



Town Clerk

Les Trigg

15 Station Road
STONE
ST15 8JP

Tel: 01785 619740

Email: clerk@stonetowncouncil.gov.uk

30 September 2026

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **TOWN COUNCIL** will be held in the **Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone**, on **TUESDAY 6 OCTOBER 2026 at 7:00pm** for consideration of the matters itemised in the following agenda.

Les Trigg
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. **To Receive Apologies for Absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Requests for Dispensations Received**
4. **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.

5. **To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held on 1 September 2026, Minute Numbers C27/024 – C27/033 (attached).**
6. **To receive the draft minutes and decisions of the under mentioned Committees:**
 - a) General Purposes Committee meeting held on 1 September 2026, Minute Numbers GP27/038 – GP27/053 (attached).
 - b) Planning Consultative Committee meeting held on 1 September 2026, Minute Numbers GP27/018 – GP27/024 (attached).
7. **Allotment Awards**

To award the winners of the Allotments Competition 2026.
8. **Conclusion of Audit 2025 - 26**

To note receipt of the External Auditor's Report and Certificate for the year ending 31 March 2026.

A letter from the External Auditor and the External Auditor's Report and Certificate are attached.
9. **To receive the forthcoming Civic Announcements (attached).**
10. **To receive the Town Mayor's and Deputy Town Mayor's Reports of Engagements (attached).**

Members of the public are welcome to attend the Town Council 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

Minutes of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 1 September 2026

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

Officers: L. Trigg, R. Edwards and H. Pickford

ABSENT: Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Burgess, J. Davies, L. Davies, I. Fordham, B. Kenney,
C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

Prayers

Before the meeting began, Reverend Paul Kingman, led prayers.

C27/024 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: J. Battrick, J. Davies,
L. Davies, B. Kenney, I. Fordham, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

C27/025 Declarations of Interest

None made.

C27/026 Requests for Dispensations

None received.

C27/027 Representations from Members of the Public

None received.

C27/028 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 7 July 2026 -
(Minute Numbers C27/024 – C27/033), be approved as a correct record.

* 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.

C27/029 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the draft minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 July 2026 - (Minute Numbers GP27/020 – GP27/037), were noted.

RESOLVED:

- b) That the draft minutes of the Planning Consultative meeting held on 7 July 2026 – (Minute Numbers PC27/013 – PC27/018), were noted.

C27/030 To Thank the Outgoing Mayor's Cadets for their Services during 2025 - 2026

The Town Mayor had invited the outgoing Mayor's Cadets to attend the Town Council meeting, to enable the past Town Mayor, Councillor J. Metters, to thank them for their conscientious service during the completed Mayoral Year 2025 - 2026.

Due to other commitments, Corporal Brooke Lippitt and Corporal Bella Balderson were unable to attend the meeting to receive their certificates of appreciation in acknowledgement of their duty and support.

Councillor Metters expressed his appreciation and asked that the Town Mayor, Councillor Best to ensure the Cadets were thanked for their diligence and service and that their certificates of appreciation were forwarded on to the Cadets following the meeting.

**C27/031 Local Government Transparency Code 2015
Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014**

The information* for Quarter ending 30 June 2026 was noted.

C27/032 Civic Announcements

The Civic Announcements, which had been previously circulated, were noted.

C27/033 To receive the Town Mayor's and Deputy Town Mayor's Reports of Engagements

The Town Mayor's and Deputy Town Mayor's reports of engagements, which had previously been circulated, were noted.

The Town Mayor provided the Town Council with additional verbal reports on the details of his engagements.

* 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.

TOWN MAYOR

* 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.

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 1 September 2026

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

Officers: L. Trigg, R. Edwards and H. Pickford

ABSENT: Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Burgess, L. Davies, B. Kenney,
A. Mottershead, A. Mynors, J. Powell, N. Powell and R. Townsend

GP27/038 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: J. Battrick, L. Davies, B. Kenney,
J. Powell, N. Powell 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.

GP27/039 Declarations of Interest and Declarations

None made.

GP27/040 Requests for Dispensations

None received.

GP27/041 The Reports of the County Councillors Representing Stone Town

The Chairman invited County Councillors to address the Committee:

County Councillor J Hood

Councillor Hood informed the Committee that there is a growing issue with the
use of electric scooters in the town and expressed concern regarding the potential
risk to pedestrian safety.

County Councillor A. Mynors

Councillor Mynors was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP27/042 The Reports of Borough Councillors representing Stone Town

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that he had attended a briefing on
Planning for the New Local Rules.

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that the consultation period had closed in
relation to the Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs).

* 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.

GP27/043 Representations from Members of the Public

None.

GP27/044 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 7 July 2026 (Minute Numbers GP27/020 – GP27/037), be approved as a correct record.

GP27/045 Minutes of Sub-Committees

RESOLVED:

- a) To note the minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on 2 June 2026, Minute Numbers ENV27/001 - ENV27/009.
- b) To note the minutes of the Town Mayor's Chairty Sub-Committee meeting held on 2 June 2026, Minute Numbers MC27/001 – MC27/006.

GP27/046 Grants to Local Organisations

The Committee considered an exceptional request for Grant Aid from the following organisation, which met the criteria within the Council's Grants Policy:

- a) **Organisation: Stone Town Football Club**
Amount Requested: £500
Reason: To purchase a replacement football pitch mower

RESOLVED: To award a grant of £500 to Stone Town Football Club

GP27/047 Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

The Committee considered a revised Complaints Procedure (which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting). The revisions reflected new legislation and introduced a 30-day deadline for acknowledging complaints.

RESOLVED:

- a) To approve the revised Complaints Procedure.

GP27/048 Call for Evidence: Shaping the Future of Local Government in Staffordshire

The Chairman asked the Committee how it would like to proceed with preparing a response to the document received from Staffordshire Parish Council Association (SPCA).

RESOLVED:

That a draft proposal be drawn up by the Chairman and the Town Clerk and then circulated to Committee members for approval.

* 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.

GP27/049 Town Council Payments

RESOLVED:

To note the list of Town Council payments* made during the period 1 to 31 May 2026.

GP27/050 Update from Working Groups

Updates were received from the Councils Working Group Co-Ordinators as follows:

a. Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group

The group had not met but a meeting is planned in the near future.

GP27/051 To receive reports from Town Councillors on attendance at meetings of local organisations and outside bodies as a representative of the Town Council

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group

Councillor J. Davies had sent his apologies so was not able to report.

Stone ATC

Town Mayor & One Councillor – Councillors: A. Best and J. Davies

Councillor Best reported that the organisation continued to operate successfully.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillors: J. Davies and C. Thornicroft

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that no meeting had taken place.

Stafford & Stone Access Group

Councillor: T. Kelt

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that no meeting had taken place.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillors: A. Burgess, J. Hood, T. Kelt, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that no meeting had taken place.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillors: J. Battrick, J. Hood and R. Townsend

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that no meeting had taken place.

SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor: T. Kelt

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that a meeting had not taken place but had been asked to use a forum to investigate any voluntary group across the Country, particularly in the area of sustainability. This has been actioned and in progress.

West Midlands Railway and other Rail Matters

Councillor: T. Kelt

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that discussions were ongoing.

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that a meeting to discuss the Station approach was widely attended and that Geoff Grant from West Midlands Rail was also in attendance. It was requested executive attendance from the TOC. Jon Heal

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has been tasked to set up a meeting with the Director of Property and Parking Manager and has requested dates from the group.
It was stated that the plan to extend the route at both ends could possibly commence in December.

The meeting was temporarily suspended and then reconvened after the Planning Consultative Committee meeting and the Environmental Sub-Committee had taken place.

GP27/052 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.

GP27/053 Application to add public footpaths at Stone - Reference: LD604G

The Committee considered the confidential correspondence received from Staffordshire County Council, which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that Page 4, Paragraph 3 – referring to the routes of the footpath were incorrect.

RESOLVED: That the County Council should be recommended to include both footpaths.

CHAIRMAN

* 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.

Stone Town Council – Planning Consultative Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 1 September 2026

PRESENT: Councillor T. Kelt in the Chair, and
Councillors: A. Best, J. Hood, R. Kenney, K. Dawson, P. Leason and J. Metters,
A. Mottershead,

Officers: L. Trigg, R. Edwards and H. Pickford

ABSENT: Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Burgess, J. Davies, L. Davies, I. Fordham, B. Kenney,
N. Powell, J. Powell and R. Townsend

PC27/018 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: J. Battrick, J. Davies, L. Davies,
I. Fordham, B. Kenney, N. Powell, J. Powell, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

PC27/019 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

Councillor J. Hood and Councillor R. Kenney advised the Committee that, as
members of Stafford Borough Council's Planning Committee, they would not
speak or vote on the planning applications listed on the agenda – 5 (b).

PC27/020 Representations from Members of the Public

None received.

PC27/021 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Planning Consultative Committee meeting held on 7 July
2026 (Minute Numbers PC27/013 – PC27/018), be approved as a correct record.

PC27/022 Planning Applications

Application Number – 26/42510/FUL

Applicant – Mr Robert Mills-Pereira

Location – Land Rear of 9 – 11 Abbey Street, Stone

Development – Erection of two dwellings and one storeroom.

Observations: No objections.

Application Number – 25/41057/OUT

Applicant – James Fletcher & Katherine Ayre & Taylor Wimpey

Location – Land at Marlborough Road, Walton, Stone, ST15 0XS

Development – Outline application for residential development (Use Class C3) of up to 120 dwellings and associated access, with all other matters reserved.

Observations: The Town Council wishes to submit its previous objections in response to planning application 25/41057/OUT (for a similar development proposal at this site).

The Town Council strongly objects to this planning application and supports the points of concern raised by local people and consultee agencies/organisations. The Town Council has asked that the grounds detailed in its representation dated 10 October 2025, in response to planning application 25/40959/OUT for the erection of 240 residential dwellings, are restated and that the relevant objections are recorded against this latest planning application (25/41057/OUT).

The Committee would also like to know how its previous concerns have been addressed.

These observations are as follows:

- The development proposal will put strain on the existing infrastructure in Stone including roads, utilities, schools and healthcare which will not be able to keep pace with demand for the services. For example, there are currently only two GP practices delivering primary healthcare services in the town and around four dental practices.
- The Town Council would like to be consulted on the infrastructure that Section 106 monies may support.
Staffordshire County Council project there will be an insufficient number of school places in the local area to mitigate the impact of the development at first phase education.
The development proposal will lead to significantly higher volumes of traffic, congestion and corresponding poor air quality/pollution, particularly along the Eccleshall Road. There is already significant traffic congestion here at peak times.
- Support for Severn Trent Water Authority's request for a holding objection as the proposal may have a detrimental impact on the surrounding Network and Treatment works, with the potential to cause flooding or pollution. Sewer outflows or spills into the River Trent and its tributaries are already a big concern.
- Support for the Environment Agency's observations about potential contamination from a previous landfill site situated within the development boundary.
- The development site is located within the 'Zone of Influence' of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation creating the risk of increased recreational pressure, requiring appropriate mitigation.
- Support of Staffordshire County Council's observations that insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that an acceptable

drainage strategy is proposed. The County is also concerned about the proposed connection with the Fillybrooks and risks of flooding.

- Support of Active Travel England's observations not to support the application without further assessment, evidence, revisions and dialogue as set out in their representation.
- There appears to be no evidence that disabled access and adequate parking provision has been incorporated into the design to ensure the lifespan of the development extends to 2125 as suggested by the applicant.
- Stone has already been the subject of large-scale residential development in recent years, especially in the area off the Eccleshall Road.
- Another new planning application has recently been submitted to Stafford Borough Council for a housing development in Marlborough Road. Adding two new sizeable developments in this area will amount to overdevelopment and have a big negative impact on residential amenity. Concern is expressed that the Government is giving the green light to large scale development with insufficient consideration to local communities.

There is the potential for over subscription of planning applications in the Stafford Borough, inflicting undesirable issues within Stone.

- Some major changes to the town are happening piecemeal without consideration for interconnectivity to infrastructure and the shape of the town, making it difficult to manage public transport and access in outlying areas.

The Town Council would also add the following new observations/points of objection in response to planning application 25/41057/OUT:

- The Walton side of Stone town has already been subject to major housing development in the form of Udall Grange and now has three new planning applications pending for the further development of nearly 1000 homes (25/40959/OUT, 25/41057/OUT and 25/41229/OUT).
- The two largest of the three new planning applications will rely on the Eccleshall Road for access and this smaller development (of 140 homes) will be accessed through an existing residential area.
- The development proposal will have only one access point in and out through Marlborough Road which is a quiet residential road. Beyond Marlborough Road traffic will have just two exit points onto the main road via Pirehill Lane (which is already difficult to exit at busy times) or a detour through the housing estate on to Tilling Drive. Higher volumes of general residential traffic on these routes will impact the health and safety of children at local schools.

- Heavy construction vehicles and new residential traffic will be driving along Marlborough Road and directly past two schools.
There appears to be no consideration for existing local communities and preserving neighbourhood amenity where residents have lived peaceably in their homes for many years.
- It is extremely concerning that these large-scale planning applications are coming through to the Planning Department separately with the possibility that an application could be approved without consideration for the totality of what is happening to the town in terms of housing density and the call on services. Development on this scale is significantly changing the shape of the town making it difficult for existing services to adequately support new homes.

Application Number – 26/42275/HOU

Applicant – Miss Courtney Roberts

Location – 25 Chandlers Way, Stone, ST15 8LY

Development – Single storey rear extension and internal alterations.

Observations: This application has been withdrawn by Stafford Borough Council – due to insufficient evidence being submitted to the Planning Department.

Application Number – 26/42053/OUT

Applicant – Name not available

Location – Land Of The East Of Stone Road The Fillybrooks, Meaford, Stone

Development –Outline planning application for the erection of up to 70 dwellings (Use Class C3) and open space provision, with all matters reserved except for access.

Observations: The application raises significant and finely balanced planning judgments concerning the development of undeveloped Green Belt land and its claimed grey-belt status under the August 2026 NPPF; unresolved groundwater, flood-risk and drainage concerns raised by the Lead Local Flood Authority; landscape and heritage harm, including effects on the Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area; the permanent loss of Grade 1 agricultural land; and the adequacy of sustainable transport, highway and infrastructure provision.

PC27/023

Applications included within the Borough Council’s weekly list that have not yet been received by the Town Council (NOTE: these items will be withdrawn if the application has not been received by the day of the meeting)

Application Number – 26/42433/TWT

Applicant – C/O Taylor Tree Works

Location – 14 Westover Drive, Stone, ST15 8TT

Development – Common Lime – Removal epicormic growth from centre of the tree. Reduce lateral branches for approx. 3m clearance from buildings

Application – Withdrawn.

Application Number – 26/42447/TWT

Applicant – Name Disclosed as ‘The applicant’

Location – Wellington House, Longton Road, Stone, ST15 8DJ

Development – TPO 1 1952: Sycamore - Fell, tree has dieback on tips of all branches. Sweet Chestnut - Prune away from neighbouring building to give 3m clearance. Sweet Chestnut - Deadwood. Ash - Fell. Tree has dieback.

Application – Withdrawn.

PC27/024

To note the following items considered under Delegated Powers:

Application Number – 26/42406/HOU

Applicant – Mr Heath and Miss Kay

Location – 23 Church Street, Stone

Development – Single Storey Extension

Observations: No Objections.

Application Number – 26/42060/HOU

Applicant – Mrs S Lyttleton

Location – 2 Rudyard Close, Stone, ST15 8ZJ

Development – Remove existing side hedge and brick built wall. Construction of a new side 2 metre high wall. Construction of 5 metre long, 2 metre high wooden fence with gravel boards and concrete posts at rear boundary between proposed new wall and existing boundary fence.

Observations: The application proposes replacement of a hedge with a panel post fence and a brick wall on a corner between Rudyard Close and Navigation Loop and removal of an interior wall. Therefore, Stone Town Council object because of the loss of a natural boundary and loss of a natural habitat. We would have no objection to the removal of the interior wall.

Application Number – 26/42155/HOU

Applicant – Claire Wyan

Location – 61 Victor Street, Stone, ST15 8HH

Development – Rear extension and loft conversion.

Observations: No objections.

Application Number – 26/41937/OUT

Applicant – Mr Martyn Ticehurst

Location – Land AT 36 And 38 The Fillybrooks, Stone, ST15 8HH

Development – Outline application for one dormer bungalow with garden and off road parking in the gardens of 36 and 38 The Fillybrooks, with off road access from White Mill Lane, all matters reserved.

Observations: No comment.

CHAIRMAN

Newcastle office
Sustainably routed via:
30 Old Bailey
London
EC4M 7AU

Tel: +44 (0)191 383 6300
forvismazars.com/uk



Mr W L Trigg
Stone Town Council
15 Station Road
Stone
Staffordshire
ST15 8JP

Direct line: +44 (0)191 383 6348

Email: local.councils@mazars.co.uk

Date: 15 September 2026

Dear Mr Trigg

Completion of the limited assurance review for the year ended 31 March 2026

We have completed our review for the year ended 31 March 2026 and I have pleasure in enclosing the certified Annual Governance and Accountability Return. The External Auditor's Certificate and Report is given in Section 3.

If there are any significant matters arising from the review, they are summarised in the External Auditor's certificate in Section 3. If we have identified minor scope for improvement we have recorded this on page 2 of this letter. The Council should consider these matters and decide what action is required. In most cases this will be self-evident. In some instances we have referred to further guidance available, such as the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel Practitioners' Guide (England) 2026/27. This can be obtained via your NALC or SLCC branch, or downloaded free of charge at the following website: <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/practitioners-guide-2025.html>.

Please also note that a copy of the 2026/27 Practitioner's Guide has now been released and is available, alongside a summary of the summary of changes from the 2025 version, at the following website: <https://www.nalc.gov.uk/resource/practitioners-guide-2026-27.html>. We would encourage all authorities to become familiar with this document ahead of preparing their 2026/27 Annual Governance and Accountability Returns.

Action you are required to take:

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 set out what you must do at the conclusion of the review. In summary, you are required to:

Publish (which must include publication on the authority's website) a statement on or before 30 September to confirm:

- that the review has been concluded and that the statement of accounts has been published;
- of the rights of inspection conferred on local government electors by section 25 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; and
- the address at which, and the hours during which, those rights may be exercised.
- Keep copies of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum.
- Ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return remains available for public access for a period of not less than five years beginning with the date on which the Annual Governance and Accountability Return was first published.

Forvis Mazars LLP

Forvis Mazars LLP is the UK firm of Forvis Mazars Global, a leading global professional services network. Forvis Mazars LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales with registered number OC308299 and with its registered office at 30 Old Bailey, London, EC4M 7AU. Registered to carry on audit work in the UK by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. Details about our audit registration can be viewed at www.auditregister.org.uk under reference number C001139861. VAT number: GB 839 8356 73

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 do not specify the period the Completion Notice needs to be on the council's website, but this period must be reasonable.

Minor scope for improvement in 2026/27

The accounting statement at Section 2 contains the following error, which was not corrected because the value was immaterial:

A typographical error was made when entering the figure for box 8 for year ending March 2025. In future, the Council should ensure that the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) is accurate and complete.

Amendment to the Practitioners' Guide 2026/27 in respect of Section 2 Box 11 Trust Fund Transactions

As part of the Accounting Statements (Section 2), the authority is asked to confirm whether there are any trust fund transactions included in the figures. Box 11 has been amended to state the authority should answer based on whether trust fund transactions have been excluded from the AGAR.

We wish to draw attention to a change within the 2026/27 Practitioner's Guide (point 2.32) which confirms the authority will need to respond 'Yes' where the figures include trust fund transactions. We would encourage all authorities to familiarise themselves with the 2026/27 Practitioner's Guide (available on the NALC website) ahead of completing their 2026/27 AGAR.

Accessibility Regulations

We are aware that the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requirement for a physical 'wet ink' signature on the original AGAR, does not allow parish council's to fully comply with the Accessibility Regulations. The National Audit Office are aware that the two pieces of legislation are not compatible, therefore smaller authorities are advised to make it clear on their website that the document is a scan and will not be fully compliant with the Accessibility Regulations.

Audit fee

Our fee note for the audit, which is in accordance with the audit fee scales set by SAAA, and available at [Audit Fees | Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments \(saaa.co.uk\)](https://saaa.co.uk/Audit-Fees-Smaller-Authorities-Audit-Appointments) will follow.

If your invoice is not as expected, please check the audit fee scales via the link above as your fee band may have changed.

We would be grateful if you could arrange for this to be paid at the earliest opportunity.

Commitment to achieving net zero

We've made an important change to how we handle post - and sustainability is driving it.

In line with our net zero targets, we encourage digital communication wherever possible. However, should it be necessary for you to communicate with us by post, our correspondence address is **30 Old Bailey, London, EC4M 7AU**.

Yours sincerely



James Collins

Director

For and on behalf of Forvis Mazars LLP

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £15 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** **must** be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** **must** be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2026**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2026** Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2026
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability Return **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities **must** publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2026 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2025/26** approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2025/26** approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2026 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

**for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.*

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments **must** be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2026
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) **must** be approved before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references, even where approved on the same day.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) **must** certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority **must** in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period which **must** be a single period of 30 working days for inspection (this excludes weekends and public holidays) which **must** include the first 10 working days of July.
- You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor **must** be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- Additional costs may be incurred if additional audit work is required.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2025) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2026).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights which **must** be a single period of 30 working days for inspection (this excludes weekends and public holidays) which **must** include the first 10 working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2026**

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?	✓	
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?	✓	
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?	✓	
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?	✓	
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?	✓	
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?	✓	
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?	✓	
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2026 been reconciled to Box 8?	✓	
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?	✓	
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.	✓	

**Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices*, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26

Stone Town Council

www.stonetowncouncil.gov.uk

LOCALLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

During the financial year ended 31 March 2026, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2025/26 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process; progress against the budget was regularly monitored; and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked; and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for. NO CASH HELD			✓
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2024/25, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2024/25 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2025/26 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2024-25 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2024/25 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. The authority has complied with laws, regulations & proper practices relating to digital and data compliance.	✓		
P. (For local councils only)	Yes	No	Not applicable
Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.	✓		

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

03/03/2026 19/05/2026

DDMMYY

S. MORRIS ACMA

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit

S. MORRIS

Date

19/05/2026

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

We acknowledge as the members of:

ENT Stone Town Council HTV

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2026, that:

	Agreed			"Yes" means that this authority:
	Yes	No*		
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.	✓			<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.	✓			<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We have assured ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.	✓			<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors' rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.	✓			<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority's accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.	✓			<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.	✓			<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.	✓			<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.	✓			<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A	<i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>
	✓			
10. We have put in place arrangements for the effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.	✓			<i>has made suitable arrangements for its IT and data management and has complied with proper practices in doing so.</i>

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each 'No' response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

02/06/2026

and recorded as minute reference:

C27/019 REFERENCE

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

Clerk

www.stonetowncouncil.gov.uk PUBLICLY AVAILABLE WEBSITE/WEBPAGE ADDRESS

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 for

ENT Stone Town Council

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2025 £	31 March 2026 £	
1. Balances brought forward	362,039	391,614	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	393,645	409,788	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	131,664	123,422	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	228,007	252,899	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	267,727	229,296	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	391,614	442,629	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	424,113	469,649	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	315,865	320,783	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0	0	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).

For Local Councils Only	Yes	No	
11 Do the figures in the accounting statements above exclude any trust transactions?	✓		For guidance refer to the Practitioners' Guide sections 2.31 to 2.33.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2026 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval.

[Signature]

Date

18/05/2026

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

02/06/2026

as recorded in minute reference:

C27/020

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

[Signature]

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2025/26

In respect of

Stone Town Council

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/> .

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2026 and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2025/26

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

Not applicable

3 External auditor certificate 2025/26

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2026

*We do not certify completion because:

Not applicable

External Auditor Name

Forvis Mazars LLP, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 1DF

External Auditor Signature

Forvis Mazars LLP

Date

14 September 2026

STONE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

1 October 2026

CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

Town Mayor

Saturday 3 October	Harvest Hoedown – The Hollies Farm
Sunday 4 October	Civic Service of Thanksgiving – Ashbourne Town Council
Sunday 11 October (am)	Civic Service – Eccleshall Parish Council
Sunday 11 October (pm)	Civic Service – Cheadle Town Council
Thursday 22 October	Stone Prostrate Cancer Awareness Evening – St Dominic's
Date TBC	Oulton Village Hall Presentation – Best Community Venue Staffordshire 2026

Deputy Town Mayor

Saturday 3 October	HMS St. Vincent Annual Dinner – Portsmouth
Thursday 22 October	St. Mary's Nursing Home 50 Years Anniversary

TOWN MAYOR

TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

1 – 30 September 2026

Friday 11 September – 2352 (Stone) Squadron's Annual Dining & Awards Evening

It was an absolute joy to meet the Cadets and spend such a lovely evening with them. The meal was excellent, and Rosie and I thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. I was especially pleased to help present the awards and celebrate the Cadets' achievements. Declan and his team are doing a wonderful job, and their dedication was clear to see. Keep up the fantastic work!

Sunday 13 September– Battle of Commemoration

The Battle of Britain Commemoration Service and Parade provided a fitting tribute to those who served during this pivotal period in our nation's history. The newly dedicated Standard looked particularly impressive, and the church service was both moving and respectful.

The congregation was accompanied by wonderful music from the organist, which added greatly to the occasion. Following the service, residents and visitors lined the High Street to watch the parade, demonstrating Stafford's continued support for remembering and honouring those who made such sacrifices.

Blessed with beautiful sunshine throughout the day, the event was a memorable and dignified commemoration enjoyed by all who attended.

Wednesday 16 September – AGM Scouts

It was my pleasure to join the scouts at their AGM. It was lovely to see other local dignitaries from around Staffordshire all coming to listen to the meeting. A few awards were handed out and we listened to the exploits of a scout who had been to the big Moot in Spain.

Saturday 19 September – Biddulph Grange

Rosie and I had a lovely afternoon at Biddulph Grange, we joined other mayors from the area and Charlie the mayor of Biddulph for a guided tour of the garden. We had been hundreds of times before, but it was really good to hear about the origin of the trees and architecture around the gardens. Thank you to Charlie and her family and thank you to the national trust for a great day.

Sunday 20 September – Uttoxeter Civic Sunday

I was very happy to attend the Uttoxeter Civic Sunday. The church service featured some great hymns. And the buffet was a graze table that looked like a piece of art. Zdzislaw Krupski was very welcoming and the choir sang beautifully. Thank you.



DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

1 – 30 September 2026

The Deputy Town Mayor did not attend any official engagements during this reporting period.