



**Stone**  
Town Council

**Town Clerk**

Les Trigg

15 Station Road  
Stone  
ST15 8JP

**Tel: 01785 619740**

**Email: [clerk@stonetowncouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@stonetowncouncil.gov.uk)**

9 December 2019

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT SUB COMMITTEE** will be held in the **Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone**, on **TUESDAY 17 DECEMBER 2019** at 7:05pm or on the rising of the Planning Committee, if later.

I trust you will be able to attend.

Les Trigg  
Town Clerk

Councillors: P Leason (Chair), T. Adamson (Vice Chair), K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess, M. Hatton, T. Kelt, J. Powell and R. Townsend

**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. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Sub-Committee held on 15 October 2019, Minute No's ENV20/018 – ENV20/023 (attached)

5. **Reports of Working Groups**

- Plastic Free Community/Single Use Plastics Working Group (report attached)
- Environmental Issues Working Group (report attached)

6. **Crown Meadow Improvements**

To receive the report of the Chairman (attached)

7. **Budget 2020-21 to 2022-23**

To consider the report of the Town Clerk (attached)

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 welcome to attend the Environment 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.

# Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

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

**PRESENT:** Councillor P. Leason in the Chair and  
Councillors: T. Adamson, K. Argyle, Mrs A. Burgess, M. Green, M. Hatton, T. Kelt,  
R. Kenney, J. Powell and R. Townsend

By Chairman's invitation: Councillors: I. Fordham & A. Best

**ABSENT:** There were no Councillors absent

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**ENV20/018**    **Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**ENV20/019**    **Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations**

None received

**ENV20/020**    **Representations from Members of the Public**

None

**ENV20/021**    **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

That the minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on the 13 August 2019 (Minute Numbers ENV20/009 – ENV20/017), be approved as a correct record.

**ENV20/022**    **Updates**

To consider updates on matters from previous Minutes:

a) Leaflet on the Meadow

**Minute Number ENV19/005 & ENV19/018:**

*That the costs of producing an information leaflet be investigated by Councillor Leason, and the findings reported back to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee*

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that at a meeting (on 25 September 2019) between the Borough Council's Biodiversity & Ecology Officer, the Town Council's Grounds Maintenance Contractor and Sub Committee Members, it had been suggested that installation of several

information boards positioned around Crown Meadow, would be preferable to the production of leaflets.

It was agreed that, upon receipt of costings for the information boards, the item would be added to a future agenda.

b) Community Planting Exercise

**Minute Number ENV19/012 & ENV19/018:**

*That a community planting exercise is considered for the planting of new wild flowers on Crown Meadow*

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that following the meeting (above) the Grounds maintenance Contractor had been asked to provide quotations for various works which included:

- Removal of a Beech tree, an Oak tree and the levelling of an area of ground near to a culvert which runs underground.
- The planting of Rowan, Elder and Crab Apple trees to form a hedge along the area of Meadow adjoining Stafford Street to create a screen to hide the Marks and Spencer building and entrance road on to the site.
- Making the bottom scrape wider and deeper to attract dragon flies etc.
- Removal of bulrushes.

The Chairman advised that upon the opening up of the scrape, a community planting exercise could be undertaken with consideration given to the creation of another new long narrow scrape.

The Chairman advised that he had arranged another meeting with the Grounds Maintenance Contractor on 22 October (10am at Crown Meadow) and Sub-Committee members were invited to attend.

c) Tree & Hedge Planting – Charter for Trees Campaign

**Minute Number ENV19/013 & ENV19/018:**

*That the location identified in Crown Meadow is recommended for tree planting and that this is undertaken through a community tree planting project*

The Chairman advised that the tree and hedge planting would form part of the screening (as above) and the costings for all work would be taken forward to the December budget meeting.

The Chairman suggested that a Crown Meadow volunteer group be

established to undertake litter picking, removal of weeds (Himalayan Balsam) and straightforward maintenance work, taking the lead from the Sub-Committee and Grounds Maintenance Contractor. It was agreed that the item be brought forward to a future agenda.

RESOLVED: To note the updates on matters brought forward from previous Minutes.

**ENV20/023 Reports from Working Groups**

To receive reports from Working Groups:

**Plastic Free Community/Single Use Plastics Working Group**

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that the Plastic Free Community/Single Use Plastics Working Group had not yet met.

**Environmental Issues Working Group**

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that a small number of Environmental Issues Working Group Members had met for the first time last week, since the Town Council had agreed to acknowledge a climate emergency.

The issues discussed had included the need to focus on the aspects of climate emergency and environmental issues that were within the remit and budget determined by the Town Council.

The working group agreed that it would research three main areas, with a view to making proposals to the Sub-Committee. These are:

- Establishing how to organise a carbon energy audit of Stone Town Council's activities to obtain an up to date evaluation of its footprint and environmental practices. This will enable consideration to be given to offsetting its footprint and leading by example in the town.
- That the Sub-Committee have meetings with Stafford Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council to learn about their plans, declarations and policies in order to establish how these can be filtered down to the local level.
- Community engagement in Stone with the use of social media, presence at farmers markets, the Town Council's website, face to face and the possibility of a public meeting.

RESOLVED: To note the reports of the Working Groups.

**Chairman**

**Proposition from the Plastic Free Community and Single Use Plastic Working Group to the Environment Sub Committee of Stone Town Council. 2nd December 2019.**

This working group is now keen to develop an action plan. The remit is relatively small but a very important issue for the town and the public. We believe we can make a difference by adopting best practise within the council and by working with groups in the community that support and facilitate in responsible use and disposal of plastics.

We propose the following actions:

**STC Audit**

- Carry out an in-house audit of all single-use plastics within STC's own operation. The Council's office team and the working group should be able to do this without paying for outsourced help
- The audit should include a review of the Council's suppliers with a view to making sure we are supplied by responsible companies and cutting out single use plastic
- Complete the audit by March 30<sup>th</sup> 2020 and working group to produce proposals by May 30<sup>th</sup>
- Seek advice from SCC, SBC and national associations on recommended best-practice
- Develop a best-practise guide on single-use plastics for all councillors to follow and promote

**Community Engagement:**

- Include single-use plastics on the agenda at any public meeting hosted by the Climate Emergency working group. Listen and learn to determine how STC can support the public in the future with reduction of plastics
- Liaise with town traders to discuss the issue and agree actions for how STC can support the reduction and end of single-use plastics
- Liaise with Tracey Lindop and associates to determine how STC can support and grow any community initiatives.
- Once we have started to get our own house in order regarding single-use plastics, STC should consider adopting/supporting a community programme to have an impact across the town. These might be:  
To encourage all Stone businesses to stop using single-use bags. Work with supermarkets to publicise and educate. Litter picking campaign. Recycling education including multi use plastics as well as single use.

**Lobbying**

- For issues relating to plastics that need change but are outside of STC's remit we will aim to lobby the relevant authorities including at Borough and County levels. This might relate to single use plastic, multi-use plastics, best practise and recycling.

**Publicity and Education**

- Establish if STC can develop its own website to promote and educate on plastic use.
- When ready, go public with STC's plastics campaign and news of community collaborations. Use our website, Facebook, ALBOS and print media.

**Costs:**

- Human resource in the Town Council office will be needed for marketing, website development and organising events.

- If the Climate Emergency Group is successful in getting a budget that enables community outreach and PR, the Plastics Group can participate/collaborate in that activity
- I propose a contingency fund of £750 in 2020-21 to enable the Single Use Plastics group to develop a campaign and begin publicising it.

#### **Immediate Actions**

- Source an alternative to single-use plastic cups for the water dispensers or an alternative way of serving water at STC facilities
- Liaise with community groups to organise a large-scale litter pick (perhaps at New Years) with associated publicity.

Report compiled Councillor Robert Townsend  
2<sup>nd</sup> December 2019

**CLIMATE EMERGENCY WORKING GROUP MEMBERS ITEM**  
**THE ENVIRONMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING 17<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2019**

**Introduction**

The Climate Emergency Working group within the Environment Sub Committee has the objective of achieving carbon neutrality for Stone, as agreed in Stone Town Council (STC). We recognise that:

- We are going to need to reduce our carbon footprint, where possible, and to mitigate for residual necessary carbon usage
- Both reduction and mitigation will cost money at least in the short to medium term but reduction resulting from improvements in efficiency will result in some cost savings in the long term
- The project and acceptance of costs must be accepted and led by the community and not seen to be initiated and driven by STC
- Much of our carbon usage within the town is outside of our direct control and can only be achieved by working with outside agencies

Actual activity expenditure is going to occur over many years but must start immediately, i.e. 2019-2021. However, it is impossible to identify actual costings without extensive planning and evaluation, which will not be possible before the budget meetings next month.

There are four areas which we wish to address in 2020-2021.

**Environmental audit**

We need to baseline STC carbon usage to be able to identify action to become more energy efficient and costs and savings from those actions. It will also enable us to determine what mitigation is necessary long term. There are options as to how to do this but our preferred route is to use Councillor Hatton's expertise. He has agreed to perform such an audit by end of January 2020. The full audit will necessarily extend beyond fixed assets to include all carbon usage where STC have some element of control such as:

- Parks and green space
- Allotments
- Events
- Markets
- Street lighting
- Bus shelters
- Public toilets (possibly)
- Electricity and gas supply
- Waste bins
- Clocks

It may be necessary to bring in outside expertise for some of these but that will become clearer as we proceed with the audit but initially it will be internal and cost neutral.

**Public engagement**

We need to get public engagement in Climate Change projects. We propose a number of actions:

- Publicity via the various markets and events in Stone



- A public launch of the STC climate project

We recognise that many people particularly younger people and schools will already be active or be very open to becoming active in this area and will be brimming with ideas, which could be teased out in brainstorming workshops. STC involvement would be facilitation, coordination and support as we see any action as necessarily community driven and lasting well beyond this administration. This initial public engagement will involve some cost (regular market stalls, providing premises for meetings, publicity, running workshops and providing workshop materials). We would also request some provision of administration services from the STC office, possibly from the new marketing officer, and we see the extension of the STC website to cover environmental issues as key. Councillors each have their own personal networks, which can be used to spread the word.

### **Borough and County engagement**

Stafford Borough and County councils (SBC, SCC) have declared climate emergencies. Some of the fixed assets used by STC are owned by SBC and some potential actions controlled by SCC. We need to find out what actions are planned by these bodies and to work with them in Stone. SCC have already held workshops with outcomes. We intend to:

- Invite an officer from SBC involved in Climate activities to discuss SBC and STC plans to decide where the councils can work together with a common aim
- To obtain the outputs from the SCC workshops via Councillor Hood to determine where these have implications to STC

In particular, we need to establish with SBC a list of minimum environmental requirements for planning applications, where appropriate, such as: planting trees, maintaining green spaces, incorporating renewable energy, and to take SBC to task wherever these are not included.

### **Funding**

The cost of implementing efficiency and mitigation schemes could be substantial and will require community support. We need to investigate and bid for any grants that are becoming available for climate projects to reduce the need for direct public funding. However, we see an immediate need for some budget in 2020-21 to start this work, in particular the public engagement, and see an initial outlay of £2,000 as vital for the public engagement activities described above.

### **Single use plastic**

The Plastics working group is separate from the Climate working group but we are aware that issues on single use plastic are bound to arise when discussing climate issues with the public and that the two working groups may well combine in future. However, the Plastic working group does need to be reconvened to hold similar budget considerations immediately.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the immediate actions for 2019-21 are:

- To perform an environmental audit on STC
- To initiate public engagement
- To request an initial budget of £2,000 for 2020-21
- To request a meeting with a SBC environmental officer
- To obtain the outputs from the SCC Climate Emergency workshops
- To investigate external funding possibilities

## Report of the Chairman of the Environment Sub-Committee

The Crown Meadow Working Group have met twice with Mick Plant and looked at various improvements to the meadow itself. These are

Opening up the bottom scrape and making it deeper and put a path around it (£2,200)

Remove willows and silver birch from both scrapes (£660)

4 trees to be moved (£200)

Work on the culvert (£220 plus depending on further investigation)

Hedge planting to screen off the Marks & Spencer Development (£1,000)

Create a new scrape and have a community project to plant the appropriate wild flowers (£1,100 plus the cost of the plants)

Spray the area by the old bridge - clear and spray (£380)

It was decided to carry out the work plus other areas identified by Mick for consideration over the next three years and prioritising the work.

Therefore the working group proposing asking the Environment Committee to consider including the following in their budget for 2020/21

Opening up the scrape and making it deeper	£2,200
Hedge planting to hide the M&S building	£1,000
The removal of the willows	£660
4 four trees (to new hedge area)	£200
Total	£4,060

**Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee**

**17<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

**Environment Sub-Committee Budget 2020-21 to 2022-23**

**Report of Town Clerk**

**Introduction**

1. The purpose of this report is to determine the level of budget for services under its control that the Sub-Committee wishes to recommend to the General Purposes Committee meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020.

**Background**

2. The General Purposes Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2019 considered the standstill budget for 2019-20 and indicative figures for the next two years based on a number of assumptions contained within the report.
3. The figures for this Sub-Committee are:

<b>Actual 2018-19 £</b>		<b>Budget 2019-20 £</b>	<b>Forecast 2019-20 £</b>	<b>Budget 2020-21 £</b>	<b>Budget 2021-22 £</b>	<b>Budget 2022-23 £</b>
15,145	Grounds Maintenance	18,200	17,300	16,600	17,100	17,600
1,432	Crown Meadow Improvements	2,860	3,700	2,000	2,100	2,100
-	Westbridge Park	-	-	-	-	-
-1,168	Allotments	3,850	1,200	60	60	60
<u>15,408</u>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<u>24,910</u>	<u>22,200</u>	<u>18,660</u>	<u>19,260</u>	<u>19,760</u>

4. In respect of the figures above, Members should note:
  - a. The Grounds Maintenance forecast for the current year includes the cost of one-off items for replanting the Walton roundabout (£600) and the town borders (£600). The Council's contractor has requested an above inflation cost uplift for 2020-21 due to significantly increased equipment costs and has suggested that the annual sum for tree pruning is increased. These sums have not been included in the above figures, but would increase costs from 2020-21 onwards by £700 per annum if approved.
  - b. The Crown Meadow Improvements budget for 2019-20 included a number of one-off tasks, including dealing with bulrushes, work to re-seat the poles at the amphitheatre, and the Kingfisher bench. Should any of these items not be completed, the funds can be rolled-over into 2020-21. The ongoing budget includes

provision for the maintenance of benches (£400) and the bridge (£500) together with an annual sum for the removal of bulrushes (£500). There is also a general contingency for unforeseen work.

- c. The budget for Westbridge Park has been removed. It originally represented the cost of maintaining the area to the west of the road which is currently the responsibility of Stafford Borough Council and was planned for transfer to the Town Council. Discussions with the Borough regarding this transfer of responsibility are currently stalled whilst the Borough plan and undertake work on the park. This budget will need to be reinstated should this transfer go ahead in the future.
  - d. The forecast for the Allotments budget this year includes path works and tree removal at Newcastle Road, and the treatment of Japanese Knotweed. The budget for 2020-21 and subsequent years includes provision for the treatment of Japanese Knotweed (£300), water charges (£700), wayleave (£250), hedge cutting (£300) and general maintenance (£1,000) together with a contingency for grounds maintenance of £1,200. Against this is set estimated annual income of £3,700. Inflation is added to these figures each year.
5. As reported to the meeting of the General Purposes Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, the standstill budget is just the starting point for the budget process. Members will want to review this standstill budget and the amounts provisionally included. In addition, there are likely to be other areas where Members will want to undertake new developments or stop/change the things that the Council is doing now.
  6. The Sub-Committee is asked to consider the standstill budget and any areas of growth or savings which they would want to be taken into account in setting the budget for 2020-21 and future years.

### **Budget Changes**

7. Elsewhere on today's agenda, reports from Working Groups are suggesting changes to the Sub-Committee's budget. These will need to be considered alongside this report and a decision made on the items to be put forward to the General Purposes Committee for inclusion.
8. In addition, the Council's grounds maintenance contractor has been asked to review items that, based on his experience of undertaking the work, the Council need to consider for inclusion in next year's budget. He has asked the Sub-Committee to consider the following items, with the first two being his highest priority suggestions:
  - a. The provision of an 80 metre path across the Amphitheatre with a ramp, rather than steps, to the road. This is estimated to cost £1,425.
  - b. Widening of Crown Meadow paths by removing growth over the existing paths and patching the stones where needed. Estimated cost £1,110.

- c. Rebuilding the steps at the Amphitheatre to a good standard. Estimated cost £1,530.
- d. Providing a barrier for the Fisherman's car park. The cost of this could be between £500 and £2,000 depending on the way that the barrier is provided.

**Recommendations**

- 9. Members are asked to recommend their proposed budget for consideration by the General Purposes Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2020.