

STONE TOWN COUNCIL

Town Clerk

Les Trigg

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5 March 2018

A meeting of the **MANAGEMENT SUB COMMITTEE** will be held in **St Michael's Suite, Frank Jordan Centre, Lichfield Street, Stone** on **TUESDAY 13 MARCH 2018** at 7:15pm or on the rising of the Estates Sub-Committee, if later.

I trust you will be able to attend.

Les Trigg
Town Clerk

Councillors: M. Green (Chair), Mrs E. Mowatt (Vice Chairman), G. Neagus, A. Osgathorpe, M. Shaw, Mrs M. Goodall and M. Williamson

AGENDA

1. **To receive apologies for absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations Received**
3. **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

4. **Review of Council Policies & Procedures**

To consider updated versions of the following documents, copies of which are attached:

- a. Equality Policy
- b. Press & Media Protocol

Will any Councillors who wish to speak at this meeting, but are not members of the Sub-Committee, please inform the Chairman before the start of the meeting

Members of the public are welcomed to attend the Management Sub-Committee Meeting as observers and/or to make representations to the committee in accordance with the Council's scheme of public participation. Details of this scheme are displayed in the Council's notice boards and are also available from the Town Council.



EQUALITIES POLICY

1. STONE TOWN COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT

The Town Council recognises and acknowledges that levels of discrimination and inequality continue to exist in society. In seeking to redress these inequalities, the Town Council is committed to civil liberties and human rights.

The Council welcomes and celebrates diversity, accepting that the majority view is not always right and will strive to build equality of opportunity into the work of the Council.

The Council will develop a shared understanding of the essence of equality, which is to value and treat all human beings humanely, with respect and dignity.

The Council is committed to ensuring that all service users have equal and independent access to Council services and to creating an environment that is accessible to all.

The Council will encourage user groups and local residents to participate in the development and shaping of services.

The Council, through its policies, services, employment contracting and funding practices will ensure that no service user, employee or job applicant will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of age, colour, impairment, marital status, lifestyle, culture, nationality, race, gender or sexuality, or on the grounds of economic or social status, or is disadvantaged by condition or requirements which cannot be shown as justifiable.

The Council will take all possible steps to eliminate any unfair and unlawful discrimination and take positive action to redress and remedy the effects of past discrimination on these groups and individuals.

2. STRATEGIC APPROACH AND PRINCIPLES

The aim of the Council is for the ethos of equalities to be integrated into mainstream policy development and service delivery.

The Council has legal and moral obligations specified in Equal Opportunities legislation in the Equal Opportunities Act 2010, Sex Discrimination Acts, the 1970 Equal Pay Act, the Race Relations Acts of 1976 and 2000, Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

Equality is inseparable from quality service provision. It represents good management practice.

The Council recognises that diverse groups and individuals within the community have a right to have their specific needs recognised and addressed with the resources available.

The Council expects each individual employee to promote the spirit of its Equality Policy. Each employee has a duty, both morally and legally, not to discriminate against other employees.

3. PRINCIPLES

Equality principles and practices are integral to policy development, decision-making and resource allocation.

Celebrating diversity by responding to the specific needs of diverse groups and individuals is a key element in the provision of quality services.

The Council recognises that disability is caused by a failure of society to meet the needs of disabled people.

The Council pledges to:

- Encourage mutual respect for all of our residents;
- Recognise and work with every diverse group;
- Give high quality inclusive services and facilities;
- Make sure our employment policies and practices are fair;
- Challenge harassment and discrimination.

It is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the following grounds:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion of belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Under the Equality Act 2010 these are known as “protected characteristics”.

4. EQUALITIES OBJECTIVES

The Town Council’s overall objectives will be to:

- a) Ensure employment policies and practices are fair and equitable;
- b) Ensure equitable access to the Town Council;
- c) Develop and support an effective consultation and participation process to enable groups at risk of discrimination and disadvantage to influence the Council’s policies and practices;
- d) Integrate equalities into mainstream policy, planning and service delivery and monitor and evaluate progress.

5. EMPLOYMENT POLICY

The Town Council is committed to ensuring that:

- a) Job applicants or existing employees will receive no less favourable treatment on grounds of protected characteristics;
- b) All posts will be advertised and applications will be welcomed from under-represented groups;
- c) All individuals will be selected, promoted and treated on the basis of their ability;
- d) Employees will be protected from harassment and discrimination and the Council will provide an effective response to deal with perpetrators and support from complainants;
- e) Recruitment and selection will be carried out based on equalities principles;
- f) Develop employment practices which reflect the responsibilities of parents and carers.

6. SERVICE USERS ACCESS TO THE COUNCIL

The Council is committed to ensuring that all service users have equal and independent access to Council Services and to creating an environment which is accessible to all. The Council will:

- a) Collaborate closely with user groups and endeavour to eliminate policies and practices which inhibit equal access to council services;
- b) Whenever practical, monitor the use of services to identify the reasons for the lack of use and to take action to remedy the situation within the resources available;
- c) Ensure that Town Council buildings are accessible and seek effective solutions to the improvements of access in existing buildings working in partnership with service users;
- d) Ensure that its publications are non-discriminatory and present a positive image for all sections of the community, welcoming and encouraging diversity.

7. CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION

The Council will encourage and support equality interest groups to express their views as service users on ways in which services can be adapted to meet specific needs.

8. INTEGRATING EQUALITY INTO POLICY AND SERVICE DELIVERY

The Town Council will aim to produce a culture which enables equality to be put into action. The achievement of equality objectives will be integral to the plans of the Town Council.

Signed

Reviewed 2018

Stone Town Council

Press/Media Protocol

1. Introduction

Stone Town Council regularly receives enquiries from the media, both to the office and to Councillors.

The purpose of this protocol is to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Town Clerk, all officers and Members involved in dealing with the media, and to provide guidance on how to handle media interest.

The Council recognises the need for openness and this should be reflected in how the media communications are dealt with.

The aim of the protocol is to ensure that the Council is seen to communicate in a professional and objective manner. In all cases, the Council's approach to the media should be:

- open and honest
- proactive
- responsive and timely

2. Handling Media Enquiries

The Town Clerk will co-ordinate all media enquiries made to the Council Offices. In certain circumstances it may be appropriate for the Town Mayor or the Chair of a Committee to respond to the enquiry, in which case the Town Clerk will contact them as appropriate.

Other officers who are directly approached by a member of the media should not attempt to answer questions themselves without gleaning the full facts and should confer with the Town Clerk before responding. However simple, factual queries will be dealt with by appropriately at the Council Offices.

Members who are directly approached by a member of the media should always respond in accordance with the guidance contained in this protocol.

The Council should not pass comment on leaks, anonymous allegations or allegations about individual staff and Members. The Council is open and accountable and should always explain if there is a reason why it cannot answer a specific enquiry.

3. News or Press Releases

News / press releases are one of the key techniques for publicising Council activities, decisions and achievements.

There are two types of press releases – Official Council Press Releases and Councillor Press Releases.

Official Council Press Releases – The Town Clerk is authorised to issue official press releases and to talk to the press on behalf of the Council as a whole. Such press releases will be non-party political and will accurately reflect the corporate view of the Council.

Where appropriate, official press releases will include a quote from the relevant Councillor(s). This would usually be the Town Mayor or a Committee Chairman. Such quotes would be agreed between the Councillor quoted and the Town Clerk.

Releases will not seek to promote the views of specific political groups, publicise the activities of individual Councillors (other than official Mayoral activities), identify a Member's political party or persuade the general public to hold a particular view.

Councillor Press Releases - Councillor press releases are personal and are written and issued by the Councillor responsible. Such releases:

- a. May or may not be political, other than in the case of the Town Mayor, where they should never be political.
- b. Should not include the name of any officer, use the Council crest/logo or use the Council telephone number as a point of contact.
- c. Should not refer to any position held by the author within the Council (e.g. Chairmanship of a Committee), unless agreed in advance with the Town Clerk for items of a non-political nature.
- d. Should be factually accurate in respect of the Council's corporate view, situation, actions and decisions made or not made. (Advice can be sought from the Town Clerk if a Member is in any doubt.)
- e. Should always be clear that the views contained are personal to the author and not necessarily the Council's view.

"Press releases" in this context refers to any contact with the press and other media, written or verbal, not just formal releases. It also covers the use of social media and websites in situations where the reader may perceive that the author is writing in their role as a Councillor.

4. Interviews

Any Member contacted by a journalist requesting an interview or a comment should ascertain whether that journalist is seeking a Council view or the view of the Member as an individual. If the former, the guidance set out below for officers contacted by journalists should be followed in the same way. If an individual view is being sought, the guidance for press releases above should be followed.

Any officer contacted by a journalist requesting an interview or a comment should refer the journalist to the Town Clerk, the Town Mayor or the appropriate Committee Chair. The person put forward for interview will depend on the situation and the information required by the journalist.

In any event, officers should never give their opinion on specific Council policy but must keep to the corporate line and key messages. Their role is to provide expertise and factual

knowledge only, in support of the Council's approved and agreed policies.

5. Media Activity Ahead of and During Meetings

The media pick up many stories from agendas and reports ahead of meetings. All Council and Committee agendas are automatically sent to the local media, displayed on town notice boards and published on the Town Council website.

Members of the media are welcome to attend and regularly do attend Council and Committee meetings. During meetings Members should be mindful that any comments and messages are put across in a manner which gives the journalist an accurate picture, rather than relying on the journalist's interpretation of what can be a complex issue or report.

6. Publicity in Election Periods

The rules governing publicity change when an election has been announced. In the period between the notice of an election and the election itself (Purdah) all proactive publicity about candidates or other politicians is halted. This applies to local, national or European elections.

During this period council publicity should not deal with controversial issues or report views, proposals or recommendations in a way that identifies them with individual Members or groups of Members. This is to make sure that no individual Councillor or political party gains an unfair advantage by appearing in corporate publicity.

In these circumstances quotes in press releases will be avoided wherever possible. Where a quote is required, however, that quote will be from the Town Clerk in accordance with the guidelines in this protocol.

7. Non-Council Related Media Activity

Officers and Members of the Council who have contact with the media in a personal capacity or as members of non-Council related organisations must not refer to their Council posts and must make it clear to the journalist concerned that they are speaking in a personal capacity or on behalf of the non-Council related organisation.

8. Correcting Inaccurate Reporting

Should the media or a website publish/broadcast something inaccurate about the Council, a decision needs to be taken on any action necessary to correct it.

The issue should be discussed with the Town Clerk as soon as possible to allow him to determine an appropriate action and who is the most appropriate person to take that action. This could be, for example, a letter or news release, a conversation with the journalist concerned, a personal letter to the editor or legal advice. Where a news release is to be issued, the Clerk will consult with appropriate Committee Chairman and, where appropriate, with the Member who has issued the incorrect information.

It should be noted that in the case of minor inaccuracies which have little or no impact on the message being conveyed, it can sometimes be counterproductive to complain.

Each case must be judged individually.

Occasionally the Council will get something wrong. In these cases damage limitation is the key – this can usually be achieved by holding hands up, apologising, and stating how we are going to learn from the error or put it right.

9. Use of the Internet and Social Media

Internet use covers all websites, networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter etc., forums and blogs which may be used by both officers and Councillors.

If the above are used in an official capacity or on Council related business, the guidance in this protocol must be adhered to in the same way as for any other media contact and they must be used in a responsible and appropriate manner.

For example, whilst acting in an official Stone Town Council capacity Members and officers should not:

- a. Undertake any action that may result in actions for libel, defamation or other claims for damages
- b. Process personal data other than for the purpose stated at the time of capture
- c. Promote any political party or undertake any campaigning
- d. Promote personal financial interests or commercial
- e. Be used in an abusive, hateful or disrespectful manner

If social media and the internet are used in an unofficial capacity, Members and Officers should restrain from making remarks that could be construed as bringing the Council into disrepute.

March 2018