

Stone Town Council – Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in St Michael’s Suite at the Frank Jordan Centre on Tuesday 1 May 2018

PRESENT: Councillor I. Fordham in the Chair and
Councillors: Mrs K. Green, Mrs J. Hood, and Mrs J. Piggott

Co-opted Member: Mr J. Heal

By Chairman’s invitation: Councillors: M. Green, A. Osgathorpe and G. Neagus

ABSENT: Councillors: P. Leason, M. Williamson and Mrs C. Collier

TTP18/035 **Apologies**

Councillors: P. Leason, M. Williamson and Mrs C. Collier

TTP18/036 **Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation**

None received

TTP18/037 **Representations from Members of the Public**

Mr Ed Stant provided an update on the activities of the Stone Traders Group.

He advised that 63 businesses had now taken up membership (which included Marks and Spencer) and six directors had been appointed to the Group.

An article has been published in the Gazette on the Group’s ‘Stone is where the Heart is’ branding campaign. Publicity material will start to appear in shops from next week.

The Traders Group is pleased with the work the Town Council is doing in Stone (in line with the Town Centre Development Strategy) and welcomes improvements to signage and noticeboards with the display of maps, locations of special interest and a calendar of events. Traders are pleased to be listed in the proposed business directory.

Mr Stant advised that two traders meetings and three meetings with Town Councillor representatives had taken place and all were very constructive. The additional attractions and events planned in Stone are welcomed and the Group appreciate the exposure of the town these will generate, encouraging residents and tourists to visit. Traders have offered to use their media platforms to promote these.

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The St George's Day event was a great success and businesses were delighted with the increase in footfall.

The Traders Group has expressed concern about the town's markets. The popularity of the Farmer's Market appears to have waned and there is a feeling that it is becoming stale. Stafford Borough Council should be made aware of this. Consideration should also be given to replacing the Craft Market with something more popular.

Mr Stant said that the Trader's Group's main objectives were to achieve an increase in the footfall in the town and for empty shops to be occupied. He concluded that the group is pleased with progress to date and looks forward to continuing to work positively with the Town Council.

TTP18/038 Train Service - To Receive Updates

The Sub-Committee received a letter from West Midlands Trains Ltd (dated 22 January 2018) in response to the question previously raised (Minute Number: TTP/028).

The Sub-Committee received a letter from Network Rail (dated 24 January 2018) in response to the question previously raised by the Estates Sub-Committee (Minute Number: EST18/024)

Jon Heal gave an update on train services in Stone and additional information about West Midlands Trains promised connections at Stafford between the direct train to London (which won't be stopping at Stone) and the new service going to London via Birmingham.

A new timetable will be introduced in May with very few changes. More significant changes to services will occur in December 2018 when another new timetable is introduced.

There are concerns about whether timetable changes in December will provide a reliable service with clear and accessible information. He suggested making further enquiries about the proposed timetable in late June/early July, when it is expected to be made available.

Mr Heal advised that the letter from Network Rail was self-explanatory, however,

West Midlands Trains have a notional plan to install a car park at Stone Station but suggested this wouldn't be a concern in the near future. He said he would look further into this issue.

After taking a decision to resign from his position as co-opted member of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee, Councillor Mrs Hood thanked Mr Heal for sharing his knowledge and providing invaluable information on train services.

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RECOMMENDED: To note the information and advice provided by Mr Heal on train services.

TTP18/039 **Stone Town Centre Development Strategy**

The Sub-Committee received a progress report from the Chairman and working groups (since approval of the Development Strategy in July 2017):

Town Centre Appearance and Environment Working Group

Councillor Fordham advised that since the last meeting, the following improvement work had been undertaken in the town centre:

- Stone in Bloom had co-ordinated a clean-up of the town on 15 April 2018.
- Stafford Borough Council has been working on the removal of unsightly bins and keeping the town tidy. Most people have co-operated with requests to relocate their bins and some people are subject to enforcement action.
- Community Payback have undertaken some work behind the High Street which will now be maintained by retailers.

Fingerposts and Notice Boards

Councillor Fordham advised that notice boards in the town are in the process of being refurbished and it is proposed to install two new ones at the top and bottom of the High Street. The larger notice boards in the High Street will host a town map, illustrations of locations of special interest, a calendar of events and a business directory. The smaller notice boards will accommodate a map and illustrations of special interest.

Stafford Borough Council will be updating the finger posts. Funding for all work has been secured apart from the new notice board proposed for the bottom of the High Street.

Work to the notice boards should be completed within the next month but the finger posts update would take a little longer to complete.

It is hoped these measures will enhance the attractiveness of the town and generate extra footfall.

A graphic artist has been appointed to provide the illustrations of locations of special interest and a map of the town which will be displayed on the notice boards and the Town Council's website. Examples of these were circulated to Sub-Committee Members.

RECOMMENDED: To note progress on the work of the group.

Town Centre Events and Attractions Working Group

Councillor Mrs Hood provided an update on the work of the group.

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She advised that 68 events are listed on the calendar which will be a welcome boost for Stone and offer entertainment for many different sections of the community. St George's Day was a well promoted, well attended family event. A wonderful display had been created with handmade bunting and shields provided by students at Christ Church Academy.

The next event will be a music festival followed by two late night shopping events on 21 June and 19 July. A 'Stone by the Sea' event will take place on 14 August. There will also be a Christmas Lights Switch On event and a special commemoration of the ending of World War 1, towards the end of the year.

A calendar of events will be displayed on the website and the notice boards in the town.

Councillor Mark Green thanked the organisers of St George's Day for a very well organised and successful event.

Councillor Mrs Hood thanked Stone in Bloom for putting the bunting up in the town, which will be on display until after the music festival.

Councillor Neagus advised that the Stone Festival Committee had moved some events into the High Street. If the splinter island has been removed by 2019, the festival procession will be brought back to the High Street.

RECOMMENDED: To note the progress report on the work of the group.

Town Centre Partnership

Town Council representatives have met three times with Stone Traders Group. The Chairman is pleased that more than 60 members had been appointed to represent half of the town centre businesses. The meetings have enabled a better understanding of each other's concerns and the prioritisation of actions. It is hoped this will encourage visitors to spend more time in Stone and to make a return visit.

RECOMMENDED: That the update on the Town Centre Partnership is noted.

TTP18/040

Update from Working Group

Commemoration to Mark 100 years since the end of World War 1 in 2018

Councillor Mrs Hood provided an update on the work of the Group. Steve Booth, Historian, had kindly shared his knowledge on the stories of local men and women as well as undertaking research on the names of the soldiers listed on the war memorial.

The group has a number of commemorative events planned which include: lighting a beacon at St Michael's Church, a special program of bell ringing, a very special Remembrance Commemoration service, and a community project to create ceramic poppies for display

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Another meeting will soon be arranged, and additional ideas, memorabilia (that could be borrowed) and more stories about relatives who were affected by the Great War would be welcomed.

Town Mayor

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