

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 7 April 2026

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: A. Best, I. Fordham, T. Kelt, P. Leason, J. Metters, A. Mottershead,
J. Powell and N. Powell

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

ABSENT: Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Burgess, J. Davies, L. Davies, K. Dawson, J. Hood,
B. Kenney, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

GP26/137 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: J. Battrick, J. Davies, L. Davies,
K. Dawson, J. Hood, B. Kenney, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

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

GP26/138 Declarations of Interest

None made

GP26/139 Requests for Dispensations

None received

GP26/140 To receive the report of the County Councillors

The Chairman invited County Councillors to address the Committee.

County Councillor Jill Hood

Councillor Hood was not able to attend the meeting.

County Councillor Andrew Mynors

Councillor Mynors was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP26/141 To receive the report of Borough Councillors

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee.

Councillor Ian Fordham

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that the Borough Council will be
implementing the Government's food waste collection service this month which

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will involve the curbside collection of waste food for processing into biogas and biofertilizer. The waste contractor, Veolia, will undertake weekly collections in newly acquired vehicles operated by newly appointed and trained crews.

The Borough Council was working towards smooth implementation of service with food caddies delivered to more than 60,000 homes along with instructions on their use.

Councillor Jon Powell

Councillor Powell informed the Committee that the Borough Council's Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee had discussed the Section 106 agreement process (established under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) providing a legal mechanism for local planning authorities to require developers to provide certain benefits or contributions as a condition of granting planning permission. The process ensures new developments are acceptable in planning terms and do not negatively impact the local community and infrastructure.

Councillor Powell advised Councillors that planning officers had suggested it was advantageous to consider suitable community projects that could be funded (from Section 106 money) to improve leisure, education, green spaces etc. well ahead of time so they were ready and waiting when large planning applications were submitted.

Councillor Philip Leason

Councillor Leason briefed the Committee on a meeting he had attended with the temporary LPT Stafford Commander for Police. The Police had reported that crime figures were down. A discussion took place about patrolling Westbridge Park and in partnership with the Borough Council were considering installation of more CCTV cameras in the town.

GP26/142 Representations from Members of the Public

None received.

GP26/143 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 3 March 2026 (Minute Numbers GP26/119 – GP26/136), be approved as a correct record.

GP26/144 Minutes of Sub-Committees

RESOLVED:

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 17 March 2026, (Minute Numbers TTP26/034 – TTP26/041), that the draft minutes be noted.
- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 17 March 2026 (Minute Numbers ENV26/035 – ENV26/042), that the draft minutes be noted.

- c) Estates Sub-Committee held on 17 March 2026 (Minute Numbers EST26/019 – EST26/029), that the draft minutes be noted, and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers EST26/024, EST26/025 and EST26/026 be adopted.

GP26/145 Appointment of Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor Elect

The Committee considered the appointment of a Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor Elect for the year 2026-27 and the arrangements for Mayor Making.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the arrangements for Mayor Making will involve holding the ceremony at St Michael & St Wulfad's Church as part of the Civic Sunday Service, in line with previous years. The Committee were in agreement with this arrangement which worked well.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Andrew Best is appointed as Town Mayor Elect for 2026-27 and Councillor Robert Townsend is appointed Deputy Mayor Elect.

GP26/146 Review of Standing Orders

The Committee had brought forward from the last meeting the review of the Council's Standing Orders.

A copy of the revised Standing Orders* had been enclosed with the agenda (electronic version) for the meeting.

The Town Clerk had previously advised the Committee that he was not proposing any changes other than updating the Procurement Act 2023 contract thresholds.

RESOLVED: That the revised Standing Orders are accepted.

GP26/147 Review of Financial Regulations

The Committee had brought forward from the last meeting the review of the Council's Financial Regulations.

A copy of the revised Financial Regulations* had been enclosed with agenda (electronic version) for the meeting.

The Town Clerk had previously advised the Committee that he was not proposing any changes other than updating the Procurement Act 2023 contract thresholds.

RESOLVED: That the updated Financial Regulations are accepted.

GP26/148 Neighbourhood Governance

The Committee considered a briefing paper received from Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association (who is joint working with West Midlands CALCs) on Neighbourhood Governance. An email from the County Executive of SPCA had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting, along with a Neighbourhood Governance Pack, containing a Council briefing, template motion and template letter to the local MP.

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The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the concept of Neighbourhood Governance was one of the items referenced in the proposal documentation for Local Government Reorganisation. It was intended that when developed neighbourhood governance would provide a localised form of governance built in to the new authorities. One comment made was that neighbourhood governance would be put in place so that the new councils do not have to rely on Town and Parish Councils.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that the purpose of this paper was to articulate the value of town and parish councils as a key link to their communities and the importance of them remaining strong players as the tier of local government closest to residents.

He explained that there was concern neighbourhood governance could replace town and parish councils, depending on how local government was restructured and implemented. No one yet knows what is going to happen or what is being proposed but concerns were based on the phrase 'not having to rely on town and parish councils'.

The Committee discussed the implications, although not knowing what was going to happen, anticipated that neighbourhood governance could be a kick in the teeth for democracy, with new unitary councils creating a greater distance between its residents and decision making.

The Committee expressed the desire to do everything possible to ensure local councils were maintained within the new structure for local government, while accepting that more detail was needed on how the responsibilities would be split.

RESOLVED: That the Committee supports use of the template and motion contained within the Neighbourhood Governance pack (as stated below) and asks the Town Clerk to write to Sir Gavin Williamson MP along the lines of the template letter enclosed.

RESOLVED: That the Committee resolves to:

1. Call on our local Member of Parliament to press the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to:
 - Ensure that parish and town councils are formally recognised as key partners within the emerging neighbourhood governance framework;
 - Guarantee that the forthcoming regulations and guidance clearly set out how parish and town councils will be integrated into neighbourhood governance structures;
 - Provide assurance that new neighbourhood governance arrangements will not duplicate functions or undermine the democratic legitimacy of parish and town councils.
2. Write to the MP enclosing this motion and requesting active lobbying on behalf of parish and town councils during the development of regulations under the English Devolution and Community Empowerment (EDCE) Bill.

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3. Engage with our principal authority to express the Council's expectation that parish and town councils be meaningfully involved in shaping local responses to the neighbourhood governance duty.
4. Publicly communicate this Council's position to residents, reaffirming our commitment to maintaining strong, local, democratic representation.

GP26/149 Data Protection Policy

The Committee considered a Data Protection Policy* drafted by the Town Clerk and enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that he had reviewed the documents and had made a number of minor changes to improve clarity, change dates and reflect the change of title from 'Privacy Policy' to 'Data Protection Policy'

RESOLVED: That the Town Council adopt the Data Protection Policy.

GP26/150 Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

The Committee considered the terms of reference* for the Stone Community Hub Liaison Group which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that when the Group had last delivered its report, a number of issues had been raised regarding the role of the Community Hub and whether the Hub was carrying out the role as was intended when the group was set up.

As no documentation had previously been developed to outline the role of the Group, the Town Clerk had produced terms of reference in consultation with Stone Community Hub Liaison Group and some discussion with the Hub and its trustees.

The Town Clerk outlined the three ways in which the Town Council interacts with the Hub which have been taken into account with this Group:

- To provide support, as a public authority, of organisations providing services to vulnerable adults in the town.
- In offering grant aid and subsidising the rental of space within the Frank Jordan Centre. The Council has due diligence responsibility to ensure the grants are used properly and effectively and the Stone Community Hub Liaison Group undertake this duty on behalf of the Council.
- The landlord and tenant responsibilities between the Hub and the Town Council are not part of the remit of the Hub Liaison Group. This is a direct relationship between the Hub and the office, unless a matter of policy arises, which will come back to the General Purposes Committee.

The Committee welcomed the terms of reference and agreed the document provided clarity and a clear remit of what the Stone Community Hub Liaison Group can and cannot do.

RESOLVED: That the terms of reference for Stone Community Hub Liaison Group be accepted.

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GP26/151 Town Council Payments

RESOLVED: To note the list* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 to 28 February 2026.

GP26/152 Update from Working Groups:

Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that a meeting had taken place with Joules Brewery who had agreed to move forward with planning applications for replacement signage at the heritage centre to include 'Stone Heritage Centre' so that people are able to identify the building as a heritage Centre rather than just 'Stone Fire Station'.

The Heritage Centre Manager is currently putting together a program of events and listings of what was going to be exhibited in the future.

GP26/153 To receive reports from Town Councillors on attendance at meetings of local organisations and outside bodies as a representative of the Town Council

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group

Councillor Davies was not available to deliver a report on this occasion.

Stone ATC

Councillor Davies was not available to deliver a report on this occasion.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Thornicroft was not available to deliver a report on this occasion.

Stafford & District Access Group

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that a meeting of Stafford & District Access Group took place on 23 March 2026. The discussion mainly related to access to the rugby club, legislation on electric bikes and scooters, and lack of information round bus stops and bus routes.

There was a suggestion (due to poor attendance levels) that there may be a need to wind the group down due to lack of interest. This matter will be discussed at the Annual General Meeting in June 2026.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that no meeting of Stone Common Plot Trustees had taken place and that the Annual General Meeting would be held later in the month.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

No meeting has taken place since the last report of Stone Community Hub Liaison Group.

SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Kelt informed the Committee that a meeting of the SPCA Executive Committee took place on 16 March where procedural matters were discussed. One major point of interest was that an agreement had been set up to engage professional planning advice for the benefit of members.

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West Midlands Railway and other Rail Matters

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that a meeting had taken place on 26 March where new officers were welcomed to discuss the community rail partnership and progress on the rail network.

GP26/154 Exclusion of the Press and Public

To resolve, pursuant to the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, that the Public and Press be excluded from the meeting whilst the next items of business are discussed on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the debate.

GP26/155 Confidential Minutes and recommendations of the undermentioned Sub-Committee:

- a) Estates Sub-Committee Meeting held on 17 March 2026, Minute Numbers: EST26/019 and EST26/029.

RESOLVED: To note the Minutes of the Estates Sub-Committee.

GP26/156 Staffing Matters

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk relating to the vacant post of Assistant Town Clerk (Democratic) and Mayor's Secretary, following the current postholders resignation.

RESOLVED: To agree reappointment to the post of Assistant Town Clerk in line with the recommendations in the Town Clerk's report.

CHAIRMAN