as a whole as a result of

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\* 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.

budget changes put forward by Sub-Committees. *(NOTE: These figures will need to be recalculated if any of the budget proposals are changed when the overall budget for recommendation to the Council is considered later in the meeting).*

**GP26/113 Budget 2026-27 to 2028-29 for recommendation to the Council**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk\* (which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting) alongside the budget proposals from Sub-Committees and from this Committee.

RESOLVED: In respect of the Town Council's budget for 2026-27 to 2028-29, it is proposed that the following recommendations be made to the Council:

1. The Standstill Budget included in the Clerk's report to this meeting be recommended to the Council for adoption with the following amendments:
  - a. Estates:
    - i. A one-off contingency provision of £500 should be made in the Frank Jordan Centre 2026-27 budget for improvements to parking arrangements.
  - b. Environment:
    - i. A provision of £1,100 should be made in the current year's budget for the repair/replacement of the boundary fence at Mount Road Allotments.
    - ii. A provision of £2,000 in 2026-27 and £3,000 per annum in subsequent years should be added to the Environmental Initiatives budget to provide funding for the proposed Crown Meadow Management Plan.
  - c. Tourism and Town Promotion:
    - i. A one-off provision of £3,000 should be made in 2026-27 for the replacement of outdated Christmas lighting display features.
    - ii. An ongoing increase of £1,000 per annum should be made to the Tourism and Town Promotion budget to provide additional funding for a summer holiday children's event.
  - d. General Purposes:
    - i. An increased inflation provision of £208 in 2026-27, £248 in 2027-28 and £364 in 2028-29 for the Council as a whole as a result of budget changes put forward by Sub-Committees. *(NOTE: These figures will need to be recalculated if any of the other budget proposals for recommendation to the Council are changed at the Council meeting).*
2. As a consequence of the above, the precept on Stafford Borough Council for 2026-27 would be £431,362.01, with Local Council Tax Support Grant of £29,184.05 to be added. This would result in a 2026-27 Council Tax for this Council's purposes of £66.99 for a Band D property, an increase for the

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year of £3.00, with indicative Council Tax levels of £70.27 and £73.71 for the following two years.

**GP26/114 Grants to Local Organisations**

The Committee considered requests for grant aid from local organisations. Before consideration, the Town Clerk informed the Committee that £3,111 remained within the Grants budget.

The following organisations met the eligibility criteria within the Council's grants policy:

- a. **Organisation:** Stone Alzheimer's Club  
**Amount Requested:** £350  
**Reason:** To purchase a speaker and microphone system to aid communication and to play music at meetings.

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £300 to Stone Alzheimer's Club.

- b. **Organisation:** Tilling Drive Allotments  
**Amount Requested:** £500  
**Reason:** To support the replacement of a self-laid water pipe system which is showing signs of wear.

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £400 to Tilling Drive Allotments.

- c. **Organisation:** Stone Lions Club  
**Amount Requested:** £500  
**Reason:** Prostate screening.

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £500 to Stone Lions Club.

- d. **Organisation:** Stone Community Hub  
**Amount Requested:** £500  
**Reason:** To start a series of activities in 2026 to promote health and wellbeing.

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £400 to Stone Community Hub.

The following organisations did not meet the eligibility criteria within the Council's grants policy for the reasons stated but the Committee agreed to instigate a discussion about making an award of a grant:

- e. **Organisation:** St Michael's Hall  
**Amount Requested:** £500  
**Reason:** To support redecoration of the hall.  
i. Level of reserves

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £400 to St Michael's Hall.

- f. **Organisation:** Alleyne's Academy  
**Amount Requested:** £250  
**Reason:** To purchase materials to start a gardening club.  
i. Turnover in excess of £100,000

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RESOLVED: To award a grant of £250 to Alleyne's Academy.

- g. **Organisation:** Futures2gether  
**Amount Requested:** £500  
**Reason:** To purchase gardening tools to maintain a community garden.  
i. Turnover in excess of £100,000

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £400 to Futures2gether.

- h. **Organisation:** Stone Community First Responders  
**Amount Requested:** £500  
**Reason:** To purchase a Laerdal Suction unit (LSU) for use in emergency medical situations to clear a patients airway.  
i. Level of reserves

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £450 to Stone Community First Responders.

#### **GP26/115 Meeting Schedule for 2026-27**

The Committee considered a proposed meeting and civic events schedule\* for the period May 2026 to April 2027 which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Committee noted that as Stafford Borough Council's 2026-27 programme of meetings was not yet available, some amendments may subsequently need to be made to avoid future clashes.

RESOLVED: To approve the Town Council's meeting schedule for 2026-27 with the August meetings removed. Any further, necessary amendments during the year would be determined by the Town Clerk in consultation with the appropriate Committee or Sub-Committee Chairman, in line with the current practice.

#### **GP26/116 Town Council Payments**

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

#### **GP26/117 Update from Working Groups:**

##### **Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group**

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the first meeting of the new Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group had taken place with the Heritage Centre Manager receiving direction on the Heritage Centre's next stages of development. Over the next year or so this will include themed events such as '250 years of the Trent & Mersey Canal' and the development of the 'Story of Stone'.

The Chairman said the meeting was most productive and reported that the Group would soon be taking on some new co-opted members.

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**GP26/118 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**

The Chairman reported on behalf of Councillor J. Davies that there had not been a recent meeting of the Stone Area Parish Liaison Group. A meeting will be called as soon as the Government's decision regarding reorganisation in Staffordshire is published.

**Stone ATC**

The Chairman reported on behalf of Councillor J. Davies that a meeting of the Stone ATC Civilian Welfare Committee was held on Tuesday 13 January 2026 which unfortunately clashed with the Town Council meetings that evening. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 24 February 2026.

**Age Concern Stone & District**

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that there had been no meeting of Age Concern Stone & District. The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Friday 6 February 2026.

**Stafford & District Access Group**

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that no meeting of the Stafford & District Access Group had been held.

**Stone Common Plot Trustees**

Councillor Townsend advised the Committee that the newly formed Funding Sub-Committee had met for a second time and was formulating proposals to access new streams of funding for the Common Plot. A meeting would be held on 9 February 2026.

**Stone Community Hub Liaison Group**

Councillor Battrick informed the Committee that he and Councillor Townsend had attended a meeting of Stone Community Hub Liaison Group (on 3 February 2026).

The group had discussed a number of items including the Frank Jordan Centre car park and flooring, and the Hub representatives confirmed at the meeting that they were happy with the service provided by the Town Council office.

The General Purposes Committee discussed the role of the Liaison Group, and it was agreed that this needed to be clarified.

**SPCA Executive Committee**

Councillor Kelt informed the Committee that a meeting had taken place with the usual reports given. The main topic of discussion was council elections and the likelihood of them taking place over the next two years.

**West Midlands Railway and other Rail Matters**

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that he hadn't been able to attend the last meeting of West Midlands Railway. He said it did not appear there were references to Stone town directly and pointed out that the train operating companies had now reverted to public ownership.

**CHAIRMAN**

# Stone

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## Town Council



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### **Standing Orders**

### **Related to Council Business**

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April 2026

# Contents

|    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 1  | General.....  | 3  |
| 2  | Rules of debate at meetings .....   | 3  |
| 3  | Disorderly conduct at meetings .....  | 5  |
| 4  | Meetings generally.....   | 5  |
| 5  | Committees and sub-committees .....   | 8  |
| 6  | Ordinary council meetings.....  | 9  |
| 7  | Extraordinary meetings of the council and committees and sub-committees .....       | 10 |
| 8  | Previous resolutions .....  | 11 |
| 9  | Voting on appointments .....  | 11 |
| 10 | Motions for a meeting that require written notice to be given to the Proper Officer | 11 |
| 11 | Motions at a meeting that do not require written notice .....                       | 12 |
| 12 | Handling confidential or sensitive information .....                                | 13 |
| 13 | Draft minutes.....  | 13 |
| 14 | Code of conduct and dispensations .....   | 14 |
| 15 | Code of conduct complaints.....   | 15 |
| 16 | Proper Officer .....  | 15 |
| 17 | Responsible Financial Officer .....   | 16 |
| 18 | Accounts and accounting statements.....   | 16 |
| 19 | Financial controls and procurement .....  | 17 |
| 20 | Staffing matters .....  | 18 |
| 21 | Requests for information.....   | 18 |
| 22 | Relations with the press/media .....  | 19 |
| 23 | Execution and sealing of legal deeds .....  | 19 |
| 24 | Restrictions on councillor activities .....   | 19 |

# 1 GENERAL

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- 1.1 These standing orders govern the conduct of the business of the Council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2 Should there be a clash between the provisions of this document and those within other documents which prescribe the activities of the Council, the order of precedence shall be:
- a. National Legislation
  - b. The Council's Standing Orders (this document)
  - c. All other documents
- 1.3 All or part of a standing order, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory requirements, may be suspended by resolution at the meeting in relation to the consideration of an item on the agenda. *(NOTE: Where a standing order incorporates a mandatory statutory requirement, the requirement and the circumstances in which the requirement applies is indicated in brackets following the relevant standing order below. This does not indicate that the application of the standing order is limited only to those circumstances, but just indicates the extent to which the standing order can be suspended by this provision).*
- 1.4 A motion to add to or vary or revoke one or more of the Council's standing orders, except one that incorporates mandatory statutory requirements, shall be proposed by a special motion, the written notice by at least three councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 10 below.
- 1.5 The Proper Officer shall provide a copy of the Council's standing orders to a Councillor as soon as possible after they have delivered their acceptance of office form.
- 1.6 The decision of the chairman<sup>2</sup> of a meeting as to the application of standing orders at the meeting shall be final.

## 2 RULES OF DEBATE AT MEETINGS

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- 2.1 Items on the agenda shall be considered in the order that they appear unless the order is changed at the discretion of the chairman of the meeting.
- 2.2 A motion (including an amendment) shall not be progressed unless it has been moved and seconded.
- 2.3 A motion on the agenda that is not moved by its proposer will be treated by the chairman of the meeting as withdrawn.

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<sup>1</sup> All references to "the Council" in this document shall also be considered to refer to the General Purposes Committee for functions which have been delegated to that Committee.

<sup>2</sup> All references to "Chairman" and "Vice-Chairman" shall be considered to refer to the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor in respect of a full Council meeting unless specifically stated otherwise.

- 2.4 If a motion (including an amendment) has been seconded, it may be withdrawn by the proposer only with the consent of the seconder.
- 2.5 The mover of a motion shall have a right to reply, not exceeding five minutes, at the conclusion of the debate immediately before the motion is put to the vote. No further debate shall take place once this right to reply has been exercised.
- 2.6 An amendment is a proposal to remove or add words to a motion. It shall not negate the motion.
- 2.7 If an amendment to the original motion is carried, the amendment becomes the substantive motion upon which further amendment(s) may be moved.
- 2.8 An amendment shall not be considered unless early verbal notice of it is given at the meeting and, if requested by the chairman of the meeting, is expressed in writing to the chairman.
- 2.9 A councillor may make an amendment to their own motion. If a motion has already been seconded, the amendment shall require the consent of the seconder.
- 2.10 Subject to standing order 2.11 below, if there is more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion only one amendment shall be moved and debated at a time, in the order directed by the chairman of the meeting.
- 2.11 In exceptional circumstances, several amendments may be discussed together if the chairman of the meeting considers this expedient but each amendment shall be voted upon separately.
- 2.12 A councillor may not move more than one amendment to an original or substantive motion.
- 2.13 The mover of an amendment has no right of reply at the end of debate on it.
- 2.14 Where a series of amendments to an original motion are carried, the mover of the original motion shall have a right of reply either at the end of debate on the first amendment or at the very end of debate on the final substantive motion immediately before it is put to the vote.
- 2.15 Unless permitted by the chairman of the meeting, a councillor may speak once in the debate on a motion except:
  - a. to speak on an amendment moved by another councillor;
  - b. to move or speak on another amendment if the motion has been amended since they last spoke;
  - c. to make a point of order;
  - d. to give a personal explanation; or
  - e. in exercise of a right of reply.
- 2.16 During the debate of a motion, a councillor may interrupt only on a point of order or a personal explanation and the councillor who was interrupted shall stop speaking. A councillor raising a point of order shall identify the standing order which they consider has been breached or specify the other irregularity in the proceedings of the meeting they are concerned by.

- 2.17 A point of order shall be decided by the chairman of the meeting, whose decision shall be final.
- 2.18 When a motion is under debate, no other motion shall be moved except:
- a. to amend the motion;
  - b. to proceed to the next business;
  - c. to adjourn the debate;
  - d. to put the motion to a vote;
  - e. to ask a person to be no longer heard or to leave the meeting;
  - f. to refer a motion to a committee or sub-committee for consideration;
  - g. to exclude the public and press;
  - h. to adjourn the meeting; or
  - i. to suspend particular standing order(s) excepting those which reflect mandatory statutory requirements.
- 2.19 Before an original or substantive motion is put to the vote, the chairman of the meeting shall be satisfied that sufficient information is available to make a sound decision, the motion has been sufficiently debated and that the mover of the motion under debate has exercised or waived their right of reply.
- 2.20 Excluding motions moved under standing order 2.18 above, the contributions or speeches by a councillor shall relate only to the motion under discussion and shall not exceed five minutes without the consent of the chairman of the meeting.

### **3 DISORDERLY CONDUCT AT MEETINGS**

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- 3.1 No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this standing order is ignored, the chairman of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.
- 3.2 If these person(s) disregard the request of the chairman of the meeting to moderate or improve their conduct, any councillor or the chairman of the meeting may move that the person be no longer heard or excluded from the meeting. The motion, if seconded, shall be put to the vote without discussion.
- 3.3 If a resolution made under standing order 3.2 above is ignored, the chairman of the meeting may take further reasonable steps to restore order or to progress the meeting. This may include temporarily suspending or closing the meeting.

### **4 MEETINGS GENERALLY**

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- 4.1 Meetings shall not take place in premises which at the time of the meeting are used for the supply of alcohol, unless no other premises are available free of charge or at a reasonable cost. (*Mandatory: Council only*)
- 4.2 Public notice of the time and place of a meeting shall be given by posting it outside the Council's offices at least clear three days before the meeting. The minimum three clear days for notice of a meeting does not include the day on which notice was issued, the

day of the meeting, a Sunday, a day of the Christmas break, a day of the Easter break or of a bank holiday or a day appointed for public thanksgiving or mourning. *(Mandatory: Council. For committees, the minimum three clear days' public notice for a meeting does not include the day on which the notice was issued or the day of the meeting. There are no mandatory requirements for sub-committees)*

- 4.3 Meetings of the Council, committees and sub-committees shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be by a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion. *(Mandatory: Council and Committees)*
- 4.4 Subject to standing order 4.3 above and the provisions of the Council's scheme of public participation, members of the public are permitted to:
- a. Make representations or raise issues at any ordinary Council meeting in relation to the work of the Council.
  - b. Raise issues at any ordinary committee or sub-committee meeting related to items of business on the agenda.
  - c. Present petitions at any ordinary Council meeting on issues within the Council's remit.
- 4.5 Subject to standing order 4.4, no more than two members of the public are entitled to speak at any full Council meeting, and shall each speak once only, for not more than 10 minutes. Where more than two members of the public have requested to speak, the Proper Officer shall determine which requests shall have preference, based on their relevance to the meeting, the urgency of the matter to be raised and the time that the request was received.
- 4.6 In accordance with standing order 4.4 above, a question asked by a member of the public during a public participation session at a full Council meeting shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question.
- 4.7 In accordance with standing order 4.6 above, the Chairman may direct that a response to a question posed by a member of the public be referred to a Councillor for an oral response, to a committee or sub-committee for further consideration or to an employee for a written or oral response.
- 4.8 Subject to standing order 4.4 above, no more than four members of the public are entitled to speak at any committee or sub-committee meeting, and shall each shall speak once only, for not more than three minutes (five minutes if there are two or less speakers). Where more than four members of the public have requested to speak, the Proper Officer shall determine which requests shall have preference, based on their relevance to the meeting, the urgency of the matter to be raised and the time that the request was received.
- 4.9 No response shall be made to a public submission made under paragraph 4.8 above, nor any debate entered into, as the item will be fully debated when the agenda item itself is considered.
- 4.10 A record of a public participation session at a meeting shall be included in the minutes of that meeting.

- 4.11 A person shall raise their hand when requesting to speak and stand when speaking (except when a person has a disability or is likely to suffer discomfort). The chairman of the meeting may at any time permit a person to be seated when speaking.
- 4.12 A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct their comments to the chairman of the meeting.
- 4.13 Only one person is permitted to speak at a time. If more than one person wants to speak, the chairman of the meeting shall direct the order of speaking.
- 4.14 The press shall be provided with reasonable facilities for the taking of their report of all or part of a meeting at which they are entitled to be present. *(Mandatory: Council and Committees)*
- 4.15 Subject to standing orders which indicate otherwise, anything authorised or required to be done by, to or before the Chairman of the Council may in their absence be done by, to or before the Vice-Chairman of the Council. *(Mandatory: Council)*
- 4.16 The Chairman, if present, shall preside at a meeting. If the Chairman is absent from a meeting, the Vice-Chairman, if present, shall preside. If both the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman are absent from a meeting, a councillor as chosen by the councillors present at the meeting shall preside at the meeting. *(Mandatory: Council)*
- 4.17 Subject to a meeting being quorate, all questions at a meeting shall be decided by a majority of the councillors or councillors with voting rights present and voting. *(Mandatory)*
- 4.18 The chairman of a meeting may give an original vote on any matter put to the vote, and in the case of an equality of votes may exercise their casting vote whether or not they gave an original vote. *See standing orders 6.8 and 6.9 below for the different rules that apply in the election of the Chairman of the Council at the annual meeting of the council. (Mandatory)*
- 4.19 Unless standing orders provide otherwise, voting on a question shall be by a show of hands. At the request of a councillor, their own vote will be recorded in the minutes. Such a request shall be made before moving on to the next item of business on the agenda.
- 4.20 In addition, any councillor may request that the voting on any question shall be recorded so as to show whether each councillor present and voting gave their vote for or against that question.
- 4.21 The minutes of a meeting shall include an accurate record of the following:
- a. the time and place of the meeting;
  - b. the names of councillors present and absent;
  - c. interests that have been declared by councillors and non-councillors with voting rights;
  - d. whether a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights left the meeting when matters that they held interests in were being considered;
  - e. if there was a public participation session; and
  - f. the resolutions made.

- 4.22 A councillor or a non-councillor with voting rights who has a disclosable pecuniary interest or another interest as set out in the council's code of conduct in a matter being considered at a meeting is subject to statutory limitations or restrictions under the code on their right to participate and vote on that matter.
- 4.23 No business may be transacted at a meeting unless at least one-third of the whole number of members of the Council, committee or sub-committee are present and in no case shall the quorum of a meeting be less than three.
- 4.24 If a meeting is or becomes inquorate no business shall be transacted and the meeting shall be closed. The business on the agenda for the meeting shall be adjourned to another meeting.
- 4.25 A meeting shall not exceed a period of 1.5 hours, nor any group of meetings held on the same evening exceed 2.5 hours without a resolution of the meeting to continue beyond this limit.

## **5 COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES**

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- 5.1 The council may appoint standing committees or other committees and sub-committees as may be necessary, and:
- a. shall determine their terms of reference;
  - b. shall determine the number and time of the ordinary meetings of a standing committee up until the date of the next annual meeting of full council;
  - c. shall permit a committee and sub-committee, other than in respect of the ordinary meetings of a committee, to determine the number and time of its meetings;
  - d. shall appoint and determine the terms of office of members of such a committee or sub-committee;
  - e. shall, after it has appointed the members of a committee or sub-committee, appoint the chairman of that committee or sub-committee;
  - f. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a committee;
  - g. shall determine if the public and press are permitted to attend the meetings of a sub-committee and also the advance public notice requirements, if any, required for the meetings of a sub-committee;
  - h. shall determine if the public may participate at a meeting of a sub-committee that they are permitted to attend; and
  - i. may dissolve a committee or sub-committee.
- 5.2 Unless the council determines otherwise, a committee or sub-committee may appoint one or more working groups whose coordinator, terms of reference and members shall be determined by the appointing committee or sub-committee.
- 5.3 Notwithstanding any appointments made to sub-committees and working groups under standing orders 5.1d and 5.2 above, the Town Mayor, the chairman of the General Purposes Committee and the chairman of the parent committee shall be ex-officio members of all sub-committees and working groups with full voting rights.

- 5.4 The members of a committee, sub-committee or working group may include non-councillors unless it is a committee which regulates and controls the finances of the Council.
- 5.5 Unless the Council determines otherwise, all the members of an advisory committee and a sub-committee of the advisory committee may be non-councillors.

## **6 ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETINGS**

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- 6.1 In an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on or within 14 days following the day on which the new councillors elected take office.
- 6.2 In a year which is not an election year, the annual meeting of the Council shall be held on such day in May as the council may direct.
- 6.3 All meetings of the Council, its committees and sub-committees shall take place at 15 Station Road, Stone, with the first meeting commencing at 7:00pm, unless:
- a. it is specifically agreed otherwise at a previous meeting, or,
  - b. it is anticipated, prior to the dispatch of meeting notice(s), that there would be a good reason that the meeting(s) should not be held in this or another previously agreed location, wherein the Town Clerk would be authorised to arrange an alternative location for the meeting(s). This includes the calling of an online meeting where permitted by law, or the conversion of a previously planned online meeting to a physical one and vice versa.
- 6.4 In addition to the annual meeting of the Council, at least three other ordinary meetings shall be held in each year on such dates and times as the council directs.
- 6.5 The first business conducted at the annual meeting of the Council shall be the election of the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor.
- 6.6 The Town Mayor, unless they have resigned or become disqualified, shall continue in office and preside at the annual meeting until their successor is elected at the next annual meeting of the council.
- 6.7 The Deputy Mayor, unless they resign or become disqualified, shall hold office until immediately after the election of the Town Mayor at the next annual meeting of the council.
- 6.8 In an election year, if the current Town Mayor has not been re-elected as a member of the Council, they shall preside at the meeting until a successor Town Mayor has been elected. The current Town Mayor shall not have an original vote in respect of the election of the new Town Mayor but must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.
- 6.9 In an election year, if the current Town Mayor has been re-elected as a member of the Council, they shall preside at the meeting until a new Town Mayor has been elected. They may exercise an original vote in respect of the election of the new Town Mayor and must give a casting vote in the case of an equality of votes.

- 6.10 Following the election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor at the annual meeting of the council, the business of the annual meeting may include:
- a. In an election year, delivery by the Town Mayor, Deputy Town Mayor and councillors of their acceptance of office forms unless the council resolves for this to be done at a later date. In a year which is not an election year, delivery by the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor of their acceptance of office forms unless the council resolves for this to be done at a later date;
  - b. Confirmation of the accuracy of the minutes of the last meeting of the council;
  - c. Receipt of the minutes of the last meeting of a committee;
  - d. Consideration of the recommendations made by a committee;
  - e. Review of delegation arrangements to committees, sub-committees, staff and other local authorities;
  - f. Review of the terms of reference for committees;
  - g. Appointment of members to existing committees;
  - h. Appointment of any new committees;
  - i. Review and adoption of appropriate standing orders and financial regulations;
  - j. Review of arrangements, including any charters and agency agreements, with other local authorities and review of contributions made to expenditure incurred by other local authorities;
  - k. Review of representation on or work with external bodies and arrangements for reporting back;
  - l. In an election year, to make arrangements with a view to the council becoming eligible to exercise the general power of competence in the future;
  - m. Review of inventory of land and assets including buildings and office equipment;
  - n. Confirmation of arrangements for insurance cover in respect of all insured risks;
  - o. Review of the council's and/or staff subscriptions to other bodies;
  - p. Review of the council's complaints procedure;
  - q. Review of the council's procedures for handling requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998;
  - r. Review of the council's policy for dealing with the press/media; and
  - S. Determining the time and place of ordinary meetings of the full council up to and including the next annual meeting of full council.

## **7 EXTRAORDINARY MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL AND COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES**

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- 7.1 The Town Mayor may convene an extraordinary meeting of the council at any time.
- 7.2 If the Town Mayor does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting of the council within seven days of having been requested in writing to do so by two councillors, any two councillors may convene an extraordinary meeting of the council. The public notice

giving the time, place and agenda for such a meeting must be signed by the two councillors.

- 7.3 The chairman of a committee or a sub-committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of the committee or the sub-committee at any time.
- 7.4 If the chairman of a committee or a sub-committee does not or refuses to call an extraordinary meeting within seven days of having been requested by to do so by two members of the committee or the sub-committee, any two members of the committee or the sub-committee may convene an extraordinary meeting of a committee or a sub-committee.
- 7.5 The Town Clerk may call a meeting of the Council or any committee or sub-committee.

## **8 PREVIOUS RESOLUTIONS**

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- 8.1 A resolution shall not be reversed within six months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least six councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 10 below, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee or a sub-committee.
- 8.2 When a motion moved pursuant to standing order 8.1 above has been disposed of, no similar motion may be moved within a further six months.

## **9 VOTING ON APPOINTMENTS**

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- 9.1 Where more than two persons have been nominated for a position to be filled by the Council and none of those persons has received an absolute majority of votes in their favour, the name of the person having the least number of votes shall be struck off the list and a fresh vote taken. This process shall continue until a majority of votes is given in favour of one person. A tie in votes may be settled by the casting vote exercisable by the chairman of the meeting.

## **10 MOTIONS FOR A MEETING THAT REQUIRE WRITTEN NOTICE TO BE GIVEN TO THE PROPER OFFICER**

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- 10.1 A motion shall relate to the responsibilities of the meeting which it is tabled for and in any event shall relate to the performance of the Council's statutory functions, powers and obligations or an issue which specifically affects the Council's area or its residents.
- 10.2 No motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is on the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Proper Officer at least ten clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice, the day of the meeting, Saturdays, Sundays or Public Holidays.

- 10.3 The Proper Officer may, before including a motion on the agenda received in accordance with standing order 10.2 above, correct obvious grammatical or typographical errors in the wording of the motion.
- 10.4 If the Proper Officer considers the wording of a motion received in accordance with standing order 10.2 above is not clear in meaning, the motion shall be rejected until the mover of the motion resubmits it in writing to the Proper Officer so that it can be understood at least ten clear days before the meeting.
- 10.5 If the wording or subject of a proposed motion is considered improper, the Proper Officer shall consult with the chairman of the forthcoming meeting or, as the case may be, the councillors who have convened the meeting, to consider whether the motion shall be included in the agenda or rejected.
- 10.6 Subject to standing order 10.5 above, the decision of the Proper Officer as to whether or not to include the motion on the agenda shall be final.
- 10.7 Should any urgent business arise between scheduled meetings of the Council or any standing committee or sub-committee, the Proper Officer will call a special meeting to deal with the issue.
- 10.8 Where urgent planning business occurs between ordinary meetings of the Council's Planning Consultative Committee, the Proper Officer shall circulate details of the business to Members, asking for comments. Where the view of Members is clear, and where no Member has requested that a special meeting of the Planning Consultative Committee should be arranged to discuss the business, those views shall be conveyed to the Borough Council by the Proper Officer following consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Consultative Committee or other appropriate Member(s) in the absence of the Chairman.
- 10.9 Where any matter is so urgent that it is not reasonable to call a special meeting with the legally required notice periods, the Council's Proper Officer is authorised to take any decision on behalf of the Council which can legally be delegated by the Council to an officer. Before taking such a decision, the Proper Officer shall take reasonable steps to consult with Council Members, and shall report the decision and the reason for its urgency at the next ordinary meeting of the Council or one of its committees if the decision would normally have been taken there.

## **11 MOTIONS AT A MEETING THAT DO NOT REQUIRE WRITTEN NOTICE**

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- 11.1 The following motions may be moved at a meeting without written notice to the Proper Officer:
- a. to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes of a meeting;
  - b. to move to a vote;
  - c. to defer consideration of a motion;
  - d. to refer a motion to a particular committee or sub-committee;
  - e. to appoint a person to preside at a meeting;

- f. to change the order of business on the agenda;
- g. to proceed to the next business on the agenda;
- h. to require a written report;
- i. to appoint a committee or sub-committee and their members;
- j. to extend the time limits for speaking;
- k. to exclude the press and public from a meeting in respect of confidential or sensitive information which is prejudicial to the public interest;
- l. to not hear further from a councillor or a member of the public;
- m. to exclude a councillor or member of the public for disorderly conduct;
- n. to temporarily suspend the meeting;
- o. to suspend a particular standing order (unless it reflects mandatory statutory requirements);
- p. to adjourn the meeting; or
- q. to close a meeting.

## **12 HANDLING CONFIDENTIAL OR SENSITIVE INFORMATION**

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- 12.1 The agenda, papers that support the agenda, and the minutes of a meeting shall not disclose or otherwise undermine confidential or sensitive information which for special reasons would not be in the public interest.
- 12.2 Councillors and staff shall not disclose confidential or sensitive information which for special reasons would not be in the public interest.

## **13 DRAFT MINUTES**

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- 13.1 If the draft minutes of a preceding meeting have been served on councillors with the agenda to attend the meeting at which they are due to be approved for accuracy, they shall be taken as read.
- 13.2 There shall be no discussion about the draft minutes of a preceding meeting except in relation to their accuracy. A motion to correct an inaccuracy in the draft minutes shall be moved in accordance with standing order 11.1a above.
- 13.3 The accuracy of draft minutes, including any amendment(s) made to them, shall be confirmed by resolution and shall be signed by the chairman of the meeting and stand as an accurate record of the meeting to which the minutes relate.
- 13.4 If the chairman of the meeting does not consider the minutes to be an accurate record of the meeting to which they relate, they shall sign the minutes and include a paragraph in the following terms or to the same effect:

“The chairman of this meeting does not believe that the minutes of the meeting of the ( ) held on [date] in respect of ( ) were a correct record but that view was not upheld by the meeting and the minutes are confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings.”

- 13.5 Upon a resolution which confirms the accuracy of the minutes of a meeting, the draft minutes or recordings of the meeting for which approved minutes exist shall be destroyed.

## 14 CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISPENSATIONS

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*See also standing order 4.22 above.*

- 14.1 All councillors and non-councillors with voting rights shall observe the code of conduct adopted by the council.
- 14.2 Unless they have been granted a dispensation, a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights shall withdraw from a meeting when it is considering a matter in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest. They may return to the meeting after it has considered the matter in which they had the interest.
- 14.3 Unless they have been granted a dispensation, a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights shall not take part in any debate or vote at a meeting when it is considering a matter in which they have a personal interest, though they would be permitted to take part in a public participation item in the same way as any member of the public.
- 14.4 Dispensation requests shall be in writing and submitted to the Proper Officer before the start of the meeting for which the dispensation is required.
- 14.5 A decision as to whether to grant a dispensation shall be made by the meeting of the council, committee or sub-committee for which the dispensation is required and that decision is final.
- 14.6 A dispensation request shall confirm:
- a. the description and the nature of the disclosable pecuniary interest or personal interest to which the request for the dispensation relates;
  - b. whether the dispensation is required to participate at a meeting in a discussion only or a discussion and a vote;
  - c. the date of the meeting or the period (not exceeding the remaining time to the next Council election) for which the dispensation is sought; and
  - d. an explanation as to why the dispensation is sought.
- 14.7 Subject to standing orders 14.4 and 14.6 above, dispensation requests shall be considered at the beginning of the meeting of the council, committee or a sub-committee for which the dispensation is required.
- 14.8 A dispensation may be granted in accordance with standing order 14.5 above if having regard to all relevant circumstances the following applies:
- a. without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited from participating in the particular business would be so great a proportion of the meeting transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business, or

- b. granting the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the council's area, or
- c. it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation.

## 15 CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

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- 15.1 Upon formal written notification from Stafford Borough Council that it is dealing with a complaint that a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights has breached the council's code of conduct, the Proper Officer shall, subject to standing order 12 above, report this to the council.
- 15.2 Where the notification in standing order 15.1 above relates to a complaint made by the Proper Officer, the Proper Officer shall notify the Town Mayor of this fact, and the Town Mayor shall nominate another staff member to assume the duties of the Proper Officer in relation to the complaint until it has been determined and the council has agreed what action, if any, to take in accordance with standing order 15.4 below.
- 15.3 The council may:
- a. provide information or evidence where such disclosure is necessary to progress an investigation of the complaint or is required by law;
  - b. seek information relevant to the complaint from the person or body with statutory responsibility for investigation of the matter;
- 15.4 Upon notification by the District or Unitary Council that a councillor or non-councillor with voting rights has breached the council's code of conduct, the council shall consider what, if any, action to take against them. Such action excludes disqualification or suspension from office. *(Mandatory)*

## 16 PROPER OFFICER

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- 16.1 The Proper Officer shall be either (i) the clerk or (ii) other staff member(s) nominated by the council to undertake the work of the Proper Officer when the Proper Officer is absent or otherwise unable to act.
- 16.2 The Proper Officer shall:
- a. at least three clear days before a meeting of the council, a committee and a sub-committee serve on councillors, by email (where agreed) or by delivery or post at their residences, a signed summons confirming the time, place and the agenda. *(Mandatory for council and committees. See standing order 4.2 above for the meaning of clear days.);*
  - b. give public notice of the time, place and agenda at least three clear days before a meeting of the council or a meeting of a committee or a sub-committee (provided that the public notice with agenda of an extraordinary meeting of the council convened by councillors is signed by them); *(Mandatory for council and committees. See standing order 4.2 above for the meaning of clear days.);*

- c. subject to standing order 10 above, include on the agenda all motions put forward by councillors unless withdrawn by the councillor themselves at least six clear days before the meeting;
- d. convene a meeting of full council for the election of a new Chairman of the Council, occasioned by a casual vacancy in the office (*Mandatory*);
- e. facilitate inspection of the minute book by local government electors;
- f. receive and retain copies of byelaws made by other local authorities (*Mandatory*);
- g. retain acceptance of office forms from councillors;
- h. retain a copy of every councillor's register of interests;
- i. assist with responding to requests made under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Data Protection Act 2018, in accordance with and subject to the council's policies and procedures relating to the same;
- j. receive and send general correspondence and notices on behalf of the council except where there is a resolution to the contrary;
- k. manage the organisation, storage of, access to and destruction of information held by the council in paper and electronic form;
- l. arrange for legal deeds to be executed; See also standing order 23 below.
- m. arrange or manage the prompt authorisation, approval, and instruction regarding any payments to be made by the council in accordance with the council's financial regulations;
- n. record every planning application notified to the council and the council's response to the local planning authority;
- o. manage access to information about the council via the publication scheme; and
- p. retain custody of the seal of the council (if any) which shall not be used for the sealing of legal deeds without a resolution to that effect. See also *standing order 23 below*.

## **17 RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER**

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- 17.1 The Town Clerk shall undertake the role of responsible financial officer, unless there is a council resolution appointing a different officer. The council shall appoint an appropriate staff member to undertake the work of the Responsible Financial Officer when the Responsible Financial Officer is absent.

## **18 ACCOUNTS AND ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

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- 18.1 "Proper practices" in standing orders refer to the most recent version of Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – a Practitioners' Guide (England)
- 18.2 All payments by the council shall be authorised, approved and paid in accordance with the law, proper practices and the council's financial regulations.
- 18.3 The Responsible Financial Officer shall supply to each councillor as soon as practicable after 30 June, 30 September and 31 December in each year a statement to summarise the Council's income and expenditure compared with the approved budget and an explanation of significant variances.

- 18.4 As soon as possible after the financial year end at 31 March, the Responsible Financial Officer shall provide each councillor with a statement summarising the council's income and expenditure for the year and the full council the accounting statements for the year in the form of the annual return, as required by proper practices, for consideration and approval.
- 18.5 The year-end accounting statements shall be prepared in accordance with proper practices for a year to 31 March. The annual return of the council, which is subject to external audit, including the annual governance statement, shall be presented to council for consideration and formal approval before 30 June or any other such date as specified in regulations.

## 19 FINANCIAL CONTROLS AND PROCUREMENT

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- 19.1 The council shall consider and approve financial regulations drawn up by the Responsible Financial Officer, which shall include detailed arrangements in respect of the following:
- a. the keeping of accounting records and systems of internal controls;
  - b. the assessment and management of financial risks faced by the council;
  - c. the work of the independent internal auditor in accordance with proper practices and the receipt of regular reports from the internal auditor, which shall be required at least annually;
  - d. the inspection and copying by councillors and local electors of the council's accounts and/or orders of payments; and
  - e. procurement policies (subject to standing orders 19.3 to 19.8 below).
- 19.2 Financial regulations shall be reviewed regularly for fitness of purpose.
- 19.3 The letting of contracts by the Council must be in accordance with the Procurement Act 2023, or subsequent replacement/supplementary legislation.
- 19.4 Contracts expected to be below the value of £30,000 (including VAT) are outside the scope of standing orders, but may be governed by the provisions within the Council's financial regulations.
- 19.5 Contracts above the value prescribed in the Procurement Act 2023 of £207,720 (goods and services)<sup>3</sup> or £5,193,000 (works)<sup>3</sup> (including VAT), which have "detailed and complex" requirements will be undertaken in partnership with the County Council, who will be able to ensure that these complex regulations are adhered to.
- 19.6 Between the figures in paragraph 19.4 and 19.5, the Council may:
- a. Advertise the contract or otherwise offer it on the open market. In this case the contract must also be published on the "Contract Finder" website.
  - b. Offer the contract to a closed list of contractors, or
  - c. Offer the contract to its "preferred contractor" identified for that area of work. In this case the requirement to advertise on the "Contracts Finder"

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<sup>3</sup> 2026 values. These figures may vary from time to time.

website would not apply, although the award of the contract would still need to be posted on the site.

- 19.7 Subject to any additional requirements in the financial regulations of the council, the tender process for contracts for the supply of goods, materials, services or the execution of works under standing order 19.6a and 19.6b above where the value is anticipated to exceed £60,000 shall include, as a minimum, the following steps:
- a. a specification for the goods, materials, services or the execution of works shall be drawn up;
  - b. an invitation to tender shall be drawn up to confirm (i) the council's specification (ii) the time, date and address for the submission of tenders (iii) the date of the council's written response to the tender and (iv) the prohibition on prospective contractors contacting councillors or staff to encourage or support their tender outside the prescribed process;
  - c. the invitation to tender shall be advertised in a local newspaper and/or other manner that is appropriate (standing order 19.6a only);
  - d. tenders are to be submitted in writing in a sealed marked envelope addressed to the Proper Officer;
  - e. tenders shall be opened by the Proper Officer in the presence of at least one councillor after the deadline for submission of tenders has passed;
  - f. tenders are to be reported to and considered by the appropriate meeting of the council or a committee or sub-committee with delegated responsibility.
- 19.8 Neither the council, nor a committee or a sub-committee with delegated responsibility for considering tenders, is bound to accept the lowest value, or any, tender.

## **20 STAFFING MATTERS**

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- 20.1 The Town Clerk shall act as employer for of the Council's paid employees and voluntary staff.
- 20.2 All written records in respect of staffing matters shall be kept confidential and secure. Only persons with line management responsibilities shall have access to staff records if so justified.
- 20.3 Appointments, dismissals, performance, disciplinary issues and grievances shall be considered in accordance with the Council's Staffing Guidelines.

## **21 REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION**

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- 21.1 Requests for information held by the council shall be handled in accordance with the council's policy in respect of handling requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- 21.2 Correspondence from, and notices served by, the Information Commissioner shall be referred by the Proper Officer to the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee. The

said committee shall have the power to do anything to facilitate compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

## **22 RELATIONS WITH THE PRESS/MEDIA**

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- 22.1 Requests from the press or other media for an oral or written comment or statement from the Council, its councillors or staff shall be handled in accordance with the Council's policy in respect of dealing with the press and/or other media.

## **23 EXECUTION AND SEALING OF LEGAL DEEDS**

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*See also standing orders 16.2l and 16.2p above.*

- 23.1 A legal deed shall not be executed on behalf of the council unless authorised by a resolution.
- 23.2 Subject to standing order 23.1 above, the council's common seal shall alone be used for sealing a deed required by law. It shall be applied by the Proper Officer in the presence of two councillors who shall sign the deed as witnesses.

## **24 RESTRICTIONS ON COUNCILLOR ACTIVITIES**

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- 24.1 No Councillor shall purport to represent the Council, or make any suggestion that they have the authority to make a binding decision on behalf of the Council, unless previously authorised by a properly minuted resolution.
- 24.2 Unless authorised by a resolution, no councillor shall:
- a. inspect any land and/or premises which the council has a right or duty to inspect; or
  - b. issue orders, instructions or directions.

# Stone

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## Town Council



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## Financial Regulations

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April 2026

# Contents

|    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 1  | General.....  | 3  |
| 2  | Accounting And Audit (Internal And External).....   | 5  |
| 3  | Annual Estimates (Budget) and Forward Planning .....  | 7  |
| 4  | Budgetary Control and Authority To Spend .....  | 7  |
| 5  | Banking Arrangements and Payments .....   | 8  |
| 6  | Payment of Salaries.....  | 9  |
| 7  | Loans and Investments.....  | 10 |
| 8  | Income.....   | 11 |
| 9  | Orders for Work, Goods and Services .....   | 12 |
| 10 | Contracts .....   | 12 |
| 11 | Payments Under Contracts for Building or Other Construction Works (Public Works Contracts) .. | 14 |
| 12 | Stores and Equipment.....   | 14 |
| 13 | Assets, Properties and Estates .....  | 15 |
| 14 | Insurance .....   | 15 |
| 15 | Charities.....  | 16 |
| 16 | Risk Management.....  | 16 |
| 17 | Suspension and Revision of Financial Regulations.....   | 16 |

# 1 GENERAL

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- 1.1 These regulations govern the conduct of the financial activities of the Council and may only be amended or varied by resolution of the Council or the General Purposes (GP) Committee<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.2 Should there be a clash between the provisions of this document and those within other documents which prescribe the activities of the Council, the order of precedence shall be:
  - a. National Legislation
  - b. The Council's Standing Orders
  - c. Financial Regulations (this document)
  - d. All other documents
- 1.3 The council is responsible in law for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that the council has a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the council's functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.4 The council's accounting control systems must include measures:
  - a. for the timely production of accounts;
  - b. that provide for the safe and efficient safeguarding of public money;
  - c. to prevent and detect inaccuracy and fraud; and
  - d. identifying the duties of officers.
- 1.5 These financial regulations demonstrate how the council meets these responsibilities and requirements.
- 1.6 Deliberate or wilful breach of these Regulations by an employee may give rise to disciplinary proceedings.
- 1.7 Members of Council are expected to follow the instructions within these Regulations and not to entice employees to breach them. Failure to follow instructions within these Regulations brings the office of councillor into disrepute.
- 1.8 The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) holds a statutory office to be appointed by the council. The Town Clerk shall be the Council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), and as such shall be responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs.

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<sup>1</sup> All references to "the Council" in this document shall also be considered to refer to the General Purposes Committee for functions which have been delegated to that Committee.

The terms “Town Clerk” and “RFO” are, however, used separately throughout this document to allow for a situation where this may not be the case.

- 1.9 The Town Clerk and/or RFO may delegate items ascribed to them within this document to another employee, but will still remain accountable to the Council for those items.
- 1.10 The RFO;
- a. acts under the policy direction of the council;
  - b. administers the council's financial affairs in accordance with all Acts, Regulations and proper practices;
  - c. determines on behalf of the council its accounting records and accounting control systems;
  - d. ensures the accounting control systems are observed;
  - e. maintains the accounting records of the council up to date in accordance with proper practices;
  - f. assists the council to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of its resources; and
  - g. produces financial management information as required by the council.
- 1.11 The accounting records determined by the RFO shall be sufficient to show and explain the council’s transactions and to enable the RFO to ensure that any income and expenditure account and statement of balances, or record of receipts and payments and additional information, as the case may be, or management information prepared for the council from time to time comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 1.12 The accounting records determined by the RFO shall in particular contain:
- a. entries from day to day of all sums of money received and expended by the council and the matters to which the income and expenditure or receipts and payments account relate;
  - b. a record of the assets and liabilities of the council; and
  - c. wherever relevant, a record of the council’s income and expenditure in relation to claims made, or to be made, for any contribution, grant or subsidy.
- 1.13 The accounting control systems determined by the RFO shall include:
- a. procedures to ensure that the financial transactions of the council are recorded as soon as reasonably practicable and as accurately and reasonably as possible;
  - b. procedures to enable the prevention and detection of inaccuracies and fraud and the ability to reconstruct any lost records;

- c. identification of the duties of officers dealing with financial transactions and division of responsibilities of those officers in relation to significant transactions;
  - d. procedures to ensure that uncollectable amounts, including any bad debts are not submitted to the council for approval to be written off except with the approval of the RFO and that the approvals are shown in the accounting records; and
  - e. measures to ensure that risk is properly managed.
- 1.14 The council is not empowered by these Regulations or otherwise to delegate certain specified decisions. In particular, any decision regarding:
- a. setting the final budget or the precept (council tax requirement);
  - b. approving accounting statements;
  - c. approving an annual governance statement;
  - d. borrowing;
  - e. writing off bad debts;
  - f. declaring eligibility for the General Power of Competence; and
  - g. the consideration of any report from the Council's internal or external auditors,
- shall be a matter for the full council only.
- 1.15 In these financial regulations, references to the Accounts and Audit Regulations or 'the regulations' shall mean the regulations issued under the provisions of section 27 of the Audit Commission Act 1998, or any superseding legislation, and then in force unless otherwise specified.
- 1.16 In these financial regulations the term 'proper practice' or 'proper practices' shall refer to guidance issued in *Governance and Accountability for Local Councils - a Practitioners' Guide (England)* issued by the Joint Practitioners Advisory Group (JPAG), available from the websites of NALC and the Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

## 2 ACCOUNTING AND AUDIT (INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)

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- 2.1 All accounting procedures and financial records of the council shall be determined by the RFO in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations, appropriate guidance and proper practices.
- 2.2 The RFO shall complete the annual statement of accounts, annual report, and any related documents of the council contained in the Annual Return (as specified in proper practices) as soon as practicable after the end of the financial year and having certified the accounts

shall submit them and report thereon to the council within the timescales set by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

- 2.3 The council shall ensure that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records, and of its system of internal control in accordance with proper practices. Any officer or member of the council shall make available such documents and records as appear to the council to be necessary for the purpose of the audit and shall, as directed by the council, supply the RFO, internal auditor, or external auditor with such information and explanation as the council considers necessary for that purpose.
- 2.4 The internal auditor shall be appointed by and shall carry out the work in relation to internal controls required by the council in accordance with proper practices.
- 2.5 The internal auditor shall:
  - a. be competent and independent of the financial operations of the council;
  - b. report to council in writing, or in person, on a regular basis with a minimum of one annual written report during each financial year;
  - c. demonstrate competence, objectivity and independence, be free from any actual or perceived conflicts of interest, including those arising from family relationships; and
  - d. have no involvement in the financial decision making, management or control of the council.
- 2.6 Internal or external auditors may not under any circumstances:
  - a. perform any operational duties for the council;
  - b. initiate or approve accounting transactions; or
  - c. direct the activities of any council employee, except to the extent that such employees have been appropriately assigned to assist the auditor.
- 2.7 For the avoidance of doubt, in relation to internal audit the terms 'independent' and 'independence' shall have the same meaning as is described in proper practices.
- 2.8 The RFO shall make arrangements for the exercise of electors' rights in relation to the accounts including the opportunity to inspect the accounts, books, and vouchers and display or publish any notices and statements of account required by Audit Commission Act 1998, or any superseding legislation, and the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 2.9 The RFO shall, without undue delay, bring to the attention of all councillors any report from internal or external auditors.

### 3 ANNUAL ESTIMATES (BUDGET) AND FORWARD PLANNING

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- 3.1 The Council's budget shall be prepared on an "Income and Expenditure" basis.
- 3.2 The GP Committee shall consider a report of the RFO setting out the prospects for the following three years' capital and revenue budgets no later than the first week of February each year. Each Sub-Committee shall be asked to formulate its proposed budget for the next three years based on policy guidelines determined by the GP Committee, and to submit these proposals to the Committee for further consideration.
- 3.3 After considering the Sub-Committees' proposals, the GP Committee shall determine a balanced and affordable budget to be recommended to the Council for the following three financial years.
- 3.4 The Council shall review the GP Committee's recommendations not later than the end of February each year and shall fix the Precept to be levied for the ensuing financial year and determine indicative precepts for the following two years.
- 3.5 The annual budget shall form the basis of financial control for the ensuing year.

### 4 BUDGETARY CONTROL AND AUTHORITY TO SPEND

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- 4.1 The Town Clerk is authorised to seek tenders/quotations, place orders and make payments in accordance with the approved annual budget, the Council's policies, and these Financial Regulations. Where the annual budget identifies specific items for which no expenditure should be incurred without the express approval of the Council, the Clerk should refer proposed spending for approval before that spending is incurred. In all other cases, the Clerk is authorised to proceed without specific approval.
- 4.2 The RFO shall regularly provide the Council with a budget monitoring statement comparing actual expenditure against that planned for each approved budget head.
- 4.3 The Town Clerk may incur expenditure on behalf of the Council which is necessary to carry out any repair, replacement or other work which is of such extreme urgency that it must be done at once, whether or not there is any budgetary provision for the expenditure. Where there is no available budget, the Clerk shall, wherever possible, discuss the issue with the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee or, in their absence, the Vice Chairman or Town Mayor before incurring the expenditure. Where no or insufficient budget provision existed, the Town Clerk shall report the action to the Council as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 4.4 In general, unspent provisions in the revenue budget shall not be carried forward to a subsequent year. Where a budget has been agreed by the Council as a "rollover budget", then unspent amounts may be rolled-over into the subsequent financial year by making

use of a rollover reserve. This provision may also be used on a one-off basis for specific items, subject to agreement of the Council.

- 4.5 All expenditure and income of the Council shall be included within its revenue account unless a specific Council resolution has determined that it shall be treated as capital. Once such a resolution has been passed, no expenditure shall be incurred in relation to any such capital project and no contract entered into or tender accepted involving capital expenditure unless the Council is satisfied that the necessary funds are available, or the requisite borrowing approval has been obtained, to meet the full projected costs of the project.
- 4.6 All capital works shall be administered in accordance with the council's standing orders and financial regulations relating to contracts.
- 4.7 Changes in earmarked reserves, other than the rollover reserve, shall require approval by council.
- 4.8 Notwithstanding the provisions above, all expenditure and income related to the Town Mayor's charity will, in the interests of transparency, be accounted for by the use of a specified reserve account for each Town Mayor.

## 5 BANKING ARRANGEMENTS AND PAYMENTS

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- 5.1 The Council's banking arrangements shall be made by the RFO and approved by the Council. They shall be regularly reviewed.
- 5.2 All invoices for payment shall be examined, verified and certified by the Clerk. The Clerk shall satisfy him/herself that the work, goods or services to which the invoice relates shall have been received or carried out in accordance with the needs of the Council.
- 5.3 The RFO shall examine invoices in relation to arithmetic accuracy and shall analyse them to the appropriate expenditure heading. The Clerk shall settle invoices promptly.
- 5.4 All cash received must be banked intact.
- 5.5 No petty cash account shall be maintained.
- 5.6 Payment of salaries and payment of deductions from salary such as may be made for tax, national insurance, pension contributions or other reasons, should be made from the Council's bank account.
- 5.7 A schedule showing payments from the Council's bank accounts shall be prepared by the RFO and presented:
  - a. To the Council on a quarterly basis in respect of payments over £250, and,
  - b. To the General Purposes Committee at each ordinary meeting.

- 5.8 For the purposes of the schedules referred to in paragraph 5.7 above:
- a. Staff salary and related payments should not be included, but total figures for a period should be made available to any Member on request. Details of payments to individual employees will only be made available in accordance with paragraph 6.4 below.
  - b. Payments in respect of the Mayor's Charity Fund will not be included, but should be made available to any Member on request.
- 5.9 The Council acknowledges that the commitment to make a payment occurs at the time an order is placed or similar arrangement made, not at the time a payment itself is made. It does not, therefore, consider that excessive controls on payments which may hamper the efficient operation of the Council need to be applied, providing that adequate controls over ordering and reporting are in place in accordance with these regulations.
- 5.10 Payments may be made by way of cheque, direct debit, bank transfer, purchasing card, PayPal, internet banking, BACS or CHAPS, provided that:
- a. All cheques shall be signed by two individuals included within the bank mandate, at least one of which shall be a Member of the Council and not more than one shall be an officer.
  - b. Transfers between Council bank accounts may be authorised by the RFO.
  - c. Payments via purchasing card can be made by a single authorised officer, and are limited to £1,000 in any single transaction, with a maximum of £5,000 outstanding at any one time.
  - d. Electronic payments and direct debits, including payments via PayPal and internet banking, can be made by a single authorised officer, but the supporting paperwork should also be signed by a second officer. All such payments should be included within the report to the General Purposes Committee required by regulation 5.7b above, subject to the exceptions set out in paragraph 5.8 above.
- 5.11 Members are subject to the Code of Conduct that has been adopted by the council and shall comply with the Code and Standing Orders when a decision to authorise or instruct payment is made in respect of a matter in which they have a disclosable pecuniary or other interest, unless a dispensation has been granted. Officers authorising payments will be required to follow these same arrangements in respect of pecuniary or other interests.

## 6 PAYMENT OF SALARIES

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- 6.1 As an employer, the council shall make arrangements to meet fully the statutory requirements placed on all employers by PAYE and National Insurance legislation. The payment of all salaries shall be made in accordance with payroll records and the rules of PAYE and National Insurance currently operating, and salary rates shall be as agreed by council, or duly delegated committee.

- 6.2 Payment of salaries and payment of deductions from salary such as may be required to be made for tax, national insurance and pension contributions, or similar statutory or discretionary deductions must be made in accordance with the payroll records and on the appropriate dates stipulated in employment contracts.
- 6.3 Once an employee's salary and conditions has been determined by the Council or an authorised Appointments Panel and a contract of employment has been signed, no changes shall be made to any employee's pay, emoluments, or terms and conditions of employment without the prior consent of the Council, except where required for the payment of overtime, absence cover, incremental progression or similar matters.
- 6.4 Payments to individual employees of net salary and to the appropriate creditor of the statutory and discretionary deductions shall not be open to inspection or review (under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or otherwise) other than:
- a. by any councillor who can demonstrate a need to know;
  - b. by the internal auditor;
  - c. by the external auditor; or
  - d. by any person authorised under Audit Commission Act 1998, or any superseding legislation.
- 6.5 Any termination payments beyond those required by law shall require the approval of the Council.

## 7 LOANS AND INVESTMENTS

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- 7.1 All borrowings shall be effected in the name of the council, after obtaining any necessary borrowing approval. Any application for borrowing approval shall be approved by Council as to terms and purpose. The application for borrowing approval, and subsequent arrangements for the loan shall only be approved by full council.
- 7.2 Any financial arrangement which does not require formal borrowing approval from the Secretary of State (such as Hire Purchase or Leasing of tangible assets) shall be subject to approval by the council in the first instance, though the renewal and extension of existing leases for the same or similar items may be authorised by the Town Clerk providing that there is provision within the Council's budget and that he/she is satisfied that the arrangement represents value for money for the Council.
- 7.3 All loans and investments shall be negotiated in the name of the council and shall be for a set period in accordance with council policy.
- 7.4 The council shall consider the need for an Investment Strategy and Policy which, if drawn up, shall be in accordance with relevant regulations, proper practices and guidance. Any Strategy and Policy shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.

- 7.5 All investments of money under the control of the council shall be in the name of the council.
- 7.6 All investment certificates and other documents relating thereto shall be retained in the custody of the RFO.
- 7.7 Payments in respect of short term or long term investments, including transfers between bank accounts held in the same bank, or branch, shall be made in accordance with Regulation 5 above.

## 8 INCOME

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- 8.1 The collection of all sums due to the council shall be the responsibility of and under the supervision of the RFO.
- 8.2 Particulars of all charges to be made for work done, services rendered or goods supplied by the Council shall be considered annually by the council as part of the budget process, and notified to the RFO who shall be responsible for the collection of all accounts due to the council.
- 8.3 The council will undertake a full review of all fees and charges periodically, following a report of the Clerk.
- 8.4 Any sums found to be irrecoverable and any bad debts shall be reported to the council and shall be written off in the year.
- 8.5 All sums received on behalf of the council shall be banked intact as directed by the RFO. In all cases, all receipts shall be deposited with the council's bankers or their agents with such frequency as the RFO considers necessary.
- 8.6 A record shall be maintained by the RFO of the amounts making up the total of each paying-in slip.
- 8.7 Personal cheques shall not be cashed out of money held on behalf of the council.
- 8.8 The RFO shall promptly complete any VAT Return that is required. Any repayment claim due in accordance with VAT Act 1994 section 33 shall be made at least annually coinciding with the financial year end.
- 8.9 Where any significant sums of cash are regularly received by the council, the RFO shall take such steps as are agreed by the council to ensure that more than one person is present when the cash is counted in the first instance, that there is a reconciliation to some form of control such as ticket issues, and that appropriate care is taken in the security and safety of individuals banking such cash.
- 8.10 Any income arising which is the property of a charitable trust shall be paid into a charitable bank account. Instructions for the payment of funds due from the charitable trust to the council (to meet expenditure already incurred by the authority) will be given by the

Managing Trustees of the charity meeting separately from any council meeting (see also Regulation 15 below).

## 9 ORDERS FOR WORK, GOODS AND SERVICES

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- 9.1 An official order number shall be issued for all work, goods and services unless a formal contract is to be prepared or an official order would be inappropriate or unnecessary. Details of orders shall be retained.
- 9.2 All members and officers are responsible for obtaining value for money at all times. An officer issuing an official order shall ensure as far as reasonable and practicable that the best available terms are obtained in respect of each transaction.
- 9.3 A Member may not specify the use of a particular supplier, issue an official order or make any contract (verbal or written) on behalf of the council.
- 9.4 The RFO shall satisfy themselves as to the lawful nature of any proposed purchase before the issue of an order.

## 10 CONTRACTS

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- 10.1 Every contract shall comply with these financial regulations, and no exceptions shall be made otherwise than in an emergency provided that this regulation need not apply to contracts which relate to the following items:
- a. for the supply of gas, electricity, water, sewerage and telephone services;
  - b. for specialist services such as are provided by solicitors, accountants, surveyors and planning consultants;
  - c. for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which consist of repairs to or parts for existing machinery or equipment or plant;
  - d. for work to be executed or goods or materials to be supplied which constitute an extension of an existing contract by the council;
  - e. for additional audit work of the external auditor;
  - f. for goods or materials proposed to be purchased which are proprietary articles and/or are only sold at a fixed price: and
  - g. In circumstances where continuity of supplier is considered by the RFO to offer greater benefits to the Council than retendering.

- 10.2 Where the council intends to procure or award a contract within the scope of the Procurement Act 2023 (“the Act”) which is valued at £30,000 or more (including VAT), the council shall comply with the relevant requirements of the Act<sup>2</sup>.
- 10.3 The full requirements of The Act, as applicable, shall be followed in respect of the tendering and award of a contract which exceed thresholds in The Act (which may change from time to time)<sup>3</sup>.
- 10.4 Such invitation to tender shall state the general nature of the intended contract and the Clerk shall obtain the necessary technical assistance to prepare a specification in appropriate cases. The invitation shall in addition state that tenders must be addressed to the Clerk in the ordinary course of post. Each tendering firm shall be supplied with a specifically marked envelope in which the tender is to be sealed and remain sealed until the prescribed date for opening tenders for that contract.
- 10.5 All sealed tenders shall be opened at the same time on the prescribed date by the Clerk in the presence of at least one member of council.
- 10.6 Any invitation to tender issued under this regulation shall be subject to the requirements of Standing Orders related to procurement<sup>4</sup> and shall refer to the terms of the Bribery Act 2010.
- 10.7 When applications are made to waive financial regulations relating to contracts to enable a price to be negotiated without competition the reason shall be embodied in a recommendation to the council.
- 10.8 Where the Clerk has determined that there is a benefit to the Council to let a contract in association with one or more other partners, or to make use of another authority’s facilities such as the County Council’s e-tendering system, the requirements of these regulations shall be replaced by the requirements of the regulations of the lead body for the letting of the contract.
- 10.9 When it is to enter into a contract of less than £30,000 (including VAT) but in excess of £3,000 (excluding VAT) in value for the supply of goods or materials or for the execution of works or specialist services other than such goods, materials, works or specialist services as are excepted as set out in paragraph 10.1 above the Clerk or RFO shall, where possible, obtain 3 quotations. Below this figure, the Clerk of RFO shall seek to obtain the best

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<sup>2</sup> The Regulations require councils to use the Contracts Finder website when advertising contract opportunities, and set out the procedures to be followed in awarding new contracts and publicising the award of new contracts

<sup>3</sup> Thresholds applicable in February 2026 (including VAT) are:

- a. For public goods and services contracts £207,720
- b. For public works contracts £5,193,000

<sup>4</sup> Standing Order 19 based on the version effective from April 2026 which was current at the time of preparing this document. This reference may change in subsequent versions of standing orders.

overall value for money for the Council after taking into account cost, quality of service and availability, and shall strive to obtain one or more estimates for the work/service to be performed.

- 10.10 The council shall not be obliged to accept the lowest or any tender, quote or estimate.
- 10.11 Should it occur that the council, or duly delegated committee, does not accept any tender, quote or estimate, the work is not allocated, and the council requires further pricing, provided that the specification does not change, no person shall be permitted to submit a later tender, estimate or quote who was present when the original decision making process was being undertaken.

## **11 PAYMENTS UNDER CONTRACTS FOR BUILDING OR OTHER CONSTRUCTION WORKS (PUBLIC WORKS CONTRACTS)**

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- 11.1 Payments on account of the contract sum shall be made within the time specified in the contract by the RFO upon authorised certificates of the architect or other consultants engaged to supervise the contract (subject to any percentage withholding as may be agreed in the particular contract).
- 11.2 Where contracts provide for payment by instalments the RFO shall maintain a record of all such payments. In any case where it is estimated that the total cost of work carried out under a contract, excluding agreed variations, will exceed the contract sum by 5% or more a report shall be submitted to the council.
- 11.3** Any variation to a contract or addition to or omission from a contract must be approved by the Town Clerk on behalf of the Council and notified to the Contractor in writing before any work has begun, the Council being informed where the final cost is likely to exceed the financial provision as a result.

## **12 STORES AND EQUIPMENT**

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- 12.1 Where the Council operates a system of stock control, or holds a supply of equipment for the use of a number of people, the Town Clerk shall be responsible for the arrangements for the care and custody of these stores and equipment.
- 12.2 Delivery Notes shall be obtained in respect of all goods received into store or otherwise delivered and goods must be checked as to order and quality at the time delivery is made.
- 12.3 Stocks shall be kept at the minimum levels consistent with operational requirements.
- 12.4 The RFO shall be responsible for periodic checks of stocks and stores at least annually.

## 13 ASSETS, PROPERTIES AND ESTATES

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- 13.1 The Clerk shall make appropriate arrangements for the custody of all title deeds and Land Registry Certificates of properties held by the council. The RFO shall ensure a record is maintained of all properties held by the council in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- 13.2 No tangible moveable property shall be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of, without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law, save where the estimated value of each individual item of tangible movable property does not exceed £250.
- 13.3 No real property (interests in land) shall be sold, leased or otherwise disposed of without the authority of the council, together with any other consents required by law. In each case a report in writing shall be provided to council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property (including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate).
- 13.4 No real property (interests in land) shall be purchased or acquired without the authority of the full council. In each case a report in writing shall be provided to council in respect of valuation and surveyed condition of the property (including matters such as planning permissions and covenants) together with a proper business case (including an adequate level of consultation with the electorate).
- 13.5 The RFO shall ensure that an appropriate and accurate Register of Assets and Investments is kept up to date. The continued existence of tangible assets shown in the Register shall be verified at least annually, possibly in conjunction with a health and safety inspection of assets.

## 14 INSURANCE

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- 14.1 Following an annual risk assessment, the RFO shall effect all insurances and negotiate all claims on the council's insurers in consultation with the Clerk.
- 14.2 The Clerk shall give prompt notification to the RFO of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances.
- 14.3 The RFO shall keep a record of all insurances effected by the council and the property and risks covered thereby and annually review it.
- 14.4 The RFO shall be notified of any loss liability or damage or of any event likely to lead to a claim, and shall report these to council at the next available meeting.

- 14.5 All appropriate members and employees of the council shall be included in a suitable form of security or fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined by the council, or duly delegated committee.

## 15 CHARITIES

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- 15.1 Where the council is sole managing trustee of a charitable body the Clerk and RFO shall ensure that separate accounts are kept of the funds held on charitable trusts and separate financial reports made in such form as shall be appropriate, in accordance with Charity Law and legislation, or as determined by the Charity Commission. The Clerk and RFO shall arrange for any audit or independent examination as may be required by Charity Law or any Governing Document.

## 16 RISK MANAGEMENT

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- 16.1 The council is responsible for putting in place arrangements for the management of risk. The Clerk shall prepare, for approval by the council, risk management policy statements in respect of all activities of the council. Risk policy statements and consequential risk management arrangements shall be reviewed by the council at least annually.
- 16.2 When considering any new activity, the Clerk [with the RFO] shall prepare a draft risk assessment including risk management proposals for consideration and adoption by the council.

## 17 SUSPENSION AND REVISION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

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- 17.1 It shall be the duty of the council to review the Financial Regulations of the council from time to time. The Clerk shall make arrangements to monitor changes in legislation or proper practices and shall advise the council of any requirement for a consequential amendment to these Financial Regulations.
- 17.2 The council may, by resolution, suspend any part of these Financial Regulations provided that the advice of the RFO regarding the risks and implications has been considered prior to the suspension. Details of the suspension must be recorded in the minutes, and must include a record of the advice of the RFO if the council has chosen not to follow it.

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## **Purpose of Report**

1. To undertake an annual review of the Council's Risk Management Policy, Strategy and Risk Register.

## **Background**

2. Attached to this report is the Town Council's:
  - a. Risk Management Policy
  - b. Risk Management Strategy
  - c. Risk Register
3. The Committee is asked to consider the documents and make comments or updates as appropriate.

## **Recommendations**

4. The Committee is recommended to consider and review the Council's Risk Management Policy, Strategy and Risk Register.

# Stone Town Council

## Risk Management Policy

### Introduction

1. Stone Town Council recognises that it has a responsibility to manage risks, both internal and external, and is therefore committed to the implementation of a risk management strategy to protect the Council from avoidable losses.

### Responsibilities

2. This Policy places a responsibility on all Members and Officers to have regard for risk in carrying out their duties. Its purpose is to enable the Council to manage its risks through anticipation and control.

### Definition

3. The Audit Commission (2001) defined “risk” as an event or action which will adversely affect an organisation’s ability to achieve its objectives, project plans and processes and to successfully execute its strategies. Therefore “risk management” is the process by which risks are **identified, evaluated** and **controlled**.
4. It is good business practice that risk management processes should be supportive rather than restrictive, and should be embedded in the culture of the Council and embraced by all staff and Members.

### Aims

5. The Council’s aims with respect to risk management are as follows:
  - a. To integrate risk management into the culture of the Council.
  - b. To raise awareness of the scope of risk management including business risk, the identification of opportunities as well as threats and that the process supports innovation.
  - c. To manage risk in accordance with best practice.
  - d. To minimise losses, injury and damage and reduce the cost of risk.
  - e. To ensure appropriate actions are taken to address identified risks.
  - f. To ensure that risks are monitored and that an appropriate reporting mechanism exists to support the annual assurance statement on the effectiveness of the Councils’ system of internal control.
  - g. To ensure appropriate actions are taken to identify and pursue opportunities.

6. These aims will be achieved through the Council's risk management strategy which details the roles, responsibilities and actions necessary for successful implementation.
7. The co-operation of all Members and officers is essential to ensure the Council's resources and service provision are not adversely affected by uncontrolled risk, to ensure the Council does not fail to seize opportunities which benefit the community.

**Relevant Legislation**

8. Stone Town Council will implement its Risk Management Policy in accordance with the current legislation governing local authorities and the associated codes of practice.

# Stone Town Council

## Risk Management Strategy

### Introduction

1. This strategy sets out the framework on which risk management processes at Stone Town Council are based. This framework ensures a consistent approach is taken across the Council and provides for an element of independent oversight by Council Officers.

### Objectives

2. The objectives of this strategy are:
  - a. To clearly identify roles and responsibilities for managing risk,
  - b. To follow a structured framework for the identification, assessment and evaluation of risks,
  - c. To ensure a corporate approach is adopted across the Council which facilitates the prioritisation of risks and avoids duplication of mitigating action,
  - d. To ensure risk management principles are embedded in all systems and processes to help demonstrate openness, integrity and accountability in all the Council's activities,
  - e. To ensure the risk management process contributes to the development of a more robust internal control framework, providing assurance to senior officers and Members that appropriate levels of control exist, and
  - f. To provide a framework for ensuring actions are proportionate to identified risks thereby efficiently and effectively utilising resources and maintaining a balance between risks and controls.

### Definitions

3. Key definitions within this strategy are:
  - a. **Risk:** an event or action which will adversely affect an organisation's ability to achieve its objectives, projects, plans or processes and thus to successfully execute its strategies.
  - b. **Risk Management:** the process by which risks are identified, evaluated and controlled, which includes the following approaches:
    - i. **Treat the Risk** - Improve the controls to reduce the probability or impact to acceptable limits
    - ii. **Transfer the Risk** - Insure against risk / outsource / design & build option for contracts
    - iii. **Tolerate the Risk** - Live with it, the risk is acceptable and additional controls would not be cost-effective

- iv. **Terminate the Risk** - Do not pursue the course of action, the risk is unacceptable and cannot be economically mitigated to an acceptable level

**Categories of Risk**

- 4. The risks facing the organisation can be split into two main categories:
  - a. **Strategic** - Risks which may threaten the achievement of the Council’s objectives, and,
  - b. **Operational** - Risks which members and staff may encounter in the daily course of their work.
- 5. These categories can also be further analysed to identify the types of risk that would be included under each as follows:

| STRATEGIC  | OPERATIONAL   |
|--|---|
| <p><b><u>Political:</u></b></p> <p>failure to deliver key objectives or policies of other levels of Government</p> <p><b><u>Economic:</u></b></p> <p>the Council’s ability to meet its financial commitments</p> <p><b><u>Social:</u></b></p> <p>the effects in changes in demographic, residential or socio-economic trends on the Council’s ability to deliver its objectives</p> <p><b><u>Technological:</u></b></p> <p>the Council’s capacity to deal with technological change or its ability to use technology to meet changing demands</p> <p><b><u>Legislative:</u></b></p> <p>current or potential changes in national or European law.</p> | <p><b><u>Professional:</u></b></p> <p>professional competences of staff</p> <p><b><u>Financial:</u></b></p> <p>financial planning and control and the adequacy of insurance cover</p> <p><b><u>Legal:</u></b></p> <p>possible breaches of legislation</p> <p><b><u>Physical:</u></b></p> <p>fire, security, accident prevention and health &amp; safety</p> <p><b><u>Contractual:</u></b></p> <p>the failure of contractors to deliver services or goods to agreed costs and specifications</p> |

| STRATEGIC  | OPERATIONAL  |
|--|--|
| <p><b><u>Environmental:</u></b><br/>the environmental consequences of service delivery ( in terms of energy efficiency, pollution, re-cycling, landfill needs, emissions etc.)</p> <p><b><u>Competitive:</u></b><br/>the competitiveness of the service/ the ability to deliver best value.</p> <p><b><u>Customer:</u></b><br/>failure to recognise the changing needs and expectations of the community</p> | <p><b><u>Technological:</u></b><br/>reliance on operational equipment (IT systems or equipment and machinery)</p> <p><b><u>Environmental:</u></b><br/>pollution, noise or energy efficiency of on-going service operation.</p> |

### Processes

- In line with best practice, the Council has adopted a seven-step process to support the implementation of risk management and help maintain impetus.

|   | Steps               | Actions  |
|---|---------------------|--|
| 1 | Identifying risk    | Risks will be identified during the service delivery planning process and cross-referenced, where possible, to key tasks and to the achievement of corporate objectives.                           |
| 2 | Analysing risk      | Risks will be assessed against likelihood and impact of the identified risks using the Council's approved evaluation criteria to give a risk score.  |
| 3 | Profiling risk      | The evaluation exercise will result in a risk score from which significant risks can be established.   |
| 4 | Prioritising action | Risks will be entered in the risk register detailing the inherent risk score, existing controls and residual risk score.   |
| 5 | Determining action  | Further actions required to reduce the threat of the risk occurring or minimise its impact will be stated in the risk register. Target dates and assignment of responsibility will also be stated. |
| 6 | Controlling risk    | The specified actions will be carried out as stated in the risk register.  |

|   |            |  |
|---|------------|--|
| 7 | Monitoring | The Town Clerk will keep the risk register under review and progress against actions identified will be regularly monitored. The register will be updated as actions are achieved and risk scores amended as appropriate. The identification of risks is a continual process and risks emerging throughout the year will be evaluated and, where necessary, added to the register. |
|---|------------|--|

**Risk Management Matrix**

7. The risk management matrix set out below categorises risks using colour ratings to focus the Council’s attention in the right place. A red risk indicates an area where the Council should focus its attention, with that level of attention descending through amber, yellow, and through to green, where it is likely that no action could be justified.
8. Each risk is allocated a risk score by multiplying the likelihood of the identified situation occurring by the impact that its occurrence would have on the Council.
9. This assessment is undertaken twice. Firstly to assess the gross risk, which is the raw risk if no controls were in place, then secondly to assess the net risk, which is the residual level of risk after taking the existing controls into account. Only the net risk is shown in the register.
10. As identified in paragraph 3.b above, the Council will need to determine whether it wishes to treat, transfer, tolerate or terminate the risk, and the actions required, if any, to achieve that outcome.

**Stone Town Council – Risk Matrix**

|        |             |            |          |        |                |
|--------|-------------|------------|----------|--------|----------------|
| Impact | Major       |            |          |        |                |
|        | Significant |            |          |        |                |
|        | Serious     |            |          |        |                |
|        | Minor       |            |          |        |                |
|        |             | Unlikely   | Possible | Likely | Almost Certain |
|        |             | Likelihood |          |        |                |

## Stone Town Council

### Strategic Risk Register – March 2025

| Risk   | Impact/Consequences  | Controls in Place   | Net Risk Score |        |       | Additional Controls/Actions Required |
|--|--|---|----------------|--------|-------|--------------------------------------|
|  |  |   | Likelihood     | Impact | Total |                                      |
| Failure to comply with legislation, regulations or Codes of Practice                     | Possible legal action against Council or individuals.  | Access to legal bulletins, advice and information via NALC, SLCC and Borough Council.   | 1              | 4      | 4     |                                      |
| Failure to maintain a robust and legal decision making process                           | Challenge to decisions, possible legal action.   | Up to date standing orders, code of practice etc. reflecting current legal practices. Access to legal bulletins, advice and information via NALC, SLCC and Borough Council.   | 1              | 4      | 4     |                                      |
| Failure of financial processes and reporting   | Decisions taken without full information, Members and officers not properly informed on financial resource matters, potential threat to council resources, reserves and/or reputation. | Annual financial statements prepared by responsible financial officer and, checked by internal and external auditors. Budget monitoring reports provided regularly to Members. Budget consideration annually with forward plan and information on reserves. Town Clerk is qualified and experienced accountant. | 1              | 3      | 3     |                                      |
| Failure of internal controls   | Potential for fraud/theft, procedures not followed leading to possibility of higher costs /need for additional other resources.  | Insurance cover - subject to certain requirements being met, internal audit, systems and division of responsibilities. Some limitation due to small number of staff.  | 1              | 3      | 3     |                                      |
| Failure to comply with safety rules related to a pandemic or other similar public risks. | Potential for spreading of virus etc., plus exposure of Council to fines and severe reputational damage.   | Regular review of rules and commitment to their implementation.   | 2              | 4      | 8     |                                      |

## Stone Town Council

### Operational Risk Register (Resource Management) – March 2025

| Risk  | Impact/Consequences  | Controls in Place   | Net Risk Score |        |       | Additional Controls/Actions Required |
|---|--|---|----------------|--------|-------|--------------------------------------|
|   |  |   | Likelihood     | Impact | Total |                                      |
| Planning applications and other consultations not responded to within timescale | Views of the Council not taken into consideration resulting in developments/projects etc. not being amended/refused as requested for the benefit of residents. | Planning Consultative Committee meets monthly. Timetables negotiated with Borough Council if necessary. Delegated arrangements in place for emergency decisions.  | 1              | 2      | 2     |                                      |
| Breach of confidentiality   | Confidential documents in the public domain. Possible third party claims/loss of public faith in the Council.  | Staff and Members clear about need for confidentiality. Private items clearly indicated on agendas. Media protocol adopted  | 1              | 2      | 2     |                                      |
| Legal proceedings against the Council   | Reputation of the Council put at risk, officers / Members personally accountable, possible significant resource implication.                                   | Access to legal advice through NALC, SLCC, Borough Council and independent solicitors. Insurance cover gives some financial protection. Council protocols and procedures designed to prevent actions outside the law. | 2              | 3      | 6     |                                      |
| Insufficient available resources to meet the Council's needs and priorities     | Aims and objectives unable to be met. Interruption or termination of services  | Budget prepared over three forward years. Regular budget monitoring by councillors and officers. Reserves at adequate level.  | 1              | 3      | 3     |                                      |
| Major budget overspend  | Interruption or termination of services, including services not subject of overspend.  | Financial assessment of new developments as part of reporting to Council. Regular budget monitoring by elected members and officers. Reserves at adequate level. Internal controls re ordering and payments.          | 1              | 3      | 3     |                                      |

| Risk  | Impact/Consequences   | Controls in Place   | Net Risk Score |        |       | Additional Controls/Actions Required   |
|---|---|---|----------------|--------|-------|--|
|   |   |   | Likelihood     | Impact | Total |  |
| Loss of trading income  | Increase in net costs. Interruption or termination of services, including services not subject of income loss. Longer term threat to service where income has fallen.     | Planned budget, prudent estimates for income, regular monitoring by officers and elected members allows review of costs or opportunity to expand income to reduce impact where possible.  | 2              | 2      | 4     |  |
| Failure of IT systems   | Unable to carry out day to day administrative and financial work. Unable to prepare minutes, reports or agendas. Unable to respond to queries from Members or the public. | Professional IT support under contract to provide support to the Council. All key IT equipment to be replaced in 2026. Full review of security systems recently undertaken as part of IT refresh. Planned updating of IT hardware and software to maintain currency, compatibility and reliability.             | 1              | 4      | 4     | IT support contract operating successfully.  |
| Serious breach of IT security   | Confidential data compromised throughout system. Possible data corruption/destruction. Failure of IT systems.   | Limited personal and confidential data held. Domain level network security control. Separate guest access to internet with no access to STC data. Security of network, data, etc. reviewed as part of IT support contract. Improvements to security implemented as part of IT refresh.                          | 1              | 4      | 4     |  |
| Loss of key staff skills for significant period (e.g. illness or resignation) | Reduced performance or reliability in some or all aspects of the Council's work.  | Some posts within the organisation can be covered to provide basic service continuation but due mainly to the small size it is not possible for full crossover of skills and knowledge. A small staff base also means there is not the capacity to significantly increase workload without increasing staffing. | 2              | 3      | 6     | Insurance cover increased from June 2019 to cover accidents to key staff outside work (accidents to staff in work already covered) |
| Major failure related to health and safety legislation                        | Injury to or death of a member of staff, Councillor or member of the public. Possibility of legal action by Health and Safety Executive.                                  | Appointed external consultants to support Council's health and safety work. Up to date health and safety policy and strategy. Risk assessments for Council premises and activities. Staff properly trained. NOTE: Some of these controls are not fully in place. This is currently in progress.                 | 1              | 4      | 4     | Undertake full set of risk assessments<br>Continue programme of staff training   |

| Risk  | Impact/Consequences  | Controls in Place  | Net Risk Score |        |       | Additional Controls/Actions Required |
|---|--|--|----------------|--------|-------|--------------------------------------|
|   |  |  | Likelihood     | Impact | Total |                                      |
| Major staffing issue resulting in industrial tribunal or legal action.                          | Resource implications, poor press, impact on workforce and council during tribunal   | Existing HR experience. Access to Borough or County HR/Legal staff for support (at a cost). Members of West Midlands Employers' Organization.  | 1              | 3      | 3     |                                      |
| Fraud/Theft   | Resource implications, poor press, loss of Council assets, impact on Council reputation.   | Internal controls, internal audit, fidelity insurance cover. The effectiveness of internal control is, however, severely restricted in a small organisation with limited scope for separation of duties. | 1              | 3      | 3     |                                      |
| Economic impact of any future pandemic or other similar occurrence on the Council's activities. | Loss of income from trading activities. Potential additional demands due to impact on community. Reduced spending on public events etc.. | There is a degree of self-balancing, with event expenditure reducing to partially compensate for lost income and additional demands.   | 2              | 2      | 4     | Continue to monitor                  |

## Stone Town Council

### Operational Risk Register (Service Delivery) – March 2025

| Risk                                     | Impact/Consequences  | Controls in Place   | Net Risk Score |        |       | Additional Controls/Actions Required   |
|--|--|---|----------------|--------|-------|--|
|  |  |   | Likelihood     | Impact | Total |  |
| Failure to review and/or collect charges | Reduced income to the Council and non-competitive charges.   | Charges reviewed annually as part of budget process. Income levels compared to budget by month as part of budget monitoring processes. Casual hirers pay in advance, regular bookings invoices. Market traders pay in advance. Booked traders who do not turn up are expected to pay on their next visit. | 1              | 1      | 1     |  |
| Lack of adequate insurances              | Claims against the Council would result in expenditure in excess of the budget.  | Regular review of insurances. Requirement for market traders to have their own indemnity insurance, which is checked before a stall is allocated.   | 1              | 3      | 3     | Need to obtain appropriate insurances to cover loaned items at Heritage Centre |
| Vandalism                                | Loss of bookings, additional expenditure, poor image.  | Users, caretaker or cleaner report any problems to DTC, who takes action accordingly. Terms and conditions of hire for FJC and Station updated to make responsibilities or hirer re damage to premises or equipment clear.  | 2              | 3      | 6     |  |
| Inadequate budget provision              | Routine and essential maintenance not undertaken or equipment not replaced resulting in reduced bookings and health and safety issues. Deterioration in leased buildings which would need to be reinstated under lease. Open spaces may become unsafe. | Budgets reviewed yearly. Condition of buildings, equipment and open spaces regularly reviewed.  | 1              | 4      | 4     |  |
| Inappropriate terms for leased buildings | Council unable to meet obligations under lease, or restrictions prevent Council from making optimum use of asset.  | Legal advice sought for new leases, and financial and other implications reported to Members before signing.  | 2              | 3      | 6     |  |

| Risk   | Impact/Consequences  | Controls in Place  | Net Risk Score |        |       | Additional Controls/Actions Required   |
|--|--|--|----------------|--------|-------|--|
|  |  |  | Likelihood     | Impact | Total |  |
| Buildings and equipment not maintained         | Fabric of building deteriorates, resulting in less attractive building for hirers and failure to meet lease obligations. | Building maintenance budget in place for planned and reactive work. Periodic building inspections.   | 2              | 3      | 6     | Regular buildings inspections (DTC)<br>Planned preventative maintenance programme (TC)   |
| Lack of Security                               | Theft and damage resulting in possible loss of assets, cancelled bookings, reduced income and higher insurance premiums. | Regular banking, insurance, buildings alarmed, on-site caretaker at Stone Station, key codes at civic office. CCTV installed at Frank Jordan Centre and Heritage Centre.       | 1              | 3      | 3     | Need to improve lone worker provisions now that Police no longer share Station Road offices.   |
| Availability of sufficient marquees for market | Market traders turned away   | Council has stock of marquees, which are regularly maintained. Access is available to additional marquees for hire. Refresh of Council marquees last undertaken in March 2019. | 1              | 2      | 2     |  |
| Allotment tenancy agreements not in place      | Lack of control of tenancies and income. Tenants not clear on terms of their agreement                                   | Signed tenancy agreements in place with all allotment holders.   | 1              | 2      | 2     |  |
| Stone Heritage Centre                          | New Centre with new challenges and no existing Council operational experience.   | Experienced manager appointed. Projected costs based on experience at other Council buildings. Steering Group with external expertise in place.                                | 2              | 3      | 6     | New Steering Group recently established with overview of operations. This risk will need further analysis in future years when the Heritage Centre is fully operational. |
| Japanese Knotweed at allotments                | Allotment revenue lost, Damage to reputation if spreads.   | Regular monitoring and prompt treatment of any Knotweed presence. NOTE: Previous treatment of Knotweed completed.  | 3              | 2      | 6     |  |
| Fly tipping at open spaces                     | Unightly and possibly hazardous resulting in increased expenditure to remove and possible claims against the Council.    | Rubbish removed as and when required.  | 2              | 2      | 4     |  |
| Illegal encampment                             | Unightly, unable to gain access for maintenance, health and safety issue resulting in complaints and poor image.         | Access partially restricted by gates and fences. Police to be informed as soon as illegal encampment is identified and dealt with by them.                                     | 1              | 3      | 3     |  |

| Risk  | Impact/Consequences  | Controls in Place   | Net Risk Score |        |       | Additional Controls/Actions Required |
|---|--|---|----------------|--------|-------|--------------------------------------|
|   |  |   | Likelihood     | Impact | Total |                                      |
| Litter/dog mess in open spaces  | Unightly, health and safety issue resulting in complaints and poor image.  | Dog bins provided, areas litter-picked regularly.   | 2              | 2      | 4     |                                      |
| Unable to provide services due to restrictions related to any future pandemic or other similar occurrence.. | Resource impact (see above). Loss of service to residents. Loss of town centre activity (events and markets). Possible closure of offices. | Plans in place to facilitate remote working if office closed. Regular review of regulations to ensure service provision is maximised within legal requirements. | 2              | 2      | 4     |                                      |

# Stone

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Town Council



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## Councillor Code of Conduct

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April 2026

# Contents

|    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 1  | Introduction .....                                    | 3  |
| 2  | Definitions.....                                      | 3  |
| 3  | Purpose of the Code of Conduct .....                  | 4  |
| 4  | General principles of councillor conduct.....         | 4  |
| 5  | Application of the Code of Conduct.....               | 5  |
| 6  | Standards of councillor conduct .....                 | 5  |
| 7  | Respect.....  | 6  |
| 8  | Bullying, harassment and discrimination .....         | 6  |
| 9  | Impartiality of officers of the council .....         | 7  |
| 10 | Confidentiality and access to information.....        | 7  |
| 11 | Disrepute.....  | 8  |
| 12 | Use of position .....                                 | 9  |
| 13 | Use of local authority resources and facilities.....  | 9  |
| 14 | Complying with the Code of Conduct .....              | 10 |
| 15 | Interests .....                                       | 10 |
| 16 | Gifts and hospitality .....                           | 11 |
| 17 | Dealing with Members of the Public.....               | 11 |
| 18 | Additional Policies/Protocols .....                   | 12 |
| 19 | Sanctions.....  | 12 |
|    | Appendix A: The Seven Principles of Public Life ..... | 13 |
|    | Appendix B: Registering interests.....                | 14 |
|    | Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests .....        | 16 |
|    | Table 2: Personal Interests.....                      | 17 |

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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- 1.1 The role of councillor across all tiers of local government is a vital part of our country's system of democracy. It is important that as councillors we can be held accountable and all adopt the behaviours and responsibilities associated with the role. Our conduct as an individual councillor affects the reputation of all councillors. We want the role of councillor to be one that people aspire to. We also want individuals from a range of backgrounds and circumstances to be putting themselves forward to become councillors.
- 1.2 As councillors, we represent local residents, work to develop better services and deliver local change. The public have high expectations of us and entrust us to represent our local area; taking decisions fairly, openly, and transparently. We have both an individual and collective responsibility to meet these expectations by maintaining high standards and demonstrating good conduct, and by challenging behaviour which falls below expectations.
- 1.3 Importantly, we should be able to undertake our role as a councillor without being intimidated, abused, bullied or threatened by anyone, including the general public.
- 1.4 This Code has been designed to protect our democratic role, encourage good conduct and safeguard the public's trust in local government. The document is based on the Model Councillor Code of Conduct developed by the Local Government Association (LGA).
- 1.5 All councils are required to have a local Councillor Code of Conduct.

# 2 DEFINITIONS

---

- 2.1 For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, a "councillor" means a member or co-opted member of a local authority or a directly elected mayor. A "co-opted member" is defined in the Localism Act 2011 Section 27(4) as "a person who is not a member of the authority but who:
  - a. is a member of any committee or sub-committee of the authority, or;
  - b. is a member of, and represents the authority on, any joint committee or joint sub-committee of the authority;and who is entitled to vote on any question that falls to be decided at any meeting of that committee or sub-committee".
- 2.2 For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, "local authority" includes county councils, district councils, London borough councils, parish councils, town councils, fire and rescue authorities, police authorities, joint authorities, economic prosperity boards, combined authorities and National Park authorities.

### 3 PURPOSE OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

---

- 3.1 The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist you, as a councillor, in modelling the behaviour that is expected of you, to provide a personal check and balance, and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against you. It is also to protect you, the public, fellow councillors, local authority officers and the reputation of local government. It sets out general principles of conduct expected of all councillors and your specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct. The LGA encourages the use of support, training and mediation prior to action being taken using the Code. The fundamental aim of the Code is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of councillor and local government.

### 4 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF COUNCILLOR CONDUCT

---

- 4.1 Everyone in public office at all levels; all who serve the public or deliver public services, including ministers, civil servants, councillors and local authority officers; should uphold the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#), also known as the Nolan Principles.
- 4.2 Building on these principles, the following general principles have been developed specifically for the role of councillor.
- 4.3 In accordance with the public trust placed in me, on all occasions:
- I act with integrity and honesty
  - I act lawfully
  - I treat all persons fairly and with respect; and
  - I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of councillor.
- 4.4 In undertaking my role:
- I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community
  - I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person
  - I avoid conflicts of interest
  - I exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
  - I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with my local authority's requirements and in the public interest.

## **5 APPLICATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

---

- 5.1 This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a councillor.
- 5.2 This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a councillor which may include when:
- you misuse your position as a councillor
  - Your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor;
- 5.3 The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:
- at face-to-face meetings
  - at online or telephone meetings
  - in written communication
  - in verbal communication
  - in non-verbal communication
  - in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.
- 5.4 You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a councillor.
- 5.5 Your Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and you are encouraged to seek advice from your Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct. Town and parish councillors are encouraged to seek advice from their Clerk, who may refer matters to the Monitoring Officer.

## **6 STANDARDS OF COUNCILLOR CONDUCT**

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- 6.1 This section sets out your obligations, which are the minimum standards of conduct required of you as a councillor. Should your conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against you, which may result in action being taken.
- 6.2 Guidance is included to help explain the reasons for the obligations and how they should be followed.

## **7 RESPECT**

---

7.1 As a councillor:

- I treat other councillors and members of the public with respect.
- I treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.

7.2 Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As a councillor, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack.

7.3 In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in councillors.

7.4 In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police. This also applies to fellow councillors, where action could then be taken under the Councillor Code of Conduct, and local authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the local authority's councillor officer protocol.

## **8 BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION**

---

8.1 As a councillor:

- I do not bully any person.
- I do not harass any person.
- I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

8.2 The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

8.3 The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such

conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

8.4 Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

8.5 The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Councillors have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the local authority's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

## **9 IMPARTIALITY OF OFFICERS OF THE COUNCIL**

---

9.1 As a councillor:

- I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the local authority.

9.2 Officers work for the local authority as a whole and must be politically neutral (unless they are political assistants). They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. You can question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, you must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

## **10 CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

---

10.1 As a councillor:

- I do not disclose information:
  - i. given to me in confidence by anyone
  - ii. acquired by me which I believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless:
    - I have received the consent of a person authorised to give it;
    - I am required by law to do so;
    - the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the

third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or

- the disclosure is:
  - reasonable and in the public interest; and
  - made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the local authority; and
  - I have consulted the Monitoring Officer prior to its release.
- I do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a councillor for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.
- I do not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.

10.2 Local authorities must work openly and transparently, and their proceedings and printed materials are open to the public, except in certain legally defined circumstances. You should work on this basis, but there will be times when it is required by law that discussions, documents and other information relating to or held by the local authority must be treated in a confidential manner. Examples include personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations.

## **11 DISREPUTE**

---

11.1 As a councillor:

- I do not bring my role or local authority into disrepute.

11.2 As a Councillor, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and your actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other councillors and/or your local authority and may lower the public's confidence in your or your local authority's ability to discharge your/it's functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute.

11.3 You are able to hold the local authority and fellow councillors to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the council whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct.

## **12 USE OF POSITION**

---

12.1 As a councillor:

- I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

12.2 Your position as a member of the local authority provides you with certain opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges, and you make choices all the time that will impact others. However, you should not take advantage of these opportunities to further your own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

## **13 USE OF LOCAL AUTHORITY RESOURCES AND FACILITIES**

---

13.1 As a councillor:

- I do not misuse council resources.
- I will, when using the resources of the local or authorising their use by others:
  - i. act in accordance with the local authority's requirements; and
  - ii. ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or of the office to which I have been elected or appointed.

13.2 You may be provided with resources and facilities by the local authority to assist you in carrying out your duties as a councillor.

13.3 Examples include:

- office support
- stationery
- equipment such as phones, and computers
- transport
- access and use of local authority buildings and rooms.

13.4 These are given to you to help you carry out your role as a councillor more effectively and are not to be used for business or personal gain. They should be used in accordance with the purpose for which they have been provided and the local authority's own policies regarding their use.

## 14 COMPLYING WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT

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### 14.1 As a Councillor:

- I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by my local authority.
- I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.
- I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings.
- I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.

14.2 It is extremely important for you as a councillor to demonstrate high standards, for you to have your actions open to scrutiny and for you not to undermine public trust in the local authority or its governance. If you do not understand or are concerned about the local authority's processes in handling a complaint you should raise this with your Monitoring Officer.

## 15 INTERESTS

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### 15.1 As a councillor:

- I register and disclose my interests.

15.2 Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of members of the authority .

15.3 You need to register your interests so that the public, local authority employees and fellow councillors know which of your interests might give rise to a conflict of interest. The register is a public document that can be consulted when (or before) an issue arises. The register also protects you by allowing you to demonstrate openness and a willingness to be held accountable. You are personally responsible for deciding whether or not you should disclose an interest in a meeting, but it can be helpful for you to know early on if others think that a potential conflict might arise. It is also important that the public know about any interest that might have to be disclosed by you or other councillors when making or taking part in decisions, so that decision making is seen by the public as open and honest. This helps to ensure that public confidence in the integrity of local governance is maintained.

15.4 You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as setout in Table 1, is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

15.5 Appendix B sets out the detailed provisions on registering and disclosing interests. If in doubt, you should always seek appropriate advice.

## 16 GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

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### 16.1 As a councillor:

- I do not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.
- I register with the Monitoring Officer (Clerk in respect of a town or parish council) any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt.
- I register with the Monitoring Officer (Clerk in respect of a town or parish council) any significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.

16.2 In order to protect your position and the reputation of the local authority, you should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a councillor. The presumption should always be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality. However, there may be times when such a refusal may be difficult if it is seen as rudeness in which case you could accept it but must ensure it is publicly registered. However, you do not need to register gifts and hospitality which are not related to your role as a councillor, such as Christmas gifts from your friends and family. It is also important to note that it is appropriate to accept normal expenses and hospitality associated with your duties as a councillor. If you are unsure, do contact your Monitoring Officer (Clerk in respect of a town or parish council) for guidance.

## 17 DEALING WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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### 17.1 As a councillor:

- I ensure at that when dealing with members of the public<sup>1</sup> that they are clear at all times when I am acting on behalf of the Council and when I am acting in a personal capacity.
- I remember that as a councillor I am part of a body corporate and only have decision making authority in specified meetings as part of that body. I will not seek to suggest to any member of the public that I have any specific influence on decision making within that body.

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<sup>1</sup> A member of the public, in this context, means anyone other than a Stone Town Council member or officer.

- I will not use the designation “Councillor” where it has the potential to suggest that I am acting on behalf of the Council, unless authorised by the Council to so act.

- 17.2 It must be remembered that very few members of the public understand Council procedures and protocols and may find it difficult to differentiate between when an individual is acting in an official capacity and when they are acting as a private individual. It is therefore incumbent upon the councillor to ensure that Council protocols are followed at all times unless it is very clear that they are acting in a personal capacity.
- 17.3 This includes always acting within established Council lines of communication and through existing Council Committees, Sub-Committees and Steering/Working Groups where they exist, and not operating outside them.
- 17.4 Nothing in this section is intended to restrict the role of a councillor in acting as an advocate for a resident, providing that they are operating within Council protocols.

## **18 ADDITIONAL POLICIES/PROTOCOLS**

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- 18.1 As a councillor:
- I will abide by agreed Council procedures and protocols and understand that items specifically specified within this paragraph will be considered to be an integral part of this Code of Conduct.
- 18.2 The following items will be considered to be part of this Code of Conduct:
- a. The Press and Media Protocol

## **19 SANCTIONS**

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- 19.1 As a councillor:
- I agree to abide by any sanctions imposed by the Standards Committee following investigation by the Monitoring Officer and subsequent decision of that Committee.
- 19.2 Following a complaint to the Monitoring Officer and subsequent investigation and consideration, the Standards Committee may consider it appropriate that sanctions are applied to a councillor who is considered to be in breach of this code. Such sanctions may include, for example, suspension from one or more Council committees. Other sanctions may also be considered appropriate depending on the nature of the breach.

## **APPENDIX A: THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE**

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The principles are:

### **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

### **Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

### **Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

### **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

### **Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

### **Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

### **Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

## APPENDIX B: REGISTERING INTERESTS

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1. Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-election or re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) which are as described in “The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012”. You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in Table 2 (Personal Interests).
2. “Disclosable Pecuniary Interest” means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner’s interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.
3. "Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.
  - a. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer (Clerk in respect of a town or parish council, who will then notify the Monitoring Officer).
  - b. A ‘sensitive interest’ is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the councillor, or a person connected with the councillor, being subject to violence or intimidation.
  - c. Where you have a ‘sensitive interest’ you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

### **Non participation in case of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest**

4. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in Table 1, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a ‘sensitive interest’, you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest. Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

### **Disclosure of Personal Interests**

5. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Personal Interests (as set out in Table 2), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a ‘sensitive interest’, you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

## Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in Table 1) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects –
  - a. your own financial interest or well-being;
  - b. a financial interest or well-being of a relative, close associate; or
  - c. a body included in those you need to disclose under Other Registerable Interests as set out in Table 2

you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied

8. Where a matter affects your financial interest or well-being:
  - a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
  - b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

## TABLE 1: DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

| Subject   | Description  |
|---|--|
| Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation | Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.   |
| Sponsorship                                       | Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council) made to the member during the 12 month period ending on the latest date referred to in paragraph 6 above for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a member, or towards his/her election expenses.<br><br>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.  |
| Contracts   | Any contract made between the member or between his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a body in which such a person is a partner in a firm, a director of an incorporated body or holds the beneficial interest in securities <sup>2</sup> ) and the Council:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and</li> <li>(b) which has not been fully discharged.</li> </ul>   |
| Land  | Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of the Council.   |
| Licences  | Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of the relevant authority for a month or longer.   |
| Corporate tenancies                               | Any tenancy where (to the member's knowledge):<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the landlord is the Council; and</li> <li>(b) the tenant is a body in which the member, or his/her spouse or civil partner/ the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners has a beneficial interest.</li> </ul>  |
| Securities  | Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) that body (to the member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of the Council; and</li> <li>(b) either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or</li> <li>(ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

<sup>2</sup> 'Securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

## TABLE 2: PERSONAL INTERESTS

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You have a personal interest in any business of your authority which relates to or is likely to affect:

1. Any body of which the member is in a position of general control or management and to which he/she has not been appointed or officially nominated by the Council;
2. Any body:
  - a. exercising functions of a public nature;
  - b. directed to charitable purposes; or
  - c. one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union).

# Stone

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Town Council



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## Information Technology Policy

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April 2026

# Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>PURPOSE OF THE IT POLICY</b>           | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>MONITORING OF IT USE</b>               | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>SCOPE OF THIS POLICY</b>               | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>COMPUTER USE</b>                       | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>EQUIPMENT</b>                          | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>HEALTH AND SAFETY</b>                  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>PASSWORD AND AUTHENTICATION POLICY</b> | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>MONITORING</b>                         | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>REMOTE WORKING</b>                     | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>EMAIL</b>                              | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>USE OF THE INTERNET</b>                | <b>10</b> |
| <b>USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA</b>                | <b>11</b> |
| <b>MISUSE</b>                             | <b>12</b> |

## **Purpose of the IT Policy**

The purpose of this IT policy is to establish clear parameters for how councillors, staff, and other authorised users use council-provided technology or equipment in the course of their duties. The policy helps to:

- Set expectations for appropriate use of equipment and systems;
- Raise awareness of risks associated with IT use;
- Safeguard the council's data and digital assets;
- Clarify what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable use;
- Outline the consequences of policy breaches.

## **Monitoring of IT Use**

As an IT provider, the council has the right to monitor the use of its IT equipment and systems, provided there is a legitimate reason for doing so and councillors, employees and other authorised users are informed that such monitoring may take place. Any monitoring must be proportionate and comply with relevant data protection and privacy laws. Other persons may be included if they access or use council systems e.g. if they have a council e-mail address

## **Scope of this policy**

This policy applies to all councillors, staff, and other authorised users, regardless of their working location or pattern, including those who are home-based, office-based, or work on a flexible or part-time basis. It sets out the expectations for the appropriate use of IT equipment and systems provided by the council and should be read alongside the separate guidance notes on the use of Council iPads and the use of removable media.

## **Computer Use**

### **1.1 Hardware**

**1.1.1** Council computer equipment is provided for council purposes. Reasonable personal use is, however, permitted as determined by the Town Clerk. Personal use of council computers and systems should be restricted to official lunch breaks or before or after working hours where possible, and in any case should have minimal impact on the Council's working.

**1.1.2** Locking computers when leaving desk, all councillors, users should lock their computers when leaving their desks to prevent unauthorised access. This applies to all council and personal devices used for work.

**1.1.3** All computer and other electronic equipment supplied should be treated with good care at all times. Computer equipment is expensive, and any damage sustained to any equipment will have a financial impact on the council.

**1.1.4** Computer and electronic hardware should be kept clean, and every precaution taken to prevent food and drink being dropped or spilled onto it.

**1.1.5** Equipment should not be dismantled or reassembled without seeking advice.

**1.1.6** Councillors, staff, and other authorised are not to purchase any computer or mobile equipment (including software) unless previously authorised by the Town Clerk.

**1.1.7** Personal disks, USB sticks, CDs, DVDs, data storage devices etc cannot be used on council computers without the prior approval of the Town Clerk.

**1.1.8** The council has a number of wireless networks. Using any device, such as a mobile phone, to make a personal Wi-Fi hot spot which bypasses existing Wi-Fi is not preemitted.

## **Equipment**

### **2.1 Portable equipment**

**2.1.1** Portable equipment includes laptop computers, netbooks, tablets, mobile and smart phones with email capability and access to the internet etc.

**2.1.2** It is particularly emphasised that council back-up procedures specific to portable equipment should be followed at all times.

**2.1.3** All portable computers must be stored safely and securely when not in the office, i.e. when travelling or when working from home. Portable equipment should not be left unattended when away from council premises or home, and should never be left in parked vehicles unless securely locked out of sight in the boot.

**2.1.4** It is important to ensure all portable devices are protected with encryption in case they are lost or stolen. All smartphones or tablets that hold council data, including emails and files, must be protected with a pin code. Where possible, these devices should also be programmed to erase all content after several unsuccessful attempts to break in. Any security set on these devices must not be disabled or removed.

**2.1.5** Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) should be implemented wherever possible.

**2.1.6** If an item of portable equipment is lost or damaged this should be reported to the Town Clerk. If the loss or damage is due to an act of negligence, the individual responsible may be liable to make a contribution to replacement costs, where not covered by insurance.

**2.1.7** No photographs or videos may be taken on council premises that may risk revealing confidential information, unless it has been authorised by the Town Clerk, This includes the use of mobile telephones with camera function, camcorder, tape or other recording device for sound or pictures - moving or still.

**2.1.8** Under no circumstances should any non-public meeting or conversation be recorded without the permission of those present, other than to the extent required for minute taking only. This does not affect statutory rights (under The Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014).

**2.1.9** In addition, the council does not permit webcams (which may be pre-installed on many laptops) to be used in the workplace, other than for conference calls for council purposes. If there is any doubt as to whether a device falls under this clause, advice should be sought from the Town Clerk.

## **2.2 Use of own devices**

**2.2.1** Personal laptops and other computers or other devices should not be used to access council IT systems, unless this is in accordance with the exceptions below, or has been specifically authorised by the Town Clerk. This is to ensure that no viruses enter the system, to assist in maintaining security, confidentiality, and data protection.

**2.2.2** The exceptions to the above are:

- Access to the council's remote AVD system by authorised users.
- Access to the Council's telephone system by authorised users.
- The use of personal devices by authorised users to access council email accounts and related calendar etc. information.
- Connection to the Council's Wi-Fi, without any access to Council data that would not otherwise be accessible to the user.

**2.2.3** Where council data is stored on a personal device as a result of any of the above, it should be stored securely and protected by passwords and PINs. No council data should be solely stored on a personal device, and must also be stored on an official council device to allow for data backup.

**2.2.4** The Town Clerk should be informed should any personal device on which Council data is stored be lost, stolen, or inappropriately accessed where there is risk of access to council data or resources. To prevent lost/stolen phones being used, users will need to retain the details of their IMEI number and the SIM number of the device as their provider will require this to deactivate it.

**2.2.5** Councillors, staff, and other authorised persons that use council systems are expected to use all devices in an ethical and respectful manner and in accordance with this policy. Accessing inappropriate websites or services on any device via the IT infrastructure that is paid for or provided by the council carries a high degree of risk, and, for employees, may result in disciplinary action, including summary dismissal (without notice). For Workers or Contractors, we may terminate the worker agreement. This is irrespective of the ownership of the device used. An example would be downloading copyright music illegally or accessing pornographic material.

**2.2.6** In cases of legal proceedings, the council may need to temporarily take possession of a device, whether council-owned or personal to retrieve relevant data.

**2.2.7** Prior to the disposal of any device that may have council data stored on it, and in the event of a user leaving the council, councillors, staff, and other authorised users are required to delete any data relating to the Council. The council may, at its discretion, seek proof that this has been done.

**2.2.8** Councillors, staff, and other authorised users must take responsibility for understanding how their device(s) work in respect to the above rules if they are accessing council servers/services via their own IT equipment. Risks to the user's personal device(s) include data loss as a result of a crash of the operating system, bugs and viruses, software or hardware failures and programming errors rendering a device inoperable. The council will use reasonable endeavours to assist, but councillors, staff, and other authorised users are personally liable for their own device(s) and for any costs incurred as a result of the above.

## **Health and safety**

**3.1.1** Councillors, staff, and other authorised users who work in council offices will be provided with an appropriate workstation.

**3.1.2** The council has a duty to ensure that regular appropriate eye tests, carried out by a competent person, are offered to employees using display screen equipment. Further details are set out in the council's health and safety policy.

**3.1.3** Any VDU user who feels that their workstation requires changes to make it compliant must raise this with the Town Clerk.

**3.1.4** If any hazards are detected at a workstation, including 'noises' from the IT equipment, this should be reported immediately to the Town Clerk, or raised direct with the Council IT support provider.

## **Password and Authentication Policy**

**4.1.1** All user accounts must be protected by strong, secure passwords<sup>1</sup>. In addition to strong passwords, Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) should be enabled wherever possible. MFA requires users to provide two or more independent forms of verification—for example, a password (something you know) and a code sent to your phone (something you have). This significantly reduces the risk of unauthorised access to systems and personal data.

For more guidance, see the NCSC's advice on password security: [NCSC Password Guidance](#)

#### **4.1.2** Access to Passwords

- Passwords are personal and must not be shared under any circumstances.
- Only the assigned user of an account may access or use the associated password.
- In exceptional cases (e.g., incident response or employee offboarding), access to system credentials may be granted to authorised personnel by the council's IT support with the permission of the Town Clerk and appropriate approvals and logging.
- Administrative credentials must be stored securely and only accessible to authorised personnel, with a copy in a sealed envelope stored in the council's safe, only to be accessed in an emergency.

#### **4.1.3** Password Storage and Management

- Passwords must not be stored in plain text or written down in insecure locations.
- Passwords may be stored using a council-approved, encrypted password manager (e.g., LastPass, Bitwarden, or KeePass).

#### **4.1.4** Password Change Requirements

- Immediately change password if compromise is suspected.

#### **4.1.5** Password Access Control and Logging

- A log should be kept of all systems, and which users have access to administrative credentials for those systems. Any access to the emergency copy of those credentials must be logged and auditable.
- Attempts to access unauthorised passwords will be treated as a security incident.

#### **4.1.6** Responsibility

- Users are responsible for creating and maintaining secure passwords for their accounts.
- System administrators, including the Council's IT Support contractor, may set up initial passwords, which users should be advised to change.

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<sup>1</sup> The council is considering adopting the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) recommendations for creating passwords using three random words (e.g. PurpleCandleRiver). This method helps create passwords that are both strong and easy to remember, while offering effective protection against common cyber threats such as brute-force attacks. This approach is endorsed in NALC guidance.

## **Monitoring**

**5.1.1** The council reserves the right to monitor and maintain logs of computer usage and inspect any files stored on its network, servers, computers, or associated technology to ensure compliance with this policy as well as relevant legislation. Internet, email, and computer usage is continually monitored as part of the council's protection against computer viruses, ongoing maintenance of the system, and when investigating faults.

**5.1.5** The council will monitor the use of electronic communications and use of the internet in line with the Investigatory Powers (Interception by Councils etc for Monitoring and Record-keeping Purposes) Regulations 2018.

**5.1.6** Monitoring of an employee's email and/or internet use will be conducted in accordance with an impact assessment that the council has carried out to ensure that monitoring is necessary and proportionate. Monitoring is in the council's legitimate interests and is to ensure that this policy is being complied with.

**5.1.7** The information obtained through monitoring may be shared internally, including with relevant councillors and IT support provider if access to the data is necessary for performance of their roles. The information may also be shared with external HR or legal advisers for the purposes of seeking professional advice. Any external advisers will have appropriate data protection policies and protocols in place.

**5.1.8** The information gathered through monitoring will be retained only long enough for any breach of this policy to come to light and for any investigation to be conducted.

**5.1.9** Councillors, staff, and other authorised users have a number of rights in relation to their data, including the right to make a subject access request and the right to have data rectified or erased in some circumstances. You can find further details of these rights and how to exercise them in the council's data protection policy.

**5.1.10** Such monitoring and the retrieval of the content of any messages may be for the purposes of checking whether the use of the system is legitimate, to find lost messages or to retrieve messages lost due to computer failure, to assist in the investigation of wrongful acts, or to comply with any legal obligation.

**5.1.11** The council may implement software and systems that can monitor and record all internet usage.

**5.1.12** The council reserves the right to inspect all files stored on its computer systems in order to assure compliance with this policy. The council also reserves the right to monitor the types of sites being accessed and the extent and frequency of use of the internet at any time, both inside and outside of working hours to ensure that the system is not being abused and to protect the council from potential damage or disrepute.

**5.1.13** Any use that the council considers to be 'improper', either in terms of the content or the amount of time spent on this, may result in disciplinary proceedings.

**5.1.14** All computers will be periodically checked and scanned for unauthorised programmes and viruses.

## **Remote working**

**6.1.1** Increased IT security measures apply to those who work away from their normal place of work (e.g. whilst travelling, working from home or at any other different venue), as follows:

- if logging into the council's systems or services remotely, using computers that either do not belong to the council or are not owned by the user, any passwords must not be saved locally. Access to the Council's systems remotely via a web browser is not permitted.
- the location and direction of the screen should be checked to ensure confidential information is out of view. Steps should be taken to avoid messages being read by other people, including other travellers on public transport etc.
- any data printed should be collected and stored securely
- papers, files or computer equipment must not be left unattended at non-council premises (excluding home working) unless arrangements have been made with a responsible person at those premises for them to be kept in a locked room or cabinet if they are to be left unattended at any time.
- council equipment and data should be stored securely when working from home.
- any data should be kept safely and should only be disposed of securely;
- papers, files, data sticks/storage, flash drive or backup hard drives should not be left unattended in cars, except where it is entirely unavoidable for short periods, in which case they must be locked out of sight in the boot of the car. If staying away overnight, council data should be taken into the accommodation, care being taken that it will not be interfered with by others or inadvertently destroyed;
- where possible the ability to remotely wipe any mobile devices that process sensitive information should be retained in the case of loss or theft;

## **Email**

**7.1.1** Council email facilities are intended to promote effective and speedy communication on work-related matters. Although we encourage the use of email, it can be risky. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users need to be careful not to introduce viruses onto council systems and should take proper account of the security advice below.

**7.1.2** On occasion, it will be quicker to action an issue by telephone or face to face, rather than via protracted email chains. Emails should not be used as a substitute for face to face or telephone conversations. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users are expected to decide which is the optimum channel of communication to complete their tasks quickly and effectively.

**7.1.3** These rules are designed to minimise the legal risks run when using email at work and to guide councillors, staff, and other authorised users as to what may and may not be done. If there is something which is not covered in the policy, councillors, staff, and other

authorised users should ask the Town Clerk, rather than assuming they know the right answer.

**7.1.4** All councillors, staff, and other authorised users who need to use email as part of their role will normally be given their own council email address and account. The council may, at any time, withdraw email access, should it feel that this is no longer necessary for the role or that the system is being abused.

**7.1.5** Email messages sent on the council's account are for council use only. Personal use is not permitted, other than in an emergency.

## **Use of the Internet**

### **8.1 Copyright**

**8.1.1** Much of what appears on the Internet is protected by copyright. Any copying without permission, including electronic copying, is illegal and therefore prohibited. The Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 set out the rules. The copyright laws not only apply to documents but also to software. The infringement of the copyright of another person or organisation could lead to legal action being taken against the council and damages being awarded, as well as disciplinary action, including dismissal, being taken against the perpetrator.

**8.1.2** It is easy to copy electronically, but this does not make it any less an offence. The council's policy is to comply with copyright laws, and not to bend the rules in any way.

**8.1.3** Councillors, staff, and other authorised users should not assume that because a document or file is on the Internet, it can be freely copied. There is a difference between information in the 'public domain' (which is no longer confidential or secret information but is still copyright protected) and information which is not protected by copyright (such as where the author has been dead for more than 70 years).

**8.1.4** Usually, a website will contain copyright conditions; these warnings should be read before downloading or copying.

**8.1.5** Copyright and database right law can be complicated. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users should check with the Town Clerk if unsure about anything.

### **8.2 Trademarks, links and data protection**

**8.2.1** The council does not permit the registration of any new domain names or trademarks relating to the council's names or products anywhere in the world, unless authorised to do so. Nor should they add links from any of the council's web pages to any other external sites without checking first with the Town Clerk.

**8.2.2** Special rules apply to the processing of personal and sensitive personal data. For further guidance on this, see the council's data protection policy, a copy of which is provided

in the electronic Councillor's Handbook, and can be requested from the Town Clerk at any time.

### **8.3 Accuracy of information**

**8.3.1** One of the main benefits of the internet is the access it gives to large amounts of information, which is often more up to date than traditional sources such as libraries. Be aware that, as the internet is uncontrolled, much of the information may be less accurate than it appears.

### **Use of social media**

**9.1.1** Social media includes blogs; Wikipedia and other similar sites where text can be posted; multimedia or user generated media sites (YouTube); social networking sites (such as Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, etc.); virtual worlds (Second Life); text messaging and mobile device communications and more traditional forms of media such as TV and newspapers. Care should be taken when using social media at any time, either using council systems or at home.

**9.1.2** Personal use of social networking/media and chat sites during working hours should be restricted to breaks.

**9.1.3** The council recognises the importance of councillors, staff, and other authorised users joining in and helping to shape sector conversation and enhancing its image through blogging and interaction in social media. Therefore, where it is relevant to use social networking sites as part of the individual's position, this is acceptable, but should always comply with the council's Press and Media Protocol.

**9.1.4** Inappropriate comments and postings can adversely affect the reputation of the council, even if it is not directly referenced. If comments or photographs could reasonably be interpreted as being associated with the council, or if remarks could be regarded as abusive, humiliating, sexual harassment, discriminatory or derogatory, or could constitute bullying or harassment, the council will treat this as a serious disciplinary offence. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users should be aware that parishioners or other local organisations may read councillors, staff, and other authorised users' personal weblogs and social media postings, to acquire information, for example, about their work, internal council business, and employee morale. Therefore, even if the council is not named, care should be taken with any views expressed.

**9.1.5** Note that the council may, from time to time, monitor external postings on social media sites. Any employee who has a profile (for example on LinkedIn or Facebook) must not misrepresent themselves or their role with the council. Councillors, staff, and other authorised users are also advised that social media sites are not an appropriate place to air council concerns or complaints: these should be raised with the council or formally through the grievance procedure.

**9.1.6** It is important to note that external contact details and information remain the property of the council. In addition, councillors, staff, and other authorised users leaving the

council will be required to delete all council-related data including contact details from any personal device/equipment.

## **Misuse**

**9.1.7** Misuse of IT systems and equipment is not in line with the council's standards of conduct and will be taken seriously. Any inappropriate or unauthorised use may lead to formal action, including disciplinary proceedings or, in serious cases, dismissal.

## **Purpose of Report**

1. To consider the proposed local government reorganisation, and to submit Stone Town Council's comments to the Government to aid their consideration of the proposals submitted by Staffordshire principal councils.

## **Background**

2. In December 2024, the Government announced plans to reorganise local government across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, along with other parts of England.
3. Currently, at a principal council level, local government services in Staffordshire are served by both Staffordshire County Council and the local district or borough council. These are known as 'two-tier' areas as services and responsibilities are split between two levels of local government. Services to Stoke-on-Trent are all delivered by the unitary Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent are being considered as a single County area for the proposed local government reorganisation.
4. The Government plans to merge existing 'two-tier' and smaller unitary authorities to create fewer, larger unitary councils which will take responsibility for all local services currently undertaken by principal authorities within the area. There are no proposals to make any changes to the role or powers of town and parish councils.
5. It has been suggested that having larger unitary councils will enable more powers, money and decision-making to be moved from central government to local areas – a process called 'devolution'.
6. For the first phase of this process, councils were asked to help shape what this new system should look like. Initial proposals were made to the Government in March 2025, with final submissions made in November 2025.
7. The Government is now consulting on the various proposals made by Staffordshire authorities before it decides on the most appropriate model for local government in the area.

## **Proposals Submitted by Staffordshire Councils**

8. Five proposals have been submitted to the Government by principal councils in Staffordshire. The proposals are:
9. **Proposal 1:** Cannock Chase District Council, East Staffordshire Borough Council, Stafford Borough Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council proposed 2 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:
  - **North Staffordshire:** Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire Moorlands, and Stoke-on-Trent
  - **South Staffordshire:** Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Stafford, and Tamworth
10. **Proposal 2:** Staffordshire County Council proposed 2 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:
  - **East Staffordshire:** East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Staffordshire Moorlands, Stoke-on-Trent, and Tamworth
  - **West Staffordshire:** Cannock Chase, Newcastle-under-Lyme, South Staffordshire, and Stafford
11. **Proposal 3:** Staffordshire Moorlands District Council proposed 2 unitary councils: This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the district areas of:
  - **North Staffordshire:** Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire Moorlands, plus 16 parishes from East Staffordshire and 6 from Stafford (**including Stone**)
  - **Southern and Mid-Staffordshire:** Cannock Chase, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Tamworth, and the remaining 22 parishes of East Staffordshire, and 34 of Stafford (**excluding Stone**)
12. **Proposal 4:** Lichfield District Council, South Staffordshire Borough Council, Tamworth Borough Council proposed 3 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:
  - **North Staffordshire:** Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire Moorlands, and Stoke-on-Trent
  - **South-West Staffordshire:** Cannock Chase, South Staffordshire, and Stafford
  - **South-East Staffordshire:** Lichfield, East Staffordshire, and Tamworth

13. **Proposal 5:** Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council proposed 4 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:

- **Unitary Authority 1:** Newcastle-under-Lyme
- **Unitary Authority 2:** Cannock Chase, South Staffordshire, and Stafford
- **Unitary Authority 3:** Staffordshire Moorlands, and Stoke-on-Trent
- **Unitary Authority 4:** East Staffordshire, Lichfield and Tamworth.

14. Government guidance suggests that new councils should be based on populations of around 500,000, and on existing borough/district boundaries. None of the above models achieve both of these criteria, with proposals 1, 2, 4, and 5 having at least one new suggested council with a population below 500,000, and proposal 3 not being based on existing boundaries.

15. The consultation takes the form of a questionnaire relating to each proposal, with the option to submit a written response. Submissions can be made by individuals as well as the Council, and must be submitted by 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

### **What Would be Best for Stone?**

16. In many ways, there would be little difference for Stone under any of proposals 1, 2, 4, and 5. In all cases, it is likely that Stafford would be the administrative centre of the new unitary council that Stone is part of, as it is now for both the County Council and Borough Council. Many existing links would therefore be maintained and there would be only a limited amount of change for Stone residents.

17. There an argument that the further split into two southern Staffordshire councils suggested in proposals 4 and 5 would be disadvantageous to Stone. Whilst it could be argued that it would result in a council which is closer to residents through being less geographically widespread, it would also be much smaller and suffer from the diseconomies of scale suffered by many current unitary councils in the 250,000 to 300,000 population range, such as Stoke-on Trent. Much of the drive behind the Government's reorganisation proposals has been for larger unitary councils which would be more financially and operationally viable, and these proposals do not address this.

18. The east/west split in proposal 2 would still retain the whole of the current Stafford Borough within the boundaries of the West Staffordshire council. This split would, however, result in a West Staffordshire council that would be significantly smaller than the South Staffordshire council proposed in proposal 1. There is a risk that this smaller council would be less financially and operationally viable.

19. Proposal 3 above would seem to be the least beneficial for Stone.
20. The division of the current Stafford Borough (and East Staffordshire Borough) would need to be addressed in this option. This would be likely to require a significant amount of work, and protracted negotiations, to split existing assets and services between the new north and south Staffordshire councils. This would be an unnecessary distraction with all of the other work that would be required anyway to bring so many different councils together and establish financially and operationally viable organisations by the likely deadline of April 2028.
21. A further issue would be the current financial position of Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Stoke is already in receipt of exceptional financial support from the Government. This does not mean that the Council gets any money from the Government, just that it is allowed to spend its own money in ways not normally permitted by local government financial rules, such as being able to use capital receipts to pay for day to day running costs. This could therefore result in funds currently available to other councils which become part of the new north Staffordshire unitary being used to meet Stoke's current deficits and possibly even the sale of existing assets to meet further day to day spending if exceptional financial support were to continue into the future.
22. Finally, proposal 3 would also split the parliamentary constituency that Stone is part of between two of the new unitary councils.
23. In summary, therefore, of the five proposal set out above, proposal 1 would appear to offer the best outcome for Stone from the five options submitted to the Government for consideration.

### **Impact on the Town Council**

24. The impact on the Town Council of the proposals are the same as set out in my previous report to this Committee in October 2025. I have repeated these comments in paragraphs 25 to 31 below for ease of reference
25. *There are no changes proposed to the structure or functions of town and parish councils in the proposed legislation so far, but there are proposals in the bill for increased "neighbourhood governance" which may overlap with the role of town and parish councils.*
26. *Proposals in this area are not yet specific, and are likely to be made under regulations after the legislation is passed. Notes to the bill say that this clause "will empower ward councillors to take a greater leadership role in driving forward the priorities of their communities. This will help to move decision-*

*making closer to residents, so decisions are made by people who understand local needs”*

- 27. It is difficult to prepare for something which is so vague, but the Town Council will need to remain flexible, informed and empowered to ensure that it can continue to provide for the needs of Stone residents whatever the new “neighbourhood governance” proposals are.*
- 28. To this end, the Council will need to take a view on the role it would want to play following the new councils coming into force. A unique opportunity exists now, which may not exist in the future, to protect local assets for local people.*
- 29. For example, the Town Council relies on leasing two of its major assets from Stafford Borough – the Council Offices and the Frank Jordan Centre. There is no guarantee that a future unitary council that is less aware of the Town Council’s needs won’t seek to sell these assets to support their budgets, and thus the benefit of them would be lost to Stone forever.*
- 30. A similar argument could apply to many other Stafford Borough assets in Stone such as play areas and open spaces, and perhaps even parts of Westbridge Park or Stonefield Park. Additionally, the town’s influence on items such as the level of car parking charges may also be significantly reduced.*
- 31. It is therefore suggested that the Committee authorises the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this Committee, to enter into discussions with Stafford Borough Council to seek to secure as many of these assets as possible for the long-term benefit of Stone, and report back to this Committee as discussions progress.*
- 32. The General Purposes Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2025 supported the proposal above and work is ongoing.*

### **Town Council Comments**

- 33. The Committee are asked to consider this report and previous discussions related to local government reorganisation, with a view to formulating a set of comments to be sent to the Government from the Town Council for consideration when formulating their decision regarding local government in Staffordshire.**
- 34. An initial draft set of comments and proposed answers to the questionnaire are attached as an appendices to this report. It is suggested that the Committee consider these draft submission and propose any amendments necessary.**
- 35. It is also suggested that the Town Council ask all Councillors to submit a personal response to the consultation based on the Town Council position, and**

publicise the Town Council's views to encourage Stone residents to submit responses along similar lines.

### **Conclusion**

36. This report has considered the proposed reorganisation of local government in Staffordshire, together with its impact on Stone and the Town Council.

37. The Committee is asked to consider this impact and respond accordingly.

### **Recommendations**

38. The Committee is recommended to:

- a. Consider, and amend as necessary, the attached comments regarding the proposals for local government restructuring in Staffordshire.
- b. Authorise the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Committee Chairman, to finalise the comments in line with the views of the Committee and submit them to the Government.
- c. Publicise the Council's response and encourage Councillors and Stone residents to respond to the consultation along similar lines.

## **Comments on Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent**

Stone Town Council represents a predominantly urban area in the northern part of Stafford Borough. It is the largest parish council within the Stafford Borough area, and the second largest within Staffordshire<sup>1</sup>.

The Town Council has noted that there are five options that have been submitted by Staffordshire councils that are currently under consideration by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The Town Council has considered each of these options from the point of view of the town of Stone and its residents. It does not have either the access to or the resources to analyse the detailed economic and other data available to principal councils, so has considered each of the options on the basis of criteria that will matter to its residents.

The options are considered below in the order of the Town Council's preference.

**Preference 1:** Cannock Chase District Council, East Staffordshire Borough Council, Stafford Borough Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council proposal for 2 unitary councils comprising the current areas of:

- **North Staffordshire:** Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire Moorlands, and Stoke-on-Trent
- **South Staffordshire:** Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Stafford, and Tamworth

This option has many advantages for Stone.

It retains the existing strong links with Stafford which have been built up over many years, particularly since the formation of Stafford Borough Council following the 1974 local government reorganisation. Stafford is currently the administrative centre that that Stone residents look to for both County and Borough level local government services, and it is expected that these links would remain, with Stafford as the administrative centre for the new South Staffordshire council.

By combining six current borough/district council areas, the new unitary council would have a population base of around 600,000 residents. This is likely to result in a stable

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<sup>1</sup> By net revenue budget 2025-26

council which is financially and operationally viable, building on the current financial position of the constituent authorities.

Stone Town Council strongly supports this option.

**Preference 2:** Staffordshire County Council proposal for 2 unitary councils comprising the current areas of:

- **East Staffordshire:** East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Staffordshire Moorlands, Stoke-on-Trent, and Tamworth
- **West Staffordshire:** Cannock Chase, Newcastle-under-Lyme, South Staffordshire, and Stafford

Many of the advantages of the previous option for Stone also apply to this one, however the proposed West Staffordshire authority would be significantly smaller than the proposed South Staffordshire council above, so may suffer from reduced financial and operational viability compared with that option.

Stone Town Council would only support this option should its preferred option prove to be unviable

**Preference 3:** Lichfield District Council, South Staffordshire Borough Council, Tamworth Borough Council proposal for 3 unitary councils comprising the current areas of:

- **North Staffordshire:** Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire Moorlands, and Stoke-on-Trent
- **South-West Staffordshire:** Cannock Chase, South Staffordshire, and Stafford
- **South-East Staffordshire:** Lichfield, East Staffordshire, and Tamworth

This again retains the advantages of maintaining existing strong links with Stafford. By splitting the south of the county into two, however, the new unitary council covering Stone would be likely to have only around 300,000 residents. This level has already been demonstrated to be too small, with many of the unitary councils of around this size created in the previous local government reorganisation now struggling financially.

Stone Town Council opposes this proposal.

**Preference 4:** Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council proposal for 4 unitary councils comprising the current areas of:

- **Unitary Authority 1:** Newcastle-under-Lyme
- **Unitary Authority 2:** Cannock Chase, South Staffordshire, and Stafford
- **Unitary Authority 3:** Staffordshire Moorlands, and Stoke-on-Trent
- **Unitary Authority 4:** East Staffordshire, Lichfield and Tamworth.

This option will have a virtually identical impact on Stone as preference 4 above. It is rated lower by the Town Council due to the potentially reduced financial viability of unitary authorities 1 and 3 compared to the previous option.

Stone Town Council opposes this proposal.

**Preference 5:** Staffordshire Moorlands District Council proposal for 2 unitary councils, including a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils, comprising the district areas of:

- **North Staffordshire:** Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire Moorlands, plus 16 parishes from East Staffordshire and 6 from Stafford (**including Stone**)
- **Southern and Mid-Staffordshire:** Cannock Chase, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Tamworth, and the remaining 22 parishes of East Staffordshire, and 34 of Stafford (**excluding Stone**)

This option would result in a change of administrative centre from Stafford to Stoke-on-Trent for Stone residents after many years of looking to Stafford for all of their principal authority services, and breaking the current strong links with Stafford. This would be likely to cause confusion and uncertainty for many Stone residents seeking to access local government services, especially if an administrative centre still exists in Stafford to service the south of the county.

The division of the current Stafford Borough and East Staffordshire Borough would be likely to require a significant amount of work, and protracted negotiations, to split existing assets and services between the new North and South Staffordshire councils. This would be an unnecessary distraction bearing in mind the significant level of other work that would be required to bring so many different councils together and establish financially and operationally viable organisations by the likely deadline of April 2028.

A further issue would be the current financial position of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, which is already in receipt of exceptional financial support from the Government. There is therefore a significant risk under this option that funds would be diverted from other areas such as Stone to be used to meet Stoke-on-Trent City Council's current deficits and possibly even the sale of assets in Stone and other areas to support further spending in the future.

Finally, this option would also split the parliamentary constituency that Stone is part of between the two new unitary councils.

Stone Town Council strongly opposes this proposal.

## **Conclusions**

Whilst Stone Town Council will continue to work enthusiastically for the residents of Stone within whatever local government structure is finally determined for

Staffordshire, there could be a significantly different outlook for the town's local government services to residents depending on the outcome.

Of the proposals that have been made to MHCLG, and for the reasons set out above, the Town Council strongly favours the split into two unitary authorities, south and north, with Stone included within the south.

The east/west proposal also offers many of the advantages of the Town Council's preferred option, but would only be supported by the Town Council should the north/south option prove to be unviable.

The Town Council opposes both of the options suggesting two southern Staffordshire councils as it is unlikely to be suitable to meet the town's needs in the longer term due to questions around the smaller councils viability.

Finally, the Town Council is totally opposed the north/south split, with Stone in the north, for the reasons exemplified earlier.

It is hoped that MHCLG will consider the comments above, and take them into account when determining their response to the proposal submitted by Staffordshire councils.

## Proposed Response to Questionnaire for Each Option

| Question   | Proposal 1     | Proposal 2                 | Proposal 3        | Proposal 4        | Proposal 5        |
|--|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?  | Strongly agree | Strongly agree             | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Somewhat disagree |
| 2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?  | Strongly agree | Strongly agree             | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Somewhat disagree |
| 3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?   | Strongly agree | Somewhat agree             | Somewhat agree    | Strongly disagree | Strongly disagree |
| 4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of exceptional financial support? | Strongly agree | Strongly agree             | Somewhat agree    | Strongly disagree | Strongly disagree |
| 5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?  | Strongly agree | Somewhat agree             | Somewhat disagree | Strongly disagree | Strongly disagree |
| 6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?   | Strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Strongly disagree | Somewhat disagree | Somewhat disagree |
| 7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?   | Strongly agree | Strongly agree             | Strongly disagree | Strongly disagree | Strongly disagree |
| 8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?  | Somewhat agree | Somewhat agree             | Somewhat disagree | Somewhat agree    | Somewhat agree    |

**From:** ██████████ (SPCA)  
**To:** [Staffordshire Parish Councils Association](#)  
**Subject:** Local Government Reorganisation Consultation -Please share with your whole council.  
**Date:** 05 February 2026 15:29:06  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)

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Good afternoon,

The government has launched its formal consultation on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Staffordshire, it was originally indicated this was to happen in May 2026.

This statutory consultation seeks views on the proposals that the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has received from Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent's principal councils.

The proposals are:

**Cannock Chase District Council, East Staffordshire Borough Council, Stafford Borough Council, Stoke-on-Trent City Council proposed 2 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:**

- **North Staffordshire:** Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire Moorlands, and Stoke-on-Trent
- **South Staffordshire:** Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Stafford, and Tamworth

**Staffordshire County Council proposed 2 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:**

- **East Staffordshire:** East Staffordshire, Lichfield, Staffordshire Moorlands, Stoke-on-Trent, and Tamworth
- **West Staffordshire:** Cannock Chase, Newcastle-under-Lyme, South Staffordshire, and Stafford

**Staffordshire Moorlands District Council proposed 2 unitary councils:** This includes a request to split existing district council areas between the proposed new councils. These would comprise the district areas of:

- **North Staffordshire:** Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire Moorlands, plus 16 parishes from East Staffordshire and 6 from Stafford
- **Southern and Mid-Staffordshire:** Cannock Chase, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Tamworth, and the remaining 22 parishes of East Staffordshire, and 34 of Stafford

**Lichfield District Council, South Staffordshire Borough Council, Tamworth Borough Council proposed 3 unitary councils. These**

**would comprise the current areas of:**

- **North Staffordshire:** Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire Moorlands, and Stoke-on-Trent
- **South-West Staffordshire:** Cannock Chase, South Staffordshire, and Stafford
- **South-East Staffordshire:** Lichfield, East Staffordshire, and Tamworth

**Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council proposed 4 unitary councils. These would comprise the current areas of:**

- **Unitary Authority 1:** Newcastle-under-Lyme
- **Unitary Authority 2:** Cannock Chase, South Staffordshire, and Stafford
- **Unitary Authority 3:** Staffordshire Moorlands, and Stoke-on-Trent
- **Unitary Authority 4:** East Staffordshire, Lichfield and Tamworth.

This consultation asks you questions about each proposal. This consultation will last for 7 weeks and closes at 23:59 on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

We are encouraging every local council to submit a formal response to the consultation, as well as share the consultation with your residents and encourage them to take part. Councillors/clerks can also respond individually.

The link to the online survey is here - <https://consult.communities.gov.uk/local-government-reorganisation/staffordshire-and-stoke-on-trent/>

Full details of the consultation and how to respond in writing can be found here - <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-government-reorganisation-in-staffordshire-and-stoke-on-trent/proposals-for-local-government-reorganisation-in-staffordshire-and-stoke-on-trent>

Finally, NALC has published a new online resource showcasing practical case studies on devolution from parish and town councils. You may find this useful, it is available here - <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/nalc-publishes-new-devolution-case-studies-resource-for-parish-and-town-councils.html>.

As always, if you need any help or assistance, or feel an online briefing about LGR in Staffordshire would be helpful, please do get in touch.

Kind regards,



County Officer  
Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association

Tel: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]@staffordshire.gov.uk

Post: Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association, Eastgate House, 79  
Eastgate Street, Stafford, ST16 2NG



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Date: 18/02/2026

Time: 13:26:38

## Stone Town Council - Payments

Page: 1

The table below lists payments made by the Council in the period identified, for the Committee's information.

The table includes payments by cheque, direct debit, payment card, telephone banking and online banking. It excludes salary and related payments, payments from the Mayor's Charity, and transfers between the Council's bank accounts. All amounts exclude VAT.

Payment Date From : 01/01/2026

Payment Date To : 31/01/2026

| <u>Payment Date</u> | <u>Reference</u> | <u>Supplier</u>                     | <u>Description</u>                               | <u>Amount (£)</u> |
|---------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------|
| 02/01/2026          | 9804             | Prism Solutions                     | Leased line rental - December 25                 | 59.90             |
| 02/01/2026          | 9804             | Prism Solutions                     | Leased line rental - December 25                 | 49.99             |
| 02/01/2026          | 01641213         | VALDA ENERGY                        | HC-Elec Usage 14.12-13.01.2026                   | 178.34            |
| 02/01/2026          | 9804             | Prism Solutions                     | Leased line rental - December 25                 | 5.91              |
| 05/01/2026          | wp-INV11131812   | Water Plus                          | Water Usage - Mount Road - 09.11 to 09.12.25     | 65.31             |
| 06/01/2026          | V02423772402     | EE                                  | EE Mobiles - 29 Dec to 28 Jan                    | 15.74             |
| 06/01/2026          | V02423772402     | EE                                  | EE Mobiles - 29 Dec to 28 Jan                    | 15.74             |
| 06/01/2026          | 13382862         | British Gas                         | Elec Supply Amphitheatre 19.11 to 20.12.25       | 13.02             |
| 08/01/2026          | wp-INV11203819   | Water Plus                          | Water Usage - Newcastle Road - 15.11 to 15.12.25 | 27.10             |
| 09/01/2026          | 13407218         | British Gas                         | Elec Usage 61 High Street 25.11 to 25.12.25      | 17.48             |
| 09/01/2026          | 13406956         | British Gas                         | Elec Usage - Feeder Pillar 1, 25.11 to 25.12.25  | 12.60             |
| 09/01/2026          | INV6001580       | MEB Total Ltd                       | Annual Boiler Service - SSTN                     | 192.50            |
| 09/01/2026          | 01668040         | VALDA ENERGY                        | SSTN Gas usage 01.01.26-31.01.26                 | 1.40              |
| 09/01/2026          | 2026/2027        | Association of Local Council Clerks | ALCC subscription to 03.02.27                    | 50.00             |
| 09/01/2026          | INVOICE-15       | KTC Security Services Ltd           | Install/Remove Bollards 7.12-28.12.25            | 60.00             |
| 09/01/2026          | INV6001580       | MEB Total Ltd                       | Annual Boiler Service - HC                       | 105.00            |
| 09/01/2026          | INV6001580       | MEB Total Ltd                       | Annual Boiler Service - FJC                      | 192.50            |
| 12/01/2026          | 201615202695321  | Pozitive Energy                     | Gas Usage - HC 01.12 to 31.12.25                 | 123.81            |

Date: 18/02/2026

Time: 13:26:38

## Stone Town Council - Payments

Page: 2

| <u>Payment Date</u> | <u>Reference</u> | <u>Supplier</u>           | <u>Description</u>                           | <u>Amount (£)</u> |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------|
| 13/01/2026          | 444008-048       | Virgin Media Business     | Telephone rental and calls to 21.01.26       | 88.06             |
| 15/01/2026          | SI-254248        | Mailing room              | Franking machine rental to 29.04.2026        | 60.00             |
| 15/01/2026          | INV337691281     | Zoom Video Comm Inc       | ZOOM Subscription Jan 14 to Feb 13           | 25.98             |
| 16/01/2026          | GB6003VC66MHXI   | Amazon                    | Whistle for Texas Flag Raising               | 8.33              |
| 16/01/2026          | GB6000VSNKWC3I   | Amazon                    | HC - Printer Ink                             | 136.25            |
| 19/01/2026          | 01668040         | VALDA ENERGY              | FJC Elec usage- 01.01.26-31.01.26            | 278.91            |
| 19/01/2026          | 01668040         | VALDA ENERGY              | SSTN Gas usage 01.01.26-31.01.26             | 990.38            |
| 19/01/2026          | 01668040         | VALDA ENERGY              | SSTN Elec usage01.01.26-31.01.26             | 359.32            |
| 19/01/2026          | 01668040         | VALDA ENERGY              | FJC Gas usage - 01.01.26-31.01.26            | 1,285.89          |
| 20/01/2026          | 7070298053       | Stafford Borough Council  | SBC Qtr Office Rent to 19/04/26              | 150.00            |
| 23/01/2026          | INV6001875       | MEB Total Ltd             | FJC - Emergency lighting test                | 123.18            |
| 23/01/2026          | 215407805        | JB Window Cleaner         | Window Cleaning Jan 26                       | 30.00             |
| 23/01/2026          | 17643            | All Print Equipment Ltd   | Copier usage - Dec 25                        | 26.19             |
| 23/01/2026          | 215407805        | JB Window Cleaner         | Window Cleaning Jan 26                       | 25.00             |
| 23/01/2026          | 215407805        | JB Window Cleaner         | Window Cleaning Jan 26                       | 65.00             |
| 23/01/2026          | INV-0597         | Evergreen Christmas Trees | Christmas Trees x 100                        | 1,416.67          |
| 23/01/2026          | L Walker         | Lee Walker Family Butcher | Contribution to Walton Lights                | 100.00            |
| 23/01/2026          | CD-244268453     | Culligan                  | Water Cooler Rental - Jan 26                 | 23.06             |
| 26/01/2026          | GB6003OB4CU5NI   | Amazon                    | Chamber coffee machine drinks refills        | 30.83             |
| 26/01/2026          | wp-INV11363353   | Water Plus                | Water usage - FJC to 06.01.26                | 412.75            |
| 26/01/2026          | wp-INV11347338   | Water Plus                | Water Usage SSTN - 06.01 to 05.01.26         | 102.33            |
| 26/01/2026          | 743014903/001/01 | Virgin Media Business     | Broadband Usage -6 Jan to 5 Feb 26           | 50.00             |
| 26/01/2026          | 233417           | Prism Solutions           | Prism IT Managed Service - Feb 26            | 1,358.50          |
| 29/01/2026          | wp-INV11393986   | Water Plus                | Water Usage - Mount Road - 09.12 to 09.01.26 | 68.31             |
| 30/01/2026          | SOT1157348       | Veolia ES (UK) Ltd        | Waste Collection FJC - Dec 2025              | 78.63             |

Date: 18/02/2026  
Time: 13:26:38

## Stone Town Council - Payments

Page: 3

| <u>Payment Date</u> | <u>Reference</u>   | <u>Supplier</u>          | <u>Description</u>              | <u>Amount (£)</u> |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| 30/01/2026          | SOT1157347         | Veolia ES (UK) Ltd       | Waste Collection FJC - Dec 2025 | 113.82            |
| 31/01/2026          | SBC Rates Jan 2026 | Stafford Borough Council | SBC Rates Mkt - Jan 2026        | 2.00              |
| 31/01/2026          | SBC Rates Jan 2026 | Stafford Borough Council | SBC Rates FJC - Jan 2026        | 279.00            |
| 31/01/2026          | SBC Rates Jan 2026 | Stafford Borough Council | SBC Rates SSTN - Jan 2026       | 180.00            |
| 31/01/2026          | SBC Rates Jan 2026 | Stafford Borough Council | SBC Rates HC - Jan 2026         | 379.00            |
|                     |                    |                          |                                 | 10,774.02         |