

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 1 October 2019

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: T. Adamson, K. Argyle, A. Best, J. Davies, Mrs L. Davies, Mrs K. Dawson,
I. Fordham, M. Green, M. Hatton, J. Hickling, Mrs J. Hood, T. Kelt, P. Leason,
J. Powell, C. Thornicroft and R. Townsend

ABSENT: Councillor Mrs A. Burgess

GP20/097 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs A. Burgess

GP20/098 **Declarations of Interests**

None

GP20/099 **Requests for Dispensations**

None

GP20/100 **To receive the report of the County Councillors**

County Councillor Mrs J. Hood

Councillor Mrs Hood reported that Staffordshire County Council's website had been updated and improved. The complaints process has been made clearer as it is easier to see the range of public services it deals with. Highways reports and complaints, and applications for Blue Badges, can now only be made online. Applicants who cannot access online facilities are asked to seek assistance from staff at their local library. Customers may use the contact centre between the hours of 9am and 5pm on weekdays.

Councillor Mrs Hood provided information on an opportunity to apply for funding through the EnviroGrant Scheme, set up by Veolia in partnership with Staffordshire County Council to help local people improve their environment or community with grants of up to £1000. Applicants must be a not for profit group or society (including schools) who want to make a positive difference to their community by improving or providing new facilities (which can include equipment and running costs). She asked that Members of the Town Council spread the word about this funding opportunity.

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the meeting about Staffordshire County Council's funding bid for a £3.9m modern history centre, if a new round two bid for funding submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund is successful. The project has received initial (round one) support with an award of £36,000 development funding to enable an application for a full National Lottery grant of £3,964,000. The proposals for the Staffordshire History Centre Project would see an extension to the existing Staffordshire Record Office on Eastgate Street, incorporating the

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Williams Salt Library. The new centre would bring together the county's extensive archives collections in one modern centre with additional strong rooms, reading areas and research labs. Rare archives, books and museum pieces would be displayed in a dedicated exhibition space.

Councillor Mrs Hood advised that county highway's contractor Amey, had been busy in the town, undertaking programmed work including road surface repairs, drain clearing and the tidying of verges. She confirmed that work had been done around Walton roundabout and on Oulton Road, where the surface water flooding issue had been resolved.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP20/101 Representations from Members of the Public

Mr Neil Richardson

Mr Richardson referred the Committee to the sale of land off Tilling Drive by Stafford Borough Council and approval of a planning application (reference 19/29876/FUL) to build a sixty-six-bedroom care home on the site, resulting in the loss of open green space and a highly valued community playing field. The item is listed on the agenda for consideration at item number 10 (Development of Land off Tilling Drive).

Mr Richardson thanked the Council for its support to date and urged the Town Council to resist the proposed development by seeking a judicial review. He cited several reasons as justification for taking this course of action. These included:

- Development of the land is against Stafford Borough Council's Green Infrastructure Policy
- 450 local people signed a petition against the proposed development and 260 letters of objection have been submitted against the sale. The scale of objections has been larger than any other planning application, yet these have been disregarded
- Stafford Borough Council should not have the power to determine a planning application where it has a substantial financial interest in the outcome
- A thirty-three-bed care home already exists in Stone and the need for another care home has not been established
- There has been no public consultation
- No written response
- No slow down lane incorporated into the design
- The development will be close to existing homes
- No sequential testing

GP20/102 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee Meeting held on the 3 September 2019 (Minute Numbers GP20/079 – GP20/096), be approved as a correct record.

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GP20/103 **Minutes of Sub-Committees**

There were no minutes for consideration.

GP20/104 **Bagnacavallo Presentation**

The Chairman welcomed Friends of Bagnacavallo representatives, Mrs Margaret Termine, Mr Nimo Termine and Mrs Margaret Broader, who had attended the meeting to talk about the friendship agreement between the towns of Bagnacavallo (in northern Italy) and Stone. An apology was given on behalf of Mr Giuseppe Termine who had been unable to join members on this evening.

The Friends talked about how the Friendship between Bagnacavallo and Stone had begun and distributed a leaflet to Committee Members documenting the timeline of events from 1980 to 2004. They talked about the many shared events, trips and fundraisers that had taken place, and those that were upcoming, as well as the student exchange visits which continue to be hosted by local families from the two towns.

The Friends of Bagnacavallo were congratulated on their valuable work which enabled the towns to share their cultures and were thanked for their time before leaving the meeting.

GP20/105 **Reappointment of Members to Working Group**

The Committee considered appointing new members to the Working Group:

- Traffic Management in the High Street

RESOLVED: That the working group be renamed 'Traffic Management in Stone Working Group' in order that its remit can be extended to include Christchurch Way and the general run of traffic, and car parks (Council and private) in the wider Stone area.

RESOLVED: That the Members of the 'Traffic Management in Stone Working Group' consist of the Town Mayor, Chairman of the General Purposes Committee, Chairman of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub Committee and Paula Lees, Community Highway Engagement Officer, Staffordshire County Council.

GP20/106 **Development of Land off Tilling Drive**

The Committee considered the response of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to the Council's request for him to call in planning application 19/29876/FUL in respect of land adjacent to the Fillybrooks, Walton, Stone.

A copy of the Secretary of State's response had been issued with the agenda for the meeting.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Secretary of State had decided not to call in planning application 19/29876/FUL after considering the case (against its call-in policy set out in the Written Ministerial Statement by Nick Boles on 26 October 2012) and being satisfied that the planning decision should be made at local level. Stafford Borough Council had subsequently approved the application

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for LNT Care Developments to build a sixty-six-bedroom, two storey care home for older people with associated access, car parking and landscaping, on the site of a highly valued community playing field. Local resident, Mr Richardson (who made representations at the beginning of the meeting) has asked the Committee to lodge a request for a judicial review.

The Town Clerk explained what a judicial review was and explained the process which challenges the lawfulness of decisions of public authorities, usually local or central government. The court has a supervisory role in making sure the decision maker acts lawfully. A Judicial Review is not a rerun on the merits of the decision but a challenge to the lawfulness of the decision that was made.

The Town Clerk summarised the steps the Town Council had already taken in an attempt to protect the land from future development. These included:

- Earmarking the site as a Local Green Space (LGS 40) within the Draft Stone Neighbourhood Plan. The designation had not been supported by the Inspector appointed to review the content of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Raising objections to Planning application 19/29876/FUL (Councillor Mrs Hood had spoken against the development proposal at the Borough Council's Planning Control Committee and Councillor Kenney had voted against the case at Committee).
- Requesting the support of Sport England which it had initially given and then withdrawn after clarification that Stafford Borough Council was committing to use some of the proceeds of the sale to develop a playing field at Yarlet.
- Asking the Secretary of State to call in the planning application to an appeal, but this had been rejected in favour of a local decision being made by Stafford Borough Council.

The Town Clerk said that he was not aware that the law had been broken but a qualified planning lawyer would need to be employed to ascertain this point. He advised that the decision to pursue a judicial review needed careful consideration as the process is very expensive, with the potential for the Town Council to be held responsible for the costs of the other party. The experiences of the Aston Lodge Residents Association were given as an example.

GP20/107 Nominations for SPCA Executive Committee

The Committee considered an invitation to nominate a representative to stand for election to Staffordshire Parish Councils Association's Executive. It was noted that the election would be taking place at the Association's AGM on the evening of 2nd December.

RESOLVED: That no nomination be made as Councillor Green is already a representative (for a two year term), and a second representative would only be appointed from Stone if no nominations are received from other parishes in the Stafford Borough.

GP20/108 VE Day 2020 Commemoration Working Group

The committee considered the recommendations from the Working Group meeting* held on 10th September, a copy of which had been issued with the agenda for the meeting.

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RESOLVED: That the Committee approves the recommendations for the VE Day 2020 Commemoration and agreed that these should be carried forward.

GP20/109 Non-Cheque Payments

RESOLVED: To note the list* of non-cheque payments made by the Council during the period 1 August to 31 August 2019.

GP20/110 Update from Working Groups:

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

The Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, Councillor Mrs Hood, informed the Committee that the Town Clerk had a meeting scheduled with the Principal Planning Officer and Town Council's Planning Consultant this week to discuss the Examiner's Report.

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that Stone Area Parish Liaison Group had met two weeks ago, and the forum was proving to be an effective way of communicating with neighbouring councils and sharing their mutual interest in Stone and surrounding areas. He said he was disappointed that Fulford and Barlaston Parish Councils had not been represented at meetings. The topics discussed had included parish plans for VE Day 2020 Commemorations, Stafford Borough Council's management of planning consultations (which had resulted in a letter being sent to the Borough Council on behalf of Eccleshall and Hilderstone Parish Councils and Stone Town Council) and traffic and parking issues, including the numerous parking tickets issued by Smart Parking.

Traffic Management in High Street Working Group

The Committee has reviewed membership of the Working Group (at GP20/105 above).

VE Day 2020 Commemoration Working Group

Councillor Kenney has reported on the outcome of the Working Group meeting (at GP20/108 above).

GP20/111 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

Councillor Davies advised that no meeting had taken place, but the AGM would be held next week.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Thornicroft advised that a meeting had taken place on 6 September 2019. Mr N. Norman had taken on the role of Chairman and had agreed to be nominated to Age UK District.

Stafford & Stone Access Group

Councillor T. Kelt advised that the next meeting of the Access Group would be held next week.

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Stone Common Plot Trustees

It was reported that no meeting of the Trustees had taken place.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

It was reported that a meeting of the Liaison Group was coming up.

SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Green informed the Committee that the SPCA Executive had thanked Stone Lions for the work they were doing on prostate cancer screening and Message in a Bottle. Four hundred males had attended the recent screening event and their work had been noted by other parish councils.

A vote of thanks was also given to Stone Lions on behalf of the Town Council.

GP20/112 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

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

GP20/113 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee Meeting held on the 3 September 2019 (Minute Numbers GP20/079, GP20/095 and GP20/096), be approved as a correct record.

CHAIRMAN