



Town Clerk

Les Trigg

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15 Station Road
STONE
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13 January 2020

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** will be held in the **Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone**, on **TUESDAY 21 JANUARY 2020 at 7:00pm**.

I trust you will be able to attend.

Les Trigg
Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. **To receive apologies for absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Requests for Dispensations Received**
4. **To receive the report of the County Councillors**
 - County Councillor Mrs J. Hood
 - County Councillor I. Parry
5. **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.
6. **Minutes of Previous Meetings**
 - a) To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee, held on 3 December 2019, Minute No's GP20/132 – GP20/149 (attached).

7. Minutes of Sub-Committees

- a) Environment Sub-Committee held on 17 December 2019, Minute Numbers ENV20/024 – ENV20/030 (attached)
 - i. To consider the draft minutes
 - ii. To consider the Recommendations contained in Minute Numbers ENV20/028, ENV20/029 and ENV20/030
- b) Management Sub-Committee held on 17 December 2019, Minute Numbers MAN20/022 – MAN20/027 (attached)
 - i. To consider the draft minutes
 - ii. To consider the Recommendations contained in Minute Number MAN20/026
- c) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 7 January 2020, Minute Numbers TTP20/029 – TTP20/036 (attached)
 - iii. To consider the draft minutes
 - iv. To consider the Recommendations contained in Minute Numbers TTP20/034 and TTP20/035
- d) Estates Sub-Committee held on 7 January 2020, Minute Numbers EST20/016 – EST20/023 (attached)
 - iii. To consider the draft minutes
 - iv. To consider the Recommendations contained in Minute Numbers EST20/020, EST20/021 and EST20/023

8. To Determine the 2020-21 to 2022-23 Budget for Recommendation to the Council

To consider the report of the Town Clerk (attached) and budget recommendations from Sub-Committees

9. RDPE Growth Programme

To consider authorising the Town Clerk to submit an expression of interest for a grant for Stone Heritage Centre under the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Programme. A copy of the programme handbook is attached.

10. Car Parking in Stone

To consider issues related to car parking in Stone

11. Open Spaces Society

To consider a letter from the Open Spaces Society appealing for a donation to its 'Legal Fund' which supports Society members in fighting legal cases in defence of commons, green spaces and rights of way.

A copy of the letter from the Open Spaces Society is attached.

12. Governance & Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England

To review the signatories for the Town Council's bank reconciliation process.

13. Non-Cheque Payments

To receive a list of non-cheque payments made by the Council during the period 1 November to 30 November 2019 (attached).

14. Update from Working Groups:

- a) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
- b) Stone Area Parish Liaison Group (notes for meeting on 18 September 2019 attached)
- c) Traffic Management in Stone Working Group
- d) VE Day 2020 Commemoration Working Group

15. 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 – Mayor & J. Davies

Age Concern Stone & District – Cllrs: T. Adamson & C. Thornicroft

Stafford & Stone Access Group – Cllr T. Kelt

Stone Common Plot Trustees – Cllrs: Mrs J. Hood, R. Kenney & T. Adamson

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group – Cllrs: Mrs J. Hood, M. Hatton & J. Powell

SPCA Executive Committee – Cllr M. Green

16. 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.

17. Confidential Minutes

- a) To confirm as a correct record the confidential minutes of the General Purposes Committee, held on 3 December 2019, Minute Numbers GP20/132 and GP20/149.

Members of the Public are welcome to attend the General Purposes Committee Meeting as observers. Persons attending should enter the Council Offices through the rear entrance door (adjacent to the car park). The Council Chamber is at the top of the stairs.

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 3 December 2019

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

ABSENT: Councillors: T. Adamson, I. Fordham, M. Hatton and J. Hickling

GP20/132 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: T. Adamson, I. Fordham, M. Hatton and J. Hickling

GP20/133 Declarations of Interests

None

GP20/134 Requests for Dispensations

None

GP20/135 To receive the report of the County Councillors

County Councillor Mrs J. Hood

Councillor Mrs Hood gave no report on this occasion and wished everyone a very merry Christmas.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP20/136 Representations from Members of the Public

None

GP20/137 Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on the 5 November (Minute Numbers GP20/114 – GP20/131), be approved as a correct record.

GP20/138 Minutes of Sub-Committees

- a) Management Sub-Committee held on 12 November 2019 (Minute Numbers MAN20/015 – MAN20/021), that the draft minutes be noted and

* 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.

the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Numbers MAN20/019 and MAN20/020 be adopted.

- b) Estates Sub-Committee held on 12 November 2019 (Minute Numbers EST20/009 – EST20/015), that the draft minutes be noted and the recommendations of the Sub-Committee contained in Minute Number EST20/015 be adopted.

GP20/139 Budget Monitoring Report – October 2019

The report of the Town Clerk* was noted.

GP20/140 Budget 2020-21 to 2022-23 Overview

The Committee received the report* of the Town Clerk setting out the prospects for the Council's 2020-21 to 2022-23 budget. The report considers the overall position of the Council, the context in which the budget needs to be set and the standstill budget, which is the starting point for determination of the precept for 2020-21.

RESOLVED: To note the standstill budget position for 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 and the issues related to setting the precept.

RESOLVED: That each sub-committee considers its financial needs for the next three years and reports back to the General Purposes Committee on 21 January 2020 with its budget proposals.

GP20/141 Grant Application Process

The Committee considered minor revisions to the Town Council's Grant Aid application process which had been forwarded by the Management Sub-Committee (Minute Number: MAN20/021)).

A revised application form had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the proposed revisions to the Town Council's Grant Aid application form are accepted.

GP20/142 Plan Headstone

The Committee considered the draft Plan Headstone protocol which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the draft Plan Headstone protocol is accepted.

GP20/143 Stafford Safer Neighbourhood Panel

The Committee considered the appointment of Councillors to provide input into a scrutiny review being undertaken by the Stafford Safer Neighbourhood Panel. The terms of reference of the review had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting.

No Councillors were nominated and no volunteers came forward to take on the task.

* 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.

GP20/144 Meeting Between HS2 and Stone Railhead Crisis Group

The Committee considered the appointment of a Councillor to represent the Council at meetings between HS2 and the Stone Railhead Crisis Group.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Mrs J. Hood represents the Town Council at meetings between HS2 Ltd and the Stone Railhead Crisis Group.

GP20/145 Non-Cheque Payments

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

GP20/146 Update from Working Groups:

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

The Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, Councillor Mrs Hood, advised the Committee that there was no new information to report.

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group

Councillor Davies advised the Committee that the next meeting of the Stone Area Parish Liaison Group would be taking place in January 2020.

Traffic Management in Stone Working Group

Councillor Kenney advised that the next meeting of the working group would be held in the New Year.

VE Day 2020 Commemoration Working Group

Councillor Kenney advised the Committee that a meeting of the working group would be held in the New year.

GP20/147 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 Stone ATC was continuing successfully and that he would be attending a meeting on Wednesday 4 December 2019.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Thornicroft advised that a meeting of Age Concern Stone & District was scheduled to take place on Friday 6 December 2019.

Stafford & Stone Access Group

Councillor T. Kelt advised that a meeting of the Access Group would be held in January 2020. He said that a meeting had taken place with representatives from the Stone Traders Group and traders' views were being taken forward.

Councillor Kelt said that he was considering taking on the task of maintaining and updating the Access Group's website.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Kenney and Councillor Mrs Hood were not aware that any meetings of the Stone Common Plot Trustees had taken place.

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Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Mrs Hood reported that no meetings had been held since the recent Annual General Meeting.

SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Green advised that he had attended the Annual General Meeting of Staffordshire Parish Councils' Association on 2 December. There had not been a quorum for a meeting of the Executive Committee which had resulted in a rescheduling of the date to 6 January 2020.

The meeting was adjourned to enable the Planning Committee meeting and confidential items on the Council Meeting agenda to take place.

The General Purposes Committee was then reconvened for the confidential items on the agenda.

GP20/148 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.

GP20/149 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on the 5 November 2019 (Minute Numbers GP20/114 and GP20/131), be approved as a correct record.

CHAIRMAN

Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 17 December 2019

PRESENT: Councillor T. Adamson in the Chair and
Councillors: K. Argyle, M. Hatton, T. Kelt, J. Powell and R. Townsend

By Chairman's invitation: Councillors: A. Best, J. Davies, Mrs L. Davies, I. Fordham,
Mrs J. Hood and C. Thornicroft

ABSENT: Councillors: Mrs A Burgess, M. Green (Mayoral duty), R. Kenney and P. Leason

ENV20/024 Apologies

Councillors: M. Green (Mayoral duty), R. Kenney and P. Leason

ENV20/025 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None received

ENV20/026 Representations from Members of the Public

None

ENV20/027 Minutes of Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on the 15 October 2019 (Minute Numbers ENV20/018 – ENV20/023), be approved as a correct record.

ENV20/028 Reports of Working Groups

a) Plastic Free Community/Single Use Plastics Working Group

The Chairman invited Councillor Townsend to provide a brief verbal summary of the work of the Plastic Free Community Working Group. A written report* of the Working Group had been issued with the agenda for the meeting.

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that the Working Group had met (once) to develop preliminary proposals on actions that will support a reduction in the use of single use plastics, both within the Town Council (organisationally by means of an internal audit) and more widely in the community. The Group is seeking to reach out to traders organisations, special interest groups and others including the growing

hospitality trade in the town. It also plans to lobby organisations which might be in a position to influence issues such as recycling facilities and bins etc.

Councillor Townsend advised the Sub-Committee that the Working Group had suggested that a contingency sum of £750 (for 2020-21) would support the necessary actions identified by the audit, as well as covering the costs of appropriate marketing.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that if the proposal was approved this sum would be earmarked within the budget, but it would be necessary to prepare specific proposals and obtain the authority of the General Purposes Committee in order to spend the money.

Councillor Davies said the Local Government Association had produced a booklet entitled 'A Councillor's Workbook on Climate Change' which, although targeted at principal councils, may be helpful to all.

RECOMMENDED: That a contingency sum of £750 be included within the budget for 2020-21 to support the Town Council's work on reducing single use plastics in the town.

b) Environmental Issues Working Group

The Chairman invited Councillor Kelt to provide a verbal overview of the work of the Environmental Issues Working Group. A written report* of the Working Group had been issued with the agenda for the meeting.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that meetings of the Environmental Issues Working Group had resulted in the identification of the following actions:

- To undertake an Environmental Audit on Stone Town Council
- To Initiate public engagement
- Engagement with Staffordshire County Council and Stafford Borough Council to promote good communication, mutual support and directional alignment
- To investigate the external funding opportunities that are available to environmental groups

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the Working Group had determined that a budget of £2,000 for 2020-21 (with a further review thereafter) would enable movement on public engagement and marketing (meetings, workshops, publicity etc).

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that if the proposal was approved this sum would be earmarked within the budget, but it would be necessary to prepare specific proposals and obtain the authority of the General Purposes Committee in order to spend the money.

RECOMMENDED: That a contingency sum of £2,000 be included within the budget for 2020-21 to aid the Town Council's work on Environmental Issues.

ENV20/029 Crown Meadow Improvements

The Chairman provided a verbal summary of a report produced by Councillor Leason on proposed improvements to Crown Meadow. The report* had been issued with the agenda for the meeting.

The Chairman advised that the report followed a meeting between the grounds maintenance contractor, the Borough Council's Biodiversity Officer and some Sub-Committee members (on 25 September 2019) where a list of actions/jobs had been proposed and the grounds maintenance contractor asked to provide a quotation.

The costings for various works in the report (opening of the bottom scrape, hedge planting, removal of Willow and Silver Birch, and relocating four trees to new hedge area) totalled £4,060.

A discussion took place about the proposals and the reasons for recommendation of the removal of trees. It was agreed that additional information was needed on the rationale.

RECOMMENDED: That a total contingency sum of £4,000 be included within the budget for 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23, spread over the three year period, to support improvements to Crown Meadow (subject to a detailed scheme and approval of the General Purposes Committee).

ENV20/030 Budget 2020-21 to 2022-23

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Town Clerk* which considered the level of budget that the Sub-Committee may wish to recommend to the General Purposes Committee meeting on 21 January 2020 for services under its control.

A vote took place on possible budget changes within the report with items 8a and 8b supported and items 8c and 8d not supported.

RECOMMENDED: That the budget figures included in the Clerk's report are accepted, with the addition of the following:

- The provision of an 80 metre path across the Amphitheatre with a ramp, rather than steps, to the road. The estimated cost is £1,425.
- Widening of Crown Meadow paths by removing growth over the existing paths and patching the stones where needed. The Estimated cost is £1,110.

- Reducing single use plastics in the town. A contingency sum of £750 be included within the budget for 2020-21 (Minute ENV20/028(a) above).
- Environmental issues engagement work. A contingency sum of £2,000 be included in the budget for 2020-21 (Minute ENV20/028(b) above).
- Improvements to Crown Meadow. A total contingency sum of £4000 spread over the three years 2020-21 to 2022-23 (Minute ENV20/029 above).

Chairman

Stone Town Council – Management Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 17 December 2019

PRESENT: Councillor J. Davies in the Chair and
Councillors: K. Argyle, Mrs L. Davies, I. Fordham and T. Kelt

By Chairman's invitation: Councillors: T. Adamson, A. Best, M. Hatton,
Mrs J. Hood, J. Powell, R. Townsend

ABSENT: Councillors: Mrs A. Burgess, M. Green (Mayoral duty) and R. Kenney

MAN20/022 Apologies

Councillors: M. Green (Mayoral duty) and R. Kenney

MAN20/023 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None received

MAN20/024 Representations from Members of the Public

None received

MAN20/025 Minutes

That the Minutes of the Management Sub-Committee Meeting held on the 12 November 2019 (Minute No's MAN20/015 – MAN20/021), be approved as a correct record.

MAN20/026 Budget 2020-21 – 2022-23

The Sub-Committee received the report of the Town Clerk* which considered the level of budget that the Sub-Committee may wish to recommend to the General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2020 for the services under its control.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the cost of cleaning the War Memorial (raised at the Sub-Committee's last meeting) had been referred to a professional company, but an estimate would not be able to be produced until the poppy wreaths (laid on Remembrance Sunday) had been removed from its perimeter. He recommended that, if the Sub-Committee wished to include this in the budget, a £5,000 contingency should be provided in 2020-21.

* 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.

The Sub-Committee suggested that funding opportunities through the War Memorial Trust should also be explored.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the costs of the parish elections held in May 2019 were still not known, as Stafford Borough Council have not yet been able to provide this information. The £28,000 in the Town Council Elections budget for the current financial year therefore remains the same as the original estimate of the possible costs.

RECOMMENDED: That the budget figures included in the Clerk's report are accepted with the addition of a £5,000 contingency in 2020-21 for the refurbishment of Stone War Memorial.

MAN20/027 Updates

The Sub-Committee received updates on the following:

a. Website

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that there had been a small number of teething problems following the transfer of the Town Council's website hosting to Staffordshire County Council. He understood that these have now been resolved.

The Town Clerk informed the Sub-Committee that the Marketing and Events Assistant would be looking at improving the content of the website in relation to the community centres and marketing aspects of the Town Council's services generally.

b. Service Continuity Plan

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that there were no additional updates to report.

c. Data Protection Act 2018

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that there were no additional updates to report. He advised Members to ensure that they used their official email addresses for all Town Council business for Data Protection and Freedom of Information purposes.

Chairman

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Stone Town Council – Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 7 January 2020

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs J. Hood in the Chair and
Councillors: A. Best, J. Davies, I. Fordham, M. Green, J. Powell and C. Thornicroft

By Chairman's invitation: K. Argyle, T. Kelt and R. Townsend

ABSENT: Councillors: T. Adamson, R. Kenney and P. Leason

TTP20/029 Apologies

Councillors: T. Adamson, R. Kenney and P. Leason

TTP20/030 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation

None received

TTP20/031 Representations from Members of the Public

None

TTP20/032 Minutes of Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee meeting held on the 15 October 2019 (Minute Numbers TTP20/021 – TTP20/028), be approved as a correct record.

TTP20/033 Calendar of Events

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that it is hoped the calendar of events would be completed by the end of March/beginning of April 2020. The events schedule would be displayed on the notice boards in the town.

Christmas Lights Switch On

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that the Stone Christmas Lights Switch On event (on 21 November 2019) had been a huge success; the whole town had joined in and the community spirit was overwhelming. The choir had been bigger than any other year; the fun fair had been present and street vendors stayed in their positions outside the boundary of the town. There had

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been a few problems but these had been quickly resolved. The stage had been set up early and the sound systems had been excellently managed.

Councillor Mrs Hood asked that a letter be issued thanking everyone who had been involved in the event.

Christmas Lights at Walton

The Chairman expressed her disappointment that the Christmas lights at both Walton roundabout and Walton shops (on the Eccleshall Road) had not been illuminated on the evening of the Christmas Lights Switch On, with the defect only being identified on the afternoon of the event. It had taken a number of days for the problem to be resolved. Councillor Mrs Hood said the lights were valued by Walton residents and the roundabout lights in particular were a significant landmark – communicating the message to motorists on the A34 that Christmas had arrived in Stone.

The Sub-Committee raised questions about the testing of the lights prior to the event and Councillor Mrs Hood said she had expressed her dissatisfaction to the contractor. She advised Councillors that she would be ensuring that the situation did not happen again in the future.

Bunting /additional

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that the multi coloured bunting had been taken down from the town and washed. She asked whether Members would like to see red, white and blue bunting in Market Square for the Victory in Europe and Victory in Japan commemorations later in the year. It was agreed that red, white and blue bunting would be purchased (within the current financial year's budget).

Music Festival

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that preparations for the Music Festival were on going and a number of bands were under consideration for the programme. Further reports will be given as arrangements progress.

TTP20/034 Traffic Management in the High Street

The Sub-Committee considered the dangers of traffic in the High Street for tourists and shoppers and the appropriateness of times of access.

The Sub-Committee agreed that the High Street should be a safe place for people to browse and for children to move around freely. There have been a number of near misses between pedestrians and motor vehicles, as well as incidents with cyclists travelling through the town at speed. The situation has however continued without resolution.

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The Sub-Committee expressed specific concerns about the management of traffic in the High Street:

- Ambulances should have a clear access into the town centre. Sometimes cars are parked across its entrance (in front of the bollards when in position)
- The signage at the top of the High Street is not clear
- Members of the public and some shopkeepers appear to be unfamiliar with requirements in respect of access and parking
- No monitoring or enforcement action appears to be being taken by responsible agencies
- Motorists are continuing to use the High Street as a short cut to avoid traffic congestion on Christchurch Way
- Action points have not been considered by Staffordshire County Council (following a Traffic Management in the High Street Working Group meeting) in relation to sequence changes to the traffic lights at the bottom of the High Street

The Sub-Committee asked the Town Clerk to write to Clear Streets to request that officers monitor the High Street and enforce traffic management in the town centre.

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk writes to Clear Streets Partnership to ask the service to exercise traffic management control in the High Street.

RECOMMENDED: That traffic management issues in the town centre are taken up by the Traffic Management in Stone Working Group.

TTP20/035 Budget 2020-21 to 2022-23

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Town Clerk* (issued with the agenda) which considered the level of budget that the Sub-Committee may wish to recommend to the General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2020 for the services under its control.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the Christmas Lights forecast for 2019-20 had been increased by £3,000 since its consideration by the General Purposes Committee on 3 December 2019. This was to accommodate improvements to the lights at the Walton shops and roundabout.

RECOMMENDED: That the budget figures included in the Clerks report are accepted.

* 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.

To receive reports from Working Groups:

Town Centre Appearance and Environment Working Group

Councillor Fordham informed the Sub-Committee that the Town Centre Appearance and Environment Working Group was continuing to monitor the appearance of the town centre and had identified some planning matters that required enforcement.

The Sub-Committee agreed that action was necessary on tackling plastic cable ties and Sellotape (which causes damage to paintwork).

Town Centre Events and Attractions Working Group

Councillor Mrs Hood confirmed that the Town Centre Events and Attractions Working Group were moving along and doing a good job, as referenced earlier in the meeting.

Town Centre Partnership

Councillor Fordham advised the Sub-Committee that the Stone Traders Group was now well established and operating independently with its primary purpose achieved. He suggested that the Town Council's future contact with the Group be made by the Town Clerk to its Chairman (rather than the Town Centre Partnership).

It was agreed that the Town Centre partnership be disbanded.

Chairman

* 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.

Stone Town Council – Estates Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 7 January 2020

PRESENT: Councillor I. Fordham in the Chair and
Councillors: A. Best, M. Green, M. Hatton, Mrs J. Hood, C. Thornicroft and
R. Townsend

By Chairman's invitation: Councillors K. Argyle and J. Davies

ABSENT: Councillors: Mrs L. Davies and R. Kenney

EST20/016 Apologies

Councillors Mrs L. Davies and R. Kenney

The Chairman advised that he would be changing the order of the agenda to enable consideration of item 8 (Reports of Working Groups) before item 7 (Budget 2020-21 – 2022-23)

EST20/017 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensations

None received

EST20/018 Representations from Members of the Public

None received

EST20/019 Minutes of Previous Meeting

That the minutes of the Estates Sub-Committee meeting held on the 12 November 2019 (Minute Numbers EST20/009 – EST20/015), be approved as a correct record.

EST20/020 Community Centre Terms & Conditions of Hire

The Sub-Committee considered a review of the Council's Terms and Conditions of hire for the Frank Jordan Centre and Stone Station Community Centre.

A copy of each of the draft Terms and Conditions* had been issued with the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that the terms and conditions of hire for the Frank Jordan Centre had previously been reviewed after the building's

* 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.

refurbishment and the terms and conditions for use of Stone Station Community Centre had been brought into line with those.

The terms and conditions for both community centres had been amended in particular to incorporate the Town Council's Safeguarding Policy, and include clarification on the position relating to the storage of equipment belonging to hirers.

The Sub-Committee discussed whether equipment belonging to hall hirers should be stored and if so, whether there should be a charge.

It was agreed that a statement about what to do in the event of a fire (use of fire exits and contact telephone numbers) needed to be included.

RECOMMENDED: That the updated terms and conditions of hire for the Frank Jordan Centre and Stone Station Community Centre are accepted, subject to the Town Clerk adding an additional statement regarding what to do in the event of a fire.

EST20/021 Members Motions Under Standing Order 4

Councillor Mark Hatton

'I would like to propose that the Town Council transfers its electricity supply to a renewable energy provider for all sites where it has direct control over the electricity supplier.

The Sub-Committee is asked to support this initiative'.

RECOMMENDED: That at the end of the existing energy contracts for gas and electricity all future contracts should be based on 100% renewable energy. The Town Clerk was asked to report back to the Sub-Committee prior to entering into a contract if the differences in cost between this and a standard contract is, in his opinion, materially higher.

EST20/022 Reports of Working Groups

Market Strategy

The Market Strategy Working Group would report back to the Sub-Committee when a review of the performance of the markets and their pricing structure had been completed.

Use of Frank Jordan Centre and Stone Station

The Chairman asked Councillor Best to assist him in providing a verbal update on the work of the Working Group. It was acknowledged that installation of audio visual equipment would make the centres easier to rent but the initial costs were prohibitive.

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The Working Group agreed that Wi-Fi facilities needed to be installed at both venues as soon as practicable.

EST20/023 Budget 2020-21 – 2022-23

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Town Clerk* which considered the level of budget that the Sub-Committee may wish to recommend to the General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2020 for the services under its control.

The Sub-Committee reviewed the standstill budget and the amounts included for each service. It also considered other areas of growth or savings to be taken into account when setting the budget for 2020-21 and future years.

The Sub-Committee confirmed that it wished to include installation of Wi-Fi facilities at both the Frank Jordan Centre and Stone Station Community Centre in the budget.

RECOMMENDED: That the budget figures included in the Clerk's report are accepted, with the addition of the provision of Wi-Fi facilities at both community centres.

Chairman

* 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.

Stone Town Council - General Purposes Committee

21st January 2020

Budget 2020-21 to 2022-23 – Recommendations to Council

Report of Town Clerk

Introduction

1. This report considers the Budget to be recommended to the Council for 2020-21 and the indicative budgets for 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Background

2. At a series of meetings during December 2019 and January 2020, this Committee and its Sub-Committees have considered the potential budgets for 2020-21 to 2022-23. It is now the role of this Committee to consider those potential budgets and decide, for recommendation to the Full Council meeting on 6th February 2018:
 - a. The budget for 2020-21 for each Budget Head.
 - b. Any contributions to or from reserves to be built into the budget.
 - c. The precept for 2020-21.
 - d. Indicative figures for 2021-22 and 2022-23 for each of the above items.
3. At the time of writing this report, the recommendations from all Sub-Committees are not yet available. This report will thus focus on the sums available to spend and the impact on reserves. Details of all Sub-Committee budget proposals will be made available at the meeting.

Payments by Stafford Borough Council

4. For a number of years, the Council has received payments of almost £30,000 from Stafford Borough Council in addition to the precept. For 2020-21 this includes £18,399 to compensate for a previous reduction in this Council's Taxbase due to benefit changes and £11,461 for the cost of concurrent functions. Neither of these payments are a legal requirement and, at the time of writing this report, neither have been confirmed for continuation beyond the next financial year. The figures in this report assume that these payments will continue into the foreseeable future at the same cash level as 2020-21.

Council Tax

5. With reference to the determination of the Council Tax level by the Council, the Secretary of State has the power to require a referendum of local people before the Council Tax can be put up by more than a specified percentage.
6. The Secretary of State has confirmed that parish Council Taxes will not be capped for 2020-21 providing that the sector as a whole "shows restraint".

Standstill Budget

7. A “standstill” budget was presented to the last meeting of this Committee. The figures can be summarised as follows:

Actual 2018-19 £		Budget 2019-20 £	Forecast 2019-20 £	Budget 2020-21 £	Budget 2021-22 £	Budget 2022-23 £
33,703	Estates	164,400	154,300	97,200	60,300	61,700
15,408	Environment	24,910	22,200	18,660	19,260	19,760
35,471	Tourism & Town Promotion	36,100	35,000	39,600	36,700	37,700
174,844	Management	233,700	230,600	205,100	209,900	214,500
5,502	Neighbourhood Plan	9,900	2,000	7,900	-	-
-19,462	Earmarked Reserves	-134,710	-126,810	-7,900	-	-
245,465	TOTAL	334,300	317,290	360,560	326,160	333,660

8. It should be noted that the Tourism & Town Promotion forecast shown for the current year above is £3,000 higher than the figure reported to the General Purposes Committee on 3rd December 2019. This is due to the cost of repairs to the Christmas lighting electrical infrastructure at Walton Shops and A34 roundabout that were not anticipated when that report was prepared.
9. In order to be able to consider the budget bids from Sub-Committees, illustrations are set out below showing the effect of a Council Tax increase of 3% each year for the standstill budget, as per the indicative budget agreed last year.

	2020-21 £	2021-22 £	2022-23 £
Council Tax Increasing by 3% Per Annum			
Required Contribution from Reserves	25,686	-27,084	-37,876
Band D Council Tax for Year	51.6	53.15	54.75

10. Thus, for example, if the Council were to decide to increase the Council Tax by 3% per annum from its current level of £50.10 for a Band D property for 2020-21, and indicate that it plans to do the same for the next two years, there would be a budget deficit of £25,686 in 2020-21, followed by a surplus of £27,084 in 2021-22 and a surplus of £37,876 in 2022-23.
11. The Council is, of course, free to set the Council Tax at any level in any year. In addition, only the decision regarding the 2020-21 precept is binding on the Council. The indicative figures for the following two years can be changed as part of future budget setting processes.
12. The other factor that the Committee may wish to take into account is that the Council is forecast to underspend by around £17,000 in the current year. This figure, or a proportion of it, could be available for one-off spending to support the budget in future years, subject to the need to maintain reserve levels.

Reserves and Balances

13. In considering its recommendations to Council, the Committee will also need to consider the level of general reserves (balances) held by the Council.
14. Excluding the reserves previously earmarked for the Crown Wharf project, the Neighbourhood Plan, and rollovers, the Council held balances of £194,117 at the beginning of 2019-20. These are forecast to reduce to around £193,085 by the end of the current year as follows:

	£
Opening Balances – 1 st April 2019	194,117
Planned Contribution to 2019-20 Budget from Balances	-16,542
Budget Adjustments (net) ¹	-1,500
Forecast Underspending 2019-20	+17,010
	-1,032
Forecast Balances – 31 st March 2020	<u>193,085</u>

15. Allowing for a 3% year-on-year increase in the level of Council Tax, the three-year standstill budget would result in movements in these balances as follows:

	Budgeted Contribution to (from) Balances £	Estimated General Fund Balance £	Number of Months Net Expenditure
31 March 2020	-	193,085	-
31 March 2021	-25,686	167,399	5.4
31 March 2022	+27,084	194,483	6.9
31 March 2023	+37,876	232,359	8.1

16. I would recommend that a Council the size of Stone Town Council should hold balances equivalent to around six to nine months' net expenditure. It can be seen from the above table that this is not achieved the first budget year above, but the balances return to the recommended level by 2021-22, based on the standstill budget. Any recommendations from Sub-Committees that are accepted by this Committee, or amendments made by the Committee itself, will clearly change these figures.
17. Members need also to bear in mind that the Council has held an additional buffer in recent years due to the £100,000 being held for Crown Wharf. The budget assumes that this money will now be spent, so will no longer be available to support the Council's reserves. Meeting the minimum recommended level of balances is thus more critical than it has been previously.

Recommendations

18. That Members consider Sub-Committee budget proposals alongside the additional information in this report and determine the budget and precept level for recommendation to the Council.

¹ NOTE: This represents the supplementary estimate approved within the year for the new post of Events and Marketing Assistant. All other adjustments were balanced by contributions from the Rollover Reserve.



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs



The European Agricultural Fund for Rural
Development: Europe investing in rural areas

RDPE Growth Programme Rural Tourism Infrastructure Handbook



Deadline for expressions of interest: midnight 16 February 2020

Search 'RDPE Growth Programme' on GOV.UK

With thanks to The Birdpark, Gloucestershire and Peak District National Park, Derbyshire for the images used in this document.

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How Growth Programme grants work

1 Got an idea? Make a plan

Every successful application starts with a good idea and a clear plan for how to make that idea a reality.



2 Read this handbook

Read the rest of this handbook to make sure you're definitely eligible and that there is funding available in your local area.



3 Express an interest

Fill in an expression of interest (EOI) form and email it to RPA. Tell us about your project and how a grant will make it bigger and better.



4 Apply in full

If your EOI is accepted, you can make a full application. If this is successful, you'll get a funding agreement to sign.



5 Get to work

With your funding agreement signed, you can start work on your project.



6 Claim your money

After you've finished the work, you can claim your money.



Read the rest of this handbook to find out more, including our 'top tips for applicants' on page 30

About the RDPE Growth programme

Includes:

- How the government manages these grants
- Government guarantees about funding after the UK leaves the EU

About the RDPE Growth Programme

The RDPE Growth Programme provides funding for projects in England which create jobs and growth in the rural economy.

Under the RDPE Growth Programme, there are grants for:

- rural tourism infrastructure
- food processing
- business development

The grants are funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), which is part of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF).

This handbook is about RDPE Growth Programme grants for rural tourism infrastructure. It explains what the grants are for, who is eligible and how to apply.

To find information about the other grants, search 'RDPE Growth Programme' on GOV.UK.



Planning a project that will grow your business, create jobs or bring more money into the rural economy?

You might be able to apply for a grant to help you fund it.

You can only apply for one RDPE grant for your project and only in one LEP area.

RDPE includes RDPE Growth Programme, LEADER, Countryside Productivity, Farming Recovery Fund and Cumbria Countryside Access Fund.

How the government manages these grants

The Rural Payments Agency (RPA) delivers the grants, working with ESIF sub-committees in Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) areas.

RPA's role is to assess applications for grants, with advice from the ESIF sub-committees.

LEPs are partnerships between public bodies and businesses. Their role is to decide local priorities for the grants. Money should be directed to give the most benefit locally.

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (CloS) are defined by the EU as a 'Less Developed Region'. Applications from the CloS LEP area will be considered separately, but at the same time as applications from other LEP areas.

The total funding for these grants is limited. Therefore, your grant application will be in competition with others for the available funding and your application may not be successful.

Read pages 33 to 71 for the LEP areas that are offering these grants. Use the map on page 31 to find your LEP area.

Government guarantees about funding after the UK leaves the EU

The UK Government has guaranteed that any Rural Development Programme projects where funding has been agreed before the end of 2020 will be funded for their full lifetime. This applies in both a negotiated and a no-deal scenario. It will make sure funding is continued for these projects until they finish. This means that Defra can continue to agree and sign new projects after the UK leaves the EU during 2019 and 2020.

Please read the priorities for funding on page 17.

Deadlines: The RPA will agree a target end date with all successful applicants. The final date by which all projects must be finished, paid for and complete grant claims submitted is 30 September 2021.

About rural tourism infrastructure grants

Includes:

- Who can apply
- What the grants are for
- How much money you can apply for
- Examples of projects

About rural tourism infrastructure grants

An overview of the tourism infrastructure grants – who can apply, what the grants will fund and how much funding is available.

Who can apply

If the project is commercial and intended to make a profit, only small businesses and farmers who want to diversify can apply.

If the project is not expected to make a profit, a wide range of organisations can apply.

Read page 13 to check if your business is eligible.

What the grants are for

The grants will help fund the costs of capital expenditure on tourism infrastructure.

The aim is to support projects that will encourage more tourists to come, to stay longer and to spend more money in rural areas.

How much money you can apply for

The minimum grant is £20,000.

You won't automatically get a grant.

All applications are assessed to see how well they fit the priorities for funding and which projects provide best value for taxpayers' money.

Examples of projects

Here are some examples of the kinds of projects which may be eligible for a rural tourism infrastructure grant.

New access infrastructure



The local district council is investing in paths to connect up a number of existing footpaths, cycle ways and bridleways.

This will create a network of easily accessible circular routes of between 4 and 15 miles, which will make the area more attractive for walking and cycling.

Extending a local museum



A local heritage museum (which is free to enter) wants to build a second viewing gallery, so it can display more of its collection.

The new gallery will include a small area for a café. The new gallery and café mean that visitors will stay longer at the museum. The project will create 2 new full-time jobs.

Capital investment in visitor attractions



A business is building a new visitor attraction for families. This will add to the range of attractions already in the area.

It will make the area more attractive to tourists and increase the number of visitors.

Because the new visitor attraction is all-weather, it will help extend the tourist season in the area.

This means other tourism businesses, like restaurants and accommodation providers, will also benefit.

The project will create one full-time job and 4 seasonal jobs.

Who can apply

Includes:

- Check the size of your business
- What is a 'full-time equivalent' (FTE) employee
- Who can't apply

Who can apply

What type of organisation can apply depends on whether or not the project will be commercial.

These grants can fund a wide range of projects that provide products and services to tourists. Who can apply depends on whether or not the project is profit-making and commercially run.

All projects must be in a rural area:

Type of project	Examples (these are illustrations only)	Who can apply
Commercial, profit-making project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tourist attractions• Accommodation• Retail outlets• Food and drink outlets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small businesses, including social enterprises• Farmers wanting to diversify into tourism
Has some income to offset costs, but is not intended to make a profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small buildings for tourist information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rural businesses, including social enterprises• Farmers• Land-owners• People or groups representing rural communities• Charities• Public bodies
Generates no income	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free tourist attractions, for example local landmarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rural businesses, including social enterprises• Farmers• Land-owners• People or groups representing rural communities• Charities• Public bodies

Check the size of your business

The size of the business depends on the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) employees it has and its financial performance.

The table below shows what qualifies as a small or micro business.

Business Size	Number of FTE employees		Annual turnover or balance sheet total
Small	fewer than 50	and	€10m (about £8.5 million) or less
Micro	fewer than 10	and	€2m (about £1.7 million) or less

What is a 'full-time equivalent' (FTE) employee

Anyone who works 30 hours or more per week counts as 1 FTE employee. A person working 30 hours a week for 3 months of the year would be 0.25 FTE employee.

FTEs include business partners and directors. If a business partner or director works 30 hours or more per week they count as 1 FTE employee.

New businesses can also apply

If you have an idea, a business plan and potential private funding for your project, you can apply for a grant.

Is your business 'linked' to other businesses

If your business is linked to other businesses, this might mean you exceed the business size requirements and the funding limits.

The most common circumstances under which businesses are considered to be linked include:

- one business holds a majority of the shareholders' or members' voting rights in another business
- one business is entitled to appoint or remove a majority of the administrative, management or supervisory body of another
- a contract between the business, or a provision in the memorandum or articles of association of one of the businesses, enables one to exercise a dominant influence over the other
- one business is able, by agreement, to exercise sole control over a majority of shareholders' or members' voting rights in another

Who can't apply

The following are not eligible for the grants:

- Crown bodies
- projects that are carried out only to meet a legal requirement

**Not sure if you are eligible?
Contact RPA.**



03000 200 301



GPEnquiries@
rpa.gov.uk

4

Preparing an application

Includes:

- National priorities for funding
- Local priorities for funding
- How we assess applications
- EOI - what we look for
- Full application - what we look for

Preparing an application

RPA will assess all applications. We're looking for evidence of a sound business case and for projects that meet the priorities for funding.

We're looking for projects that best meet the national and local priorities for funding, and that are good value for taxpayers' money. If you can show this clearly in your application, you're more likely to get a grant.



National priorities for funding

Your project must meet two of the priorities below, or your application will be rejected. The more priorities your project meets, the more likely you are to get a grant.

Create jobs	Create at least 1 FTE job for every £30,000 of grant funding. Creates skilled jobs
Extend the tourism season	Attracts tourists outside the usual period of May to October
Develop tourist attractions and infrastructure	Creates or develops tourist attractions and infrastructure to increase the range of attractions available locally, encourage tourists to stay longer and increase their spend
Wider benefits	The project provides benefits to the wider tourism economy in the rural area

Local priorities for funding

Local priorities are set by the ESIF sub-committees. Check the LEP area directory on pages 33 to 71 to see the priorities for your LEP area.

Some tourist destinations have 'destination plans' or strategies for encouraging tourism locally. Your project will be prioritised if it fits with the objectives of the destination plan. The LEP directory will say if there is a destination plan in your local area.

How we assess applications

Application is in 2 stages. First, you must submit an 'expression of interest' (EOI) form. If we endorse your EOI, we will invite you to submit a full application.

We assess your application at both stages. Read 'How to apply' on page 26 for more information.

EOI – what we look for

We use the information on the EOI form to check that both the applicant and project are eligible.

Then we assess how well your project meets the national and local priorities for grants. To do this we look at question 30 of the EOI (the 'strategic fit') and score and rank it against other applications.

It will help your application if you explain your project clearly.

Tell us exactly what you're doing, why it's good for your business, how and where you're doing it and who will benefit from it.

Full application – what we look for

If you're invited to submit a full application, we'll ask for more information to further assess your project and your business. This table will give you an overview of what we assess.

Strategic fit	<p>How well the project meets the national and local priorities for funding.</p> <p>How the project will impact the environment.</p> <p>That the project does not disadvantage anybody in terms of characteristics such as ethnicity, disability, age and gender.</p>
Value for money	<p>How the project costs represent value for money.</p> <p>The amount of grant required to deliver the outcomes and outputs, including jobs.</p> <p>What difference grant funding will make, compared to what would happen without grant funding.</p>
Need and demand	<p>Why grant funding is required for the project.</p> <p>There is a clearly identified market need for the project.</p> <p>The impact the project has on other businesses, both positive and negative.</p>
Financial viability	<p>The current financial viability of your business.</p> <p>How the project may impact on your existing business operations.</p> <p>How you will fund the project until the grant is claimed.</p> <p>How the business will benefit from the project financially.</p>
Delivery and sustainability	<p>Whether the project will be delivered in budget and on time.</p> <p>That the right skills and resource are in place to deliver the project successfully.</p> <p>How project outputs and other benefits will be monitored and recorded.</p> <p>That risks to project delivery have been identified and how they will be mitigated.</p>

5

Funding and costs

Includes:

- How much funding is available
- Paying for the project
- Eligible costs
- Costs which are not eligible

Funding and costs

You can use grant funding to cover a certain percentage of some project costs – some costs are not eligible.

How much funding is available

The minimum grant is £20,000.
The maximum grant per project is €200,000 (approximately £175,000 at current exchange rates).

The grants can only fund a certain percentage of eligible costs and there is a maximum percentage that applies. You can use other public money to pay for eligible costs – but only up to that maximum percentage.

Above the maximum percentage, all the money you use to pay for eligible costs must be from private sources (like savings or a bank loan).

The maximum percentage of funding you can get depends on whether or not the project is commercially run and intended to make a profit, not the status of the applicant organisation.

Type of project	Maximum percentage
Commercial, profit-making project (such as a tourist attraction)	Up to 40%
Makes some income to offset costs but is not intended to make a profit (such as small buildings for tourist information)	Up to 80%
Generates no income (such as a new cycle path)	Up to 100%

Has your business already had some public funding?

When you apply, we'll ask you to tell us if you have had any funding from the EU or other public sources, and if it was awarded under 'industrial de minimis'.

If so, we might need to limit the amount of the funding you can get, to comply with the EU state aid industrial de minimis rules.

Hire-purchase or leased items must be paid off before you claim

If you buy an item for the project using lease purchase or hire-purchase, you must own this outright before you can claim any grant money towards it.

That means that, before you claim the grant, you must:

- pay all of the instalments
- show that the title has passed to you

Otherwise you will not be able to include these costs in your claim.

Paying for the project

Grants are paid in stages, in arrears. They can only be claimed after the work being claimed for is finished and has been paid for.

We expect you to make a maximum of 3 claims over the course of the project.

You must show that you have sufficient funds to pay for the project costs until you get the grant payments.

Do not start work, incur costs or place an order before your grant agreement has been signed.

This will potentially make your whole project ineligible.

Eligible costs

The grant can be used to pay for a percentage of the following costs:

- constructing or improving buildings
- buying new equipment and machinery

The following costs are also eligible, if they form part of a larger project being funded:

- architects, engineer or consultant fees for the project (as long as these don't add up to more than 15% of the project's total eligible costs)
- buying or developing a dedicated piece of computer software (but not an off-the-shelf piece of software like Microsoft Office)
- patents, licences, copyrights or trademarks
- energy-saving and resource efficiency equipment



Costs which are not eligible

The following are not eligible for the grants (this list is not exhaustive).

Costs specific to tourism:

- refurbishment only to retain the current star rating of tourist accommodation
- tourism brown signs
- hire costs (for example, covering equipment or temporary structures)
- costs of establishing the England Coast Path where these are part of the statutory obligation

General costs:

- any costs incurred before the project start date shown in the grant funding agreement
- contingency costs
- the cost of getting any permissions or consents, such as planning permission
- any items which you have already had EU or national funding for (or intend to get EU or national funding for)
- relocation costs – if the business needs to relocate in order to expand, it can only apply for funding for the cost of the expansion
- costs associated with the provision of housing
- marketing and promotion

Buildings, land and equipment costs:

- repairs and maintenance of existing buildings, equipment and machinery
- purchase of land, whether or not this land is built on
- like-for-like replacement of existing items (such as buildings, equipment and machinery)
- purchase of machinery or equipment that will not be on the asset register of the business 5 years after completion of the project
- the cost of moveable fittings – like soft furnishings, beds, tables, chairs, cutlery and crockery, curtains, televisions and audio equipment
- renewable heat and energy systems covered by the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) or Feed-In Tariffs (FITs)

Business running costs:

- salaries and running costs of the business
- in-kind contributions (this means the value of donated work or services) such as the cost of using your own labour, vehicle and office space
- recurring licence fees, subscriptions and service charges
- computers, software and printers used in the general running of the business, like processing orders or accounts
- mobile phones
- standard, non-specialised domestic vehicles, such as cars (including 4 X 4) and motorbikes
- road freight transport vehicles for hire or reward

Agricultural business costs:

- buildings, machinery and equipment used for growing and harvesting agricultural and horticultural products
- standard agricultural equipment and inputs like animals and crops
- the cost of agricultural production rights and payment entitlements
- developing or setting up agricultural businesses

Financial costs:

- bad debts
- advance payments
- insurance policy costs
- working capital
- financial charges, such as bank charges, fines and interest
- costs connected with a leasing contract, such as a lessor's margin, interest refinancing costs, overheads and insurance charges
- reclaimable VAT
- pension provision

To check if a cost is eligible call the Rural Payments Agency helpline on 03000 200 301 or email GPEnquiries@rpa.gov.uk

6

How to apply

Includes:

- The EOI form
- What happens after you submit an EOI form
- Full application
- If you are offered a grant
- Top tips for applicants

How to apply

What you need to do to begin your application, and an overview of the information you must provide.

Application is in 2 stages. First, you must submit an 'expression of interest' (EOI) form. If we endorse your EOI, we will invite you to submit a full application.

RPA will assess your application at both stages. At EOI stage, applications will be assessed as they are received. At full application stage, projects will be assessed in batches. Only the highest-scoring applications will be successful.

Deadline:

We must receive your EOI before midnight on 16 February 2020 – if we get it after this deadline, we will reject it.

The expression of interest (EOI) form

You can find the EOI form on GOV.UK – search 'RDPE Growth Programme EOI'.

On the EOI, you'll need to give us some information about your business, including:

- whether it's linked to any other businesses
- turnover and balance sheet total from the most recent financial accounts
- details of any previous public funding your business has had

You'll also need to tell us about your project:

- what the objectives are and what the outputs will be
- an overview of the costs
- important dates for the project
- how it fits with the local and national priorities for funding
- the market demand for your project and its impact on similar businesses

How to submit your form

Email your form to
growthapps@rpa.gov.uk

We can only accept forms that are:

- sent by email
- Microsoft Excel documents saved in the 1997-2003 XLS format

We cannot accept any other format – including PDF documents, scanned documents, hard copy printed applications or hand-written applications.

Email your EOI from the email address you specify at question 5 of the EOI form. If an agent sends the form on your behalf, that address must be copied into the email.



Provide an email address that you check regularly.

We will use the email address you put in section 5 of the form as our main way of contacting you.

What happens after you submit your EOI

After you submit the form, you'll get an automatic email to say we have received it. We will then assess your EOI and let you know whether or not you will be invited to submit a full application.

We aim to give you a decision on your EOI within 30 working days.

If an application is unsuccessful

If your EOI is unsuccessful, RPA will send you a letter with the reasons.

To find out how to complain against the decision, read the 'How to complain' section of the RPA complaints procedure page on GOV.UK.

Full application

If you're invited to submit a full application, we'll send you the relevant form and advice about how to fill this in.

The form asks for full details about you, your business and your project, including:

- final project costs
- supplier details
- key dates
- proposed project outputs

You'll need to send us:

- supporting documents appropriate to the project (such as market research, customer surveys, or industry reports)
- business accounts for last 3 financial years (unless you are a new business)
- relevant permissions and consents
- 3 quotes for each item to be purchased
- evidence that you can cover the project costs before claiming the grant in stages

There is potentially a lot of information, evidence and paperwork to collect. It can take 2 - 3 months for you to prepare your full application, possibly longer if you need planning permission.

You'll be given a named contact at RPA to support you and answer questions.

You'll also be invited to attend a workshop, where RPA will explain the application process in more detail and answer any initial questions you have.

Before you send us your full application, you'll need to be registered on RPA's [Rural Payments service](#) and have a Single Business Identifier (SBI) number.

We will assess Full Applications in three batches. Decisions on applications in each batch will be made at the same time. You will need to tell us on the EOI form which batch you want your full application to be part of.

We aim to give you a decision on your full application within 60 working days of receipt.

If you are offered a grant

If you are offered a grant, we'll send you a grant funding agreement for you to sign. This will set out the legal terms and conditions of the grant, including:

- the amount of the grant
- the outputs we've agreed for your project
- which suppliers you're using

If you need to change anything in the grant funding agreement over the course of the project, such as changing a supplier, you need to get written agreement from RPA first. If not, we could terminate your agreement and reclaim any grant we've already paid.

You'll get more information and help with this if you're offered a grant.

Top tips for applicants



Before you start your application, here are some important reminders...

Jobs + growth + rural

The main aim of the RDPE Growth Programme is to create jobs and growth in the rural economy. Tell us how your project will help do this.

Sell us your idea

Explain really clearly what your project does and how it will benefit the economy. It's hard for us to justify giving you a grant if we don't understand your project.

Show us what the funding will mean to the success of your project

We must invest public money carefully. We're looking for viable, growing businesses. If you can show us that your project is good value for money, and that you're planning to use the grant money to improve your project, you're more likely to get the grant.

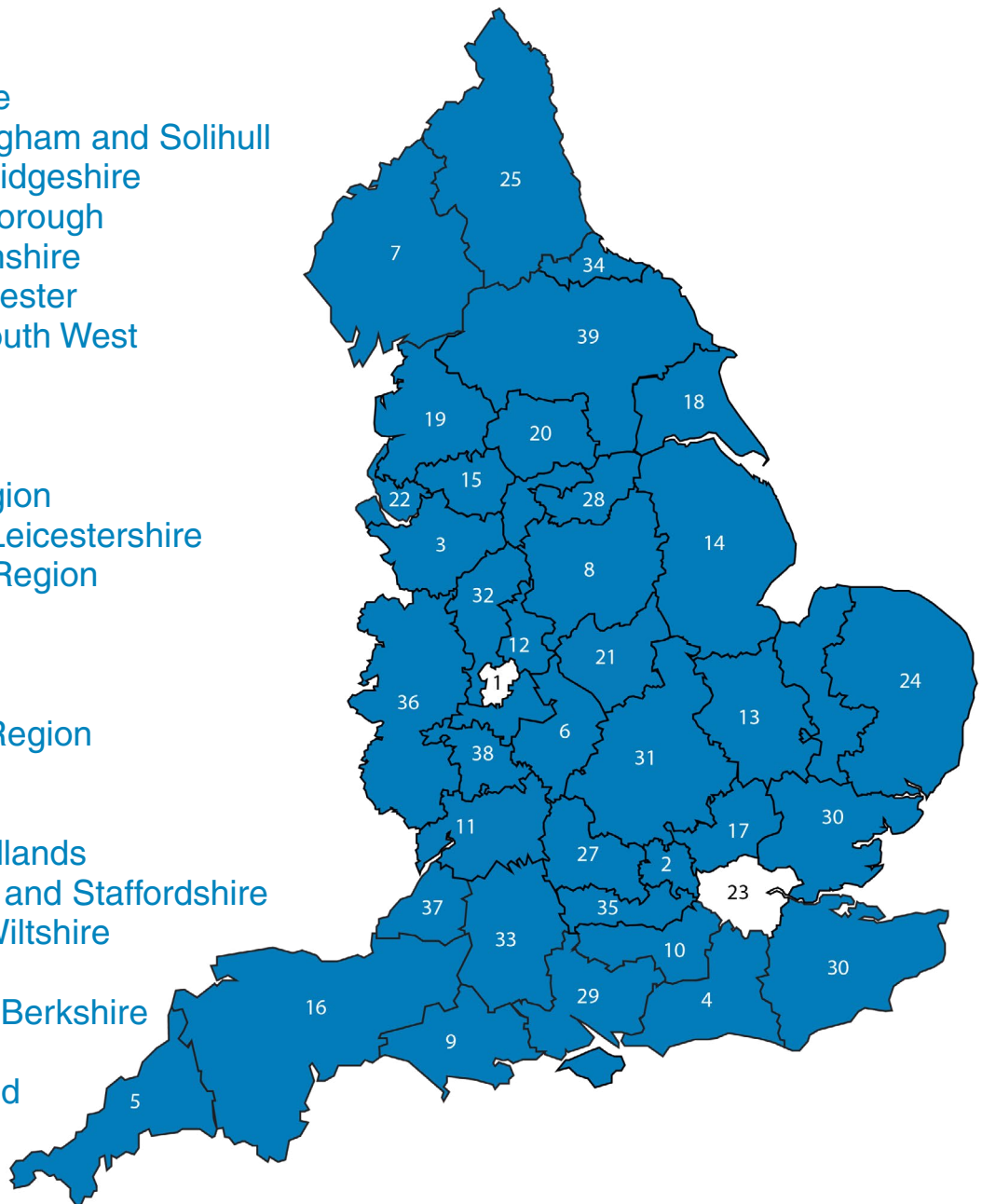
Do the market research

You have to show that there is real demand for what you want to do, or you're unlikely to get a grant.

LEP directory: grants in your area

LEPs offering rural tourism infrastructure grants:

- 2 Buckinghamshire Thames Valley
- 3 Cheshire and Warrington
- 4 Coast to Capital
- 5 Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly
- 6 Coventry and Warwickshire
- 7 Cumbria
- 8 D2N2
- 9 Dorset
- 10 Enterprise M3
- 11 Gloucestershire
- 12 Greater Birmingham and Solihull
- 13 Greater Cambridgeshire
Greater Peterborough
- 14 Greater Lincolnshire
- 15 Greater Manchester
- 16 Heart of the South West
- 17 Hertfordshire
- 18 Humber
- 19 Lancashire
- 20 Leeds City Region
- 21 Leicester and Leicestershire
- 22 Liverpool City Region
- 24 New Anglia
- 25 North East
- 27 Oxfordshire
- 28 Sheffield City Region
- 29 Solent
- 30 South East
- 31 South East Midlands
- 32 Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire
- 33 Swindon and Wiltshire
- 34 Tees Valley
- 35 Thames Valley Berkshire
- 36 The Marches
- 37 West of England
- 38 Worcestershire
- 39 York
North Yorkshire
East Riding



Grants in your area

Use this directory to find out about the priorities for funding and what funding is available in your LEP area.

How to use this directory

Check the map on the previous page to see if your LEP area is offering a rural tourism infrastructure grant

- Find the entry for your LEP area (these are listed alphabetically)
- Each entry has a link to the LEP area rural map. Use this to check if your project is in a rural area
- There is also a link to the LEP area Growth hub website. Growth hubs help businesses access local and national advice. This makes it easier for them to find the help they need to grow their businesses
- Read the whole entry carefully to find out:
 - minimum and maximum grants available
 - types of eligible projects and businesses
 - local priorities
- Read the documents at the links shown in the 'Further reading' section

Deadlines:

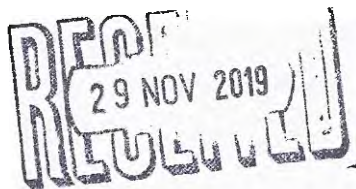
The RPA will agree a target end date with all successful applicants.

The final date by which all projects must be finished, paid for and complete grant claims submitted is 30 September 2021.

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire

LEP area	Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire	Call reference number	32RD19TO0008
LEP area Growth hub website	www.stokestaffsgrowthhub.co.uk		
LEP area rural map	Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire area rural map		
Minimum grant	£20,000	Maximum grant	€200,000, approx. £175,000
Local priorities			
<p>The tourism sector is important to the economy of the SSLEP area. The tourism priorities for the SSLEP area are shown in the destination management plan. These grants are for capital investments to develop and grow tourism in rural areas.</p> <p>Priority will be given to projects that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create new and develop existing visitor attractions in rural areas to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increasing the range of visitor activities - extend the tourism season beyond the usual period of May to October • increase the number and length of overnight stays • create and develop infrastructure building on the success of high profile sporting and leisure events as well as food and drink events • create skilled jobs in the applicant business <p>It is expected that new accommodation will aim to achieve at least 4 star or equivalent accreditation rating. Accommodation below this accreditation rating may be supported where there is evidenced market need and demand. These projects must show all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear need and market demand for the new accommodation • the number of new bed spaces to be created, and • provide benefits to other businesses and the economy in the local rural area 			
Further reading			
<p>The Staffordshire Excellence programme helps develop and improve the quality of the tourism experience across the LEP area. This may help when making an application.</p> <p>SSLEP Strategic Economic Plan April 2018</p> <p>SSLEP ESIF Strategy</p>			

Town Clerk
Stone Town Council
Borough Area Office
15 Station Road
STONE
Staffordshire
ST15 8JR



TEL 01491 573535
EMAIL hq@oss.org.uk
WEB www.oss.org.uk

20 November 2019

Dear Town Clerk

Defending commons, green spaces and paths

The society maintains a special legal fund to enable us to support our members fighting legal cases in defence of commons, green spaces and rights of way around the country. The fund, which was created through your generosity, has been exhausted because there are so many threats facing our precious spaces and paths.

We must now replenish the fund, and we ask your help to do so.

In the last couple of years we have backed some significant cases. We have supported the Moorside Fields Community Group in Lancaster who are fighting Lancashire County Council all the way to the supreme court, not only to save their precious, 13-hectare meadow from development, but also to establish an important legal precedent—that the holding of land by a council for educational use is not incompatible with its enjoyment by local people as a village green. The decision is imminent. We hope the local people win; they could not have fought this without us.

We part-funded a barrister for the Friends of Freeman's Wood, also in Lancaster, at the public inquiry into their application to register threatened open space as a green; the developers were also legally represented, so the friends needed a lawyer. And we have helped the Friends of Finsbury Park, on the edge of the City of London, fight the commercial exploitation of their peaceful green lung by the noisy annual Wireless Festival. Sadly, they lost in the appeal court and were refused leave to appeal to the supreme court—but it was a fight that had to be fought. And, of course, it cost money.

Continued



It is vital that we should support our members in fighting cases which, were it not for our help, they would have to abandon. When they ask for help, their application goes to the legal subcommittee of our trustees which considers it against set criteria. For example, we ask if the issue is of more than local significance? Is the chance of success more than 50 per cent? Does the case have local support? We are careful to spend the money wisely and always we seek to uphold the claims of communities against land-grabbers.

Please ensure that we can continue to back our members in their battles for our green spaces and paths by replenishing our legal fund.

Yours sincerely

Kate Ashbrook

Kate Ashbrook
General Secretary

PS: *We are pleased to accept donations to this appeal as follows:*

1. *Online at <https://www.oss.org.uk/how-you-can-help/appeals/>*
2. *By bank transfer to Account: 00100021 Sort Code: 20-39-53*
3. *By cheque in the post using the enclosed envelope.*

PPS: There are also cases which arise from our own initiative: these are funded separately. For instance, you generously backed our appeal to fight the Leigh Common case in the high court. Thanks to you and our legal team, the developers decided to back down before the case reached the court; they also paid our costs, so we did not spend the money we raised. That money has been saved and we shall use it to fight cases which we take on ourselves from the centre. That money is separate from the legal fund which is ring-fenced to support members' cases.

Thank you



YES, I should like to make a donation to the Open Spaces Society's 'Legal Fund' appeal

23067

Town Clerk

I enclose (please tick): £100 ☐ £75 ☐ £50 ☐ £25 ☐ £10 ☐ other ☐

Please make cheques payable to the Open Spaces Society and return this slip to us in the pre-paid envelope provided. You need not use a stamp, but if you do it will save us the cost of postage.

We are grateful for every donation we receive. We usually acknowledge receipt of donations, but some members have indicated that they would rather not receive an acknowledgement, enabling us to put that saving to good effect. Please tick if you would like to receive a receipt. ☐

Or donate online at <http://www.oss.org.uk/how-you-can-help/appeals/>.

GIFT AID

You can increase the value of your gift to the society, at no extra cost to yourself, by making your donation eligible for Gift Aid. **Gift aiding your donation will raise 25% more for the society's appeal.** For every pound you give, we can claim an extra 25 pence from HM Revenue & Customs helping your gift go further.

I would like Open Spaces Society to treat all donations I have made in the last 4 years, and those I make in the future, as Gift Aid donations until further notice. ☐

*I would like Open Spaces Society to treat **only** this donation as a Gift Aid donation* ☐

I have already completed a Gift Aid declaration for Open Spaces Society ☐

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that, if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Stone Town Council - Non-Cheque Payments

The table below lists non-cheque payments made by the Council in the period since the last report, for the Committee's information.

The table includes payments by direct debit, telephone banking and online banking. It excludes salary and related payments, payments from the Mayor's Charity, and transfers between the Council's bank accounts, which can be seen by any Member on request. All amounts exclude VAT.

Date	Reference	Supplier	Description	Amount	Month
01/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	Prism Solutions	Analogue Line	£46.69	Nov-19
04/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	Stafford Borough Council	Rates - FJC	£427.00	Nov-19
04/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	Stafford Borough Council	Rates - MKT	£114.00	Nov-19
04/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Current Electrical & Property Services	Marquees for Morruis dancers	£540.00	Nov-19
04/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	Stafford Borough Council	Rates - STN	£221.00	Nov-19
05/11/2019	Elec 19/032	Virgin Media Business	Telephone calls Oct 19	£52.07	Nov-19
05/11/2019	Elec 19/033	PC World Business	Ipad & pencil - new post	£497.46	Nov-19
05/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Stone Gazette Ltd	Advert - switch -on	£315.00	Nov-19
06/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	EE	Mobile caretaker - STN	£21.64	Nov-19
06/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	EE	Mobile caretaker - FJC	£21.64	Nov-19
06/11/2019	Elec 19/032	Veolia ES (UK) Ltd	Waste collection - Oct 19 - STN	£132.04	Nov-19
06/11/2019	Elec 19/032	Veolia ES (UK) Ltd	Waste collection - Oct 19 - FJC	£144.04	Nov-19
06/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Mr L Trigg	Reim for music	£28.49	Nov-19
07/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Mark Green	Card - 110th b'day	£2.92	Nov-19
07/11/2019	Elec 19/033	J G Fenn Ltd	Stationery	£151.16	Nov-19
07/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Mark Green	Flowers - 110th b'day	£25.00	Nov-19
07/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Home & Colour	Cable ties & silicon	£27.66	Nov-19
07/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	Open Spaces	Subscription 2020/21	£45.00	Nov-19
08/11/2019	Elec 19/033	J G Fenn Ltd	Stationery	£187.24	Nov-19
08/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Panda Press (Stone) Ltd	Rem Sun Service Sheet	£205.00	Nov-19
08/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Staffs Shoe Repair	4 x keys - allot	£14.40	Nov-19
08/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Angel Springs Ltd	Supplies/ maint water machine	£25.34	Nov-19
08/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Holly Addinson	Mouse & laptop sleeve	£27.49	Nov-19
08/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Mr L Trigg	USB stick - music	£12.00	Nov-19
08/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Trudy Williams	Raffle tkts, coffee & postage	£15.98	Nov-19
08/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Mrs C Parton	T bags for reception	£3.50	Nov-19
08/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Angel Springs Ltd	Supplies/ maint water machine	£12.42	Nov-19
08/11/2019	Elec 19/033	Angel Springs Ltd	Supplies/ maint water machine	£5.00	Nov-19
11/11/2019	Elec 19/034	The Secret Kitchen	4 Reception - Rem Sun 19	£540.00	Nov-19
12/11/2019	Elec 19/034	Virgin Media Business	Broadband Nov 2019	£50.00	Nov-19

Date	Reference	Supplier	Description	Amount	Month
12/11/2019	Elec 19/034	Florence Brass	Performance - 1st Sept 19	£150.00	Nov-19
12/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	British Gas	Electricity - FJC 24 Sept-23 Oct 19	£109.72	Nov-19
13/11/2019	Elec 19/034	M J Plant	Grounds maint - Oct 19	£1,409.00	Nov-19
13/11/2019	Elec 19/034	M J Plant	Repair flood damage	£192.50	Nov-19
13/11/2019	Elec 19/034	M J Plant	Maint - bus shelters	£495.00	Nov-19
18/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	Sage Pay Europe	Trans charges	£15.00	Nov-19
19/11/2019	Staffordshire Playing Fields	Staffordshire Playing Fields Association	Subscription 2019/ 20	£20.00	Nov-19
19/11/2019	British Telecom Plc	British Telecommunications PLC	Qtly rent of fire alarm line - STN	£100.50	Nov-19
19/11/2019	British Telecom Plc	British Telecommunications PLC	Qtly rent of fire alarm line - FJC	£100.50	Nov-19
19/11/2019	Elec 19/035	NPower Ltd	Final inv 61 High St Pillar	£42.51	Nov-19
19/11/2019	Elec 19/035	Society of Local Council Clerks	Clerk's Manual	£47.50	Nov-19
19/11/2019	Elec 19/035	Society of Local Council Clerks	Clerk's Manual delivery	£4.00	Nov-19
19/11/2019	Elec 19/035	NPower Ltd	Final inv 30 High St Pillar	£32.37	Nov-19
19/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	World Pay	Trans charges	£12.50	Nov-19
19/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	World Pay	Trans charges	£2.92	Nov-19
19/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	World Pay	Trans charges	£9.99	Nov-19
20/11/2019	Soc Local Council Clerks	Society of Local Council Clerks	Subscription 2019/ 20	£227.00	Nov-19
20/11/2019	PC World Bus	PC World Business	Printer	£369.99	Nov-19
20/11/2019	Assoc Local Council Clerks	Association of Local Council Clerks	Subscription 2019/ 20	£40.00	Nov-19
20/11/2019	PC World Bus	PC World Business	Ipad & pencil - new post	£497.46	Nov-19
22/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	British Gas	Gas-FJC - Oct 19	£264.41	Nov-19
22/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	British Gas	Gas -STN Oct 19	£199.53	Nov-19
22/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	British Gas	Elec - STN - Oct 19	£74.13	Nov-19
25/11/2019	Ms S L Lloyd	Miscellaneous	Act- Switch-On	£150.00	Nov-19
25/11/2019	Radio Comms	Radio Comms Ltd	Hire of radios - Switch-On	£80.00	Nov-19
25/11/2019	D/Dbt 19/011	Prism Solutions	ICT Provision	£696.22	Nov-19
25/11/2019	H Ashley	Miscellaneous	Act - switch-on	£50.00	Nov-19
25/11/2019	BOBB IN	BOBB IN	Black Arm Bands - Headstone	£128.00	Nov-19
25/11/2019	J&S Security	J & S Security Services	Security - Switch-On	£126.50	Nov-19
25/11/2019	Stafford Borough Council	Stafford Borough Council	Renewal of lottery registration	£20.00	Nov-19
26/11/2019	Current Electrical & Property S	Current Electrical & Property Services	Temporary power to stage & marquees - Switch-On	£550.00	Nov-19
26/11/2019	Steves Sound Systems	Steve's Sound Systems	PA syst - Rem Sun & Amn	£230.00	Nov-19
29/11/2019	NatWest	NatWest	Fank charges Nov 19	£55.41	Nov-19

The Stone Area Parish Liaison Group

Notes of the meeting held in St Michael's Suite, Frank Jordan Centre, Lichfield Street, Stone, on Wednesday 18 September 2019

PRESENT: Councillors: J. Davies (Stone Town Council) in the Chair, and B. Fletcher (Stone Rural Parish Council), B. Eyre (Yarnfield & Cold Meece Parish Council), Mrs S. Hughes (Yarnfield & Cold Meece Parish Council), Mrs S. Parkin (Yarnfield & Cold Meece Parish Council) and Mrs R. Langford (Eccleshall Parish Council)

Also:

Mr L. Trigg (Town Clerk to Stone Town Council)

Trudy Williams (Assistant Clerk to Stone Town Council)

Councillor Davies welcomed everyone to the meeting.

L20/012 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor R. Harris (Sandon & Burston Parish Council) and Mr J. Fraser (Yarnfield & Cold Meece Parish Council).

L20/013 Declarations of Interest

None received.

L20/014 Notes of the previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 19 June 2019 were agreed as a true record.

Councillor Mrs Hughes said (following comments made under L20/010) that she had visited Stone Leisure Centre and can confirm that there is no pool for toddlers, and the public viewing area to the swimming pool consists of just 14 seats with four or five coffee tables forming part of the café. It was agreed that this provision was inadequate.

L20/015 Purpose of the Group

The Chairman asked whether everyone present had had an opportunity to view the document stating the 'Purpose of the Group' which had been circulated with the agenda.

Members agreed with its content but asked whether a line should be included stating that a purpose of the group is to improve the effectiveness of parish councils by sharing information and ideas and joining forces where appropriate to provide a more persuasive representation.

The Chairman advised that this purpose was implied but there are constitutional issues to consider as the group cannot bind any decisions

(which have to go back to individual councils). The Town Clerk advised that the statement of purpose could include a reference to member Council's being 'better together'.

It was agreed that the Statement of Purpose be amended to include this adjustment.

It was suggested that forging relationships that enable working effectively together (alongside the work of individual parish councils) may be an appropriate way to describe the Group's purpose. Meeting people from other parishes and learning how things are done improves effectiveness and promotes cross fertilisation of ideas.

It was stated that one fundamental issue with the group is its inability to represent the views of member councils properly as not all parishes are represented at the meetings. It was acknowledged that the Liaison Group cannot speak on behalf of parishes who are not present. A good form of words is needed to avoid any suggestion that the group is representing parish councils inappropriately.

A discussion took place about how the group could be promoted amongst councils on the invitation list. It was suggested they could be asked to volunteer their views on a particular topic of interest (as well as the Group share what parishes present at the meeting are thinking). The Chairman offered to send a covering letter to the Chairmen (when the minutes are issued) saying the group would appreciate their input. If people are unable to attend, Members understand, but would like to ask: what do you think of about these issues?

A window of opportunity exists to ask them to discuss the Group at their next parish council meeting and to suggest they have an agenda item about attending a future meeting. Information can be shared between meetings and there is an opportunity to meet counterparts.

The membership of the group was explored as originally the invitee list consisted of everyone that touched Stone Rural and Eccleshall boundaries.

It was decided that a wider line should be drawn around Fradswell, Gayton, Salt and Enson, Marston, Whitgreave, Eccleshall and Standon. The following parish councils would therefore be added to the invitation list:

Fradswell, Milwich, Standon and Gayton.

L20/016 Update on Neighbourhood Plans

Each parish/town council representative updated the Group on progress with their Neighbourhood Plans.

Eccleshall

Councillor Mrs Langford shared Eccleshall Parish Council's experiences with its adopted Neighbourhood Plan. The Plan doesn't mirror the parish boundary. There has been a number of challenges and battles, which after speaking with other parishes she has found to be commonplace.

Councillor Mrs Langford said Staffordshire County Council and Stafford Borough Council have to follow Government instruction. Neighbourhood Plans will no longer prevail if there are changes to the law and the Local Plan Review may have an impact on Neighbourhood Plans. Any amendments are likely to be very costly. Eccleshall has encountered pressure from developers who have tried to have the Plan amended.

Eccleshall Parish Council had to go back to consultation again when it was preparing its Plan. It had to revise the whole document as one line was not right. This was costly and caused significant delays.

Councillor Mrs Langford said that excellent skilled people had led the survey and it was very important to have good people to help you through.

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council are at the start of the process for producing a Neighbourhood Plan and have appointed planning consultants, Urban Vision.

Stone Town Council

The Town Clerk advised the Group that he had received the report from the Independent Examiner which will be considered by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group next week. He said if all suggested changes in the report are made, the Plan should be ready to go to referendum. There are one or two big issues mostly around open spaces. There were originally more than 50 open spaces in the draft Plan but these have been halved in number. The Examiner has said they do not meet the criteria to be defined as open green space and should be listed as green infrastructure. The two most controversial sites are Blackies Lane (Aston Lodge) and Tilling Drive (development of a residential home) and the Inspector has supported the view of Stafford Borough on both.

The Town Council applied to the Secretary of state to ask him to call the Tilling Drive planning application in but the decision has been issued today that he will not call it in, leaving Stafford Borough Council free to decide its outcome.

The Town Clerk said the cost of the process was less than had been anticipated at the start. The costs have been £20,000 with a £9,000 grant (the maximum value available). The expected cost had been between £25,000 and £40,000.

The Chairman offered parishes an opportunity to speak to representatives of Stone Town Council, if they are interested in sharing experiences.

Hilderstone Parish Council

The parish council has no plans to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

Stone Rural Parish Council

The parish council has no plans to develop a Neighbourhood Plan.

The differences between open green spaces and green infrastructure (and the protection they afford), were discussed.

L20/017 Planning Applications Processing

The Town Clerk confirmed that a letter expressing concerns about the Borough Council's planning consultation process (supported by three members of the Liaison Group), had been forwarded to Stafford Borough Council.

The Chairman said that if other members of the group would like to send their views to Stafford Borough Council in parallel, this would be appreciated.

L20/018 Joint Calendar of Events

Stone Town Council's Calendar of Events was circulated, and details of the following upcoming and new events were shared:

- A Classic car event will be held in Stone High Street this coming Saturday.
- Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council will be holding a VE Day commemoration and plans are at an early stage, with the involvement of local groups.
- A VE 75 Street party will be held on Bank Holiday Friday in Stone.
- A Sunday commemorative church service will be held at St Michael & St Wulfad.
- Eccleshall Parish Council is planning a VE Day Commemoration.
- A VJ Day celebration/commemoration will be considered in Stone after VE day.
- St Saviours Christmas fete.

The Chairman asked Liaison Group members to forward details of their events for inclusion in the joint calendar.

L20/019 Ongoing Items of Interest

a. Leisure and Recreation

Stone Leisure Centre – disappointment was expressed at the beginning of the meeting that the leisure centre does not have a pool for toddlers or an adequate public viewing area.

Play areas In Eccleshall – two new play areas have been provided by developers Bovis Homes and Taylor Wimpey. Unfortunately there have been issues with both.

The Taylor Wimpey play area (which is finished) has a culvert running nearby which is attracting children who have been playing in it when it is full of water. They have also been using it as a ramp. These

activities are dangerous and pose health and safety issues for which complaints have been made to Stafford Borough Council. No one appears to be taking responsibility and the nearby homeowners had been told they were responsible for the children.

The opening of the Bovis Homes play area has been delayed significantly.

Again in Eccleshall, there has been a situation where a proposal was submitted for another play area to be built outside the settlement area and a petition was submitted against taking away the green space.

Ashdale Park in Yarnfield – a play area should have been provided but it didn't materialise. Advice was given that these facilities have to be requested and a commitment given to the project (by the developer) at an early stage.

Crown Wharf – The theatre and pub are now well under development. The Town Councillors are particularly interested in the old fire station which will be converted into a heritage centre. Work is moving on at a pace and the heritage centre (which is the third stage of the development) should be opened in the latter part of next year. The Town Council is working in partnership with Joules Brewery and looking to build an extension on the side which will be used as a café/meeting area. Joules who are very much community minded are letting the Town Council have the building for a peppercorn rent.

The Chairman said the development was Joules flagship project, giving the brewery an opportunity to promote Joules brand as well as provide a fantastic new facility in the town.

It is an exciting project that is long overdue and has caught the imagination of the town. 35,000 people come into the town on the canal each year and it is a facility they are likely to be interested in using. If people are attracted to the town, they are likely to visit other nearby towns and villages in the locality which is good for everyone.

There will be onsite parking facilities of a reasonable number and there is plenty of parking space nearby requiring only a short walk. Use of the heritage centre and the theatre should not coincide and demand for parking from clientele shouldn't be too great.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council had made an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund but it was rejected on the grounds that the scheme did not meet their criteria despite the project building a heritage centre and pulling together the heritage of the town. The project has proven challenging in respect of securing grant funding, always just missing the necessary criteria.

It was suggested that an application for grant aid be made to the Princes Trust.

Smart Parking – The Chairman advised that the problems with Smart

Parking's management regime (at the rear of B and M) were still ongoing. Councillor Davies asked that if anyone knew of people receiving parking enforcement notices in alleged unfair circumstances, to let him know as he is building a dossier of cases.

Eccleshall is in need of additional parking facilities.

b. Commercial and Retail Activity

The Chairman updated the Group on commercial and retail activity in Stone.

The Specsavers store in the High Street is now open.

The Town Clerk informed the Group about a local Stafford paper that had reported how successful Stafford town centre currently is on the basis that it hadn't deteriorated/got worse (in respect of empty shops) at the same rate (as an average) as other parts of the country.

The Chairman said the Town Council is conscious of the pressures on retail businesses in the town. The Crown Wharf Development and the many and varied events being held in the High Street are helping to counteract the effects of that. Unfortunately there will never be a return to the range of shops that used to be in the High Street but there are new types of shops. There is always something happening in respect of movement and shops are not sitting empty. Only a few units have been closed longer term so the town is reasonably happy.

c. HS2

Publicity about HS2 has been very quiet recently but it looks that Phase 2a will continue. It was said that the company is still spending lots of money in this area ensuring that all is going ahead.

The joint council petition will go to the House of Lords Select Committee once reconvened. It was not known whether members had yet been appointed.

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council has met with HS2 Company representatives and is now a formal consultee. The Council were offered trees for screening which Members believe is a disproportionate measure. One of the representatives was helpful and there was a suggestion that there may be a mis match between the information that had been given about the scheme, and reality.

d. Devolution – Sharing of Contractors/Equipment

Sandon and Burston Parish Council who has been taking the lead on devolution of services was not represented at this meeting.

The Town Clerk reported that the issue has affected Stone Town Council in as much as some of the grass verges are no longer being maintained by Staffordshire County Council and their overgrown

condition is becoming noticeable. Enquiries have been made to establish which areas will be maintained in the future.

Eccleshall Parish Council has a Traffic Committee which meets with Highways representatives to talk about highway issues in the parish. The meetings have proven useful for sharing information and provide an opportunity to supply a list of defects. Officers will indicate which jobs they can and cannot take on, and every so often there is a breakthrough.

From its engagement exercise Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council has five high priority action areas and one of these is traffic, for which a councillor is taking the lead.

The traffic congestion caused by the splitter island in Stone was discussed and its effects were likened to a permanently broken down truck. It was considered to be a very poor decision to install the splitter island. On Farmers' Market days (and during rush hour) it is very difficult to exit Morrisons Supermarket car park.

The thought of getting caught in the traffic there is sure to put people off coming into town.

Questions were raised about whether more parking spaces were needed for people coming in to town and asked about Westbridge Park and others. Now that the free car park has gone, people are parking on the street (Newcastle Road from Trent Road into town) which is hazardous.

Eccleshall Parish Council carried out an exercise where it has identified spaces that might be available for people to park in during the day. For example, on the premises of the old police station and bank. They are trying to look creatively at the issue of long stay parking.

The Town Council said the old Stone police station car park used to be made available for Christmas shoppers but was in the process of being sold. He said generally speaking there is enough parking in Stone, but it is not free.

Farmers' Market – Councillor Mrs Hughes said she considers the market dangerous from a pedestrian point of view as she had nearly fallen twice. The space at the back of the stalls is limited and shops signs cannot be seen when pedestrians are walking in such close proximity.

The Borough Council run the Farmers Market and shops could be asked to take in their signs in on these days. The Group were advised that the County issue a document to shopkeepers explaining the rules on the positioning of signage and this should be enforced where necessary.

The Staffordshire County Council website, with resources for local councils to find out about their options for keeping areas looking

good, can be accessed at: <http://www.highwaysyourway.info/>

L20/020 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Wednesday 15 January 2020 at 3pm, in St Michael's Suite at the Frank Jordan Centre, Stone.

Apologies were given in advance by Councillor Mrs Hughes who will not be available to attend the meeting.