

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in St Michael's Suite, Frank Jordan Centre, Lichfield Street, Stone
on Tuesday 7 November 2017

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: G. Collier, Mrs C. Collier, Mrs J. Hood, J. Davies, Mrs E. Mowatt,
A. Osgathorpe, M. Shaw, I. Fordham, Mrs J. Piggott, Mrs K. Green, M. Green and
Mrs J. Farnham.

ABSENT: Councillors Mrs M. Goodall, T. Jackson, P. Leason, G. Neagus, and M. Williamson

GP18/090 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors: Mrs M. Goodall, T. Jackson, P. Leason and M. Williamson.

GP18/091 **Declarations of Interests**

None

GP18/092 **Requests for Dispensations**

None

GP18/093 **To receive the Report of the County Councillors**

County Councillor Mrs J. Hood

Councillor Mrs Hood advised the Committee that she had been away on holiday for three weeks but offered to take on any issues that people would like to have investigated. She was delighted to see County Councillor Parry at the meeting.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry advised the Committee that he didn't have any items to report specifically but was ready to listen to issues people wished to raise. He represents a small section of the parish geographically but is keen to support initiatives in the town, which is the service town of his constituents.

The following items were raised with Councillor Parry and Councillor Mrs Hood:

- Parking in Stone town – Use of the redundant National Westminster Bank car park by members of the public, now that the bank has closed in the town.

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Committee that the Town Clerk had written to the bank manager at Nat West, and when the mobile unit is moved from the site, it may be a possible to seek permission for the general public to utilise the car park.

- Hazard caused by fallen leaves to pedestrians (which are slippery under foot) – Street Scene is the only resource Stafford Borough Council has for dealing with public space issues.

Councillor Parry suggested that these types of matters be reported to Staffordshire County Council through the usual route.

- Closure of the Post Office – no information is available on the close date, but it is thought to be in January 2018. Councillor Mrs Hood stated that the loss of both the Post Office and Bank in Stone will have a huge negative impact on the town. Footfall will diminish as people travel out of town to access these facilities as well as utilise alternative shopping opportunities. There is a strong need to devise a plan to keep the Post Office in Stone and to protect the interests of traders.
- Railhead – Councillor Parry advised that Staffordshire County Council had responded to the consultation on the construction of the railhead, the aim being to minimise the effects. Concerns have been expressed by a lot of local people and he will be taking those on board along with the impacts on traffic and transportation.
- Excess surface water on the A34, at the Walton Island and on the A34, opposite the garage.

There are chevrons on the approach to the A34 Walton island. Motorists cannot see what is coming from the right.

Councillor Parry said the road rises up and is designed to take major traffic into the Business Park. The profile of accidents occurring there will be recorded and analysed routinely.

- Trees overhanging the highway in Pirehill Lane, adjacent to the industrial estate.
- Power station site – Councillor Parry reported that planning permission had been awarded for a number of units and he was confident that the site would be developed.

GP18/094 Representations from Members of the Public

None

GP18/095 Minutes

RESOLVED:

Tourism and Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 17 October 2017, copies having been circulated to Members, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record and that the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers: TTP18/019, TTP18/020 and TTP18/021 be adopted.

Environment Sub-Committee held on 17 October 2017, copies having been circulated to Members, be signed by the Chairman as a correct record and that the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number ENV18/004 be adopted.

GP18/096 Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee

The notes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting held on 11 October 2017 were noted. Councillor Mrs Hood provided an update on the Neighbourhood Planning process following submission of Stone's Plan to Stafford Borough Council.

GP18/097 Budget Monitoring Report

The Committee received the quarterly report* of the Town Clerk with information on the Council's current financial position compared with its budget for the year, with recommendations for further action.

RESOLVED: To approve the adjustments to the Council's budget as set out in Appendix A of the report. The Council's performance against budget at the end of September 2017 and details of the Council's spending since the last budget monitoring report were noted. No further action was deemed necessary.

**GP18/098 Stafford Borough Council Local Plan Review
Plan for Stafford Borough – Draft Supplementary Planning Documents**

The Committee considered a letter from Stafford Borough Council with information on the launch of three consultations. These are:

- Call for Sites – Brownfield sites. Applications are invited for Brownfield sites which will be assessed for inclusion in the updated Brownfield Land Register during 2018.
- Call for Sites – Local Green Space. Applications are invited for Local Green Space designations which will be assessed as part of the Local Plan Review.
- Draft Supplementary Planning Documents – Comments are invited on the following draft Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD): The Design SPD, The Re-use of Rural Buildings SPD and the Shopfronts and Advertisements SPD.

RESOLVED: That the item will be considered again at the General Purposes Committee meeting in December, when a full response will be determined.

GP18/099 Developing a community based approach – the Highways and Rights of Way – 'Your Choices' website

The Committee considered a letter from Staffordshire County Council advising that the County Council, Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association and representatives of local councils across Staffordshire had been working together to establish a new resource for local councils.

A 'Highways and Rights of Way – Your Choices' website is now live at www.highwaysyourway.info to provide information and advice on assisting local councils to explore options and opportunities for getting more involved in taking on and delivering local environmental tasks.

RESOLVED: The new website was noted.

* 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.

GP18/100 **Grant Application from AEDdonate**

The Committee considered a request for a grant from AEDdonate who are supporting the Coppice Estate, on the other side of the railway line, in raising funds for the purchase of a public access defibrillator.

The item had been deferred at the last meeting of the Committee whilst clarification was sought on a number of questions about costs relating to AEDdonate premises and fundraising.

The Committee considered answers given to the Town Councils questions, but the Town Clerk advised that further clarification was still needed. It was established that AEDdonate are eligible to receive a grant. The Coppice Estate residents would not be entitled to apply directly for funding unless the group becomes properly constituted. The group would also then have access to other funding opportunities such as Staffordshire County Council's Community Fund.

The cost of the project is £1999 but the funding raised to date is under £1000 (as stated on AEDdonate's website).

RESOLVED: That the Town Council agrees in principle to approval of grant funding for £500, to be made to AEDdonate, for a defibrillator to be supplied and installed on the Coppice Estate subject to:

- a) The Town Clerk being satisfied regarding clarification on the questions asked, and,
- b) No payment being made until the fund reaches the position where the defibrillator can be purchased immediately (currently expected to be when it reaches £1,499).

GP18/101 **Stone Post Office**

The Chairman, Councillor Kenney advised that he has held conversations with the Network Operations Manager and External Affairs Officer at the Post Office. Both are committed to the retention of a Post Office in Stone, after the Co-op store has closed. They are actively looking to find an alternative site for the facility.

The Post Office model involves running the operation from within a retail outlet to ensure its continued viability but no-one has expressed an interest in the business opportunity to date.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council work with Post Office representatives to secure a facility in Stone from January 2018.

RESOLVED: To approach Stafford Borough Council to request that consideration be given to offering business rates relief to the company taking on the service.

GP18/102 **Non-Cheque Payments**

RESOLVED: To note the list* of non-cheque payments made by the Council during the period 1 September 2017 to 30 September 2017.

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Members Motions under Standing Order 4

Members Motion – Councillor Osgathorpe

Councillor A. Osgathorpe

The General Purposes Committee, on 2nd October 2014, considered, as part of a wider report, an item regarding access of developers to make pre-planning presentations to the Council's Planning Committee as follows:

“Developer Presentations at Planning Meetings

- 16. Following the requirements now placed on developers to consult with the local community prior to submitting planning applications, the Council receives a number of requests either for developers to present their proposals to the Council or for Councillors to attend developer presentations at other sites. This can be difficult for Councillors, due to the potential for suggestions of pre-judgement and conflicts of interest.*
- 17. In order to ensure a consistency of approach it is suggested that two presentation slots of 15 minutes each be set aside at the second Planning Committee meeting each month to accommodate the requests of developers to present to the Council. This allows for a presentation in a controlled, but open and transparent environment. Requests could be made to the Clerk and allocated on a “first come first served” basis, adjusted if necessary to allow particularly significant developments to be considered as a priority.*
- 18. Question: Do Members wish to provide two 15 minute slots at the second Planning Committee meeting each month to receive pre-planning presentations from developers?”*

The General Purposes Committee supported the suggestion in paragraph 17 above, which was recorded within minute number GP15/058.

I am concerned that the current opportunity afforded to developers in making pre-planning presentations/consultation to the Town Council's Planning Committee is disproportionate to those existing for other bodies and individuals. To bring this more in line with other representations made to the Town Council by other people/groups and organisations, I propose the following motion:

“That the scheme for pre-planning presentations to the Council by developers agreed by the General Purposes Committee on the 2nd October 2014, minute number GP15/058, be rescinded in interests of fairness”.

RESOLVED:

- That minute number GP15/058 be rescinded forthwith.
- To authorise the Town Clerk, in consultation with Councillor A. Osgathorpe, to work on a policy proposal for the management of requests from applicants to deliver future pre-planning presentations.

GP18/103 Update from Working Groups

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Councillor Mrs Hood had given a progress report earlier in the meeting.

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The Committee was advised that an additional grant of £3000 had been awarded to the Town Council in respect of the Neighbourhood Plan project.

RESOLVED: To note the update on the work of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Protocol for Marking the Death of the Sovereign or other member of the Royal Family Group

Councillor Davies reported that a meeting of the Group would be taking place in the Council Chamber on Friday 10 November 2017.

RESOLVED: To note the update on the work of the Marking the Death Working Group.

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group

Councillor Davies informed the Committee that this group meets quarterly and provides a useful forum for Stone and its hinterland to share information and discuss issues that are of mutual interest. At the last meeting on 11 October 2017, Superfast Staffordshire Programme Manager kindly joined members to give an update on Broadband services in Staffordshire. The group also provides an opportunity to share their calendar of events both for publicity purposes and to avoid the clashing of dates.

RESOLVED: To note the work of the Stone Area Parish Liaison Group.

GP18/104 **To receive reports from Town Councillors on attendance at meetings of local organisations and outside bodies as a representative of the Town Council**

Stone ATC

The Mayor advised that he had attended the AGM and details were recorded in the Mayor's Report.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Mrs Collier and Councillor Mrs Green were not able to attend the last meeting.

Stone Town Band

The Mayor reported that he had attended a rehearsal on Friday.

Walton Community Centre

Councillor Green advised that he had not been invited to any meetings.

Stafford & Stone Access Group

Councillor Mrs Collier reported that no meeting of the Access Group had taken place since the last meeting of the General Purposes Committee.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Mrs Hood reported that there is currently a big problem with commercial dog walkers. They arrive with large numbers of dogs and are considered a threat to people with single dogs and to children in the vicinity. A decision has been taken by Trustees to stop commercial dog walkers from using the Plot.

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Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Mrs Farnham had made a report at the last meeting about the introduction of lunch clubs and day to day activities. The group is now appealing for new volunteers. The Hub would like to recruit people to deliver debt counselling, marital advice, IT and depression/mental health support services.

The food bank is well stocked following harvest festivals.

There is a furniture warehouse at the Baptist Church in Rising Brook where the delivery of furniture will be made free of charge.

The AGM, which will be open to the public, is to be held on 30 November 2017 at the Frank Jordan Centre.

Canal & River Trust

Councillor Kenney reported that there was nothing to add to the report given at the previous meeting.

SPCA Executive Meeting

No report was available.

The meeting was suspended to enable the Planning Committee Meeting and Confidential item on the General Purposes Committee Meeting to take place, after which it was reconvened for the confidential items.

GP18/105 Exclusion of the Press and Public

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

RESOLVED: To exclude the Press and Public from the next item of business.

GP18/106 Debt Recovery

The Committee considered a report of the Town Clerk which included a written report submitted to the meeting in September 2017, and a verbal report with an update on the current situation.

RESOLVED: That the item be added to the next agenda if the issue remains.

Town Mayor