



Town Clerk

Les Trigg

Tel: 01785 619740

Email: clerk@stonetowncouncil.gov.uk

15 Station Road
Stone
ST15 8JP

8 July 2024

Dear Councillor,

A meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT SUB COMMITTEE** will be held in the **Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone**, on **TUESDAY 16 JULY 2024 at 7:05pm**, or on the rising of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee, if later.

The agenda is set out below and I trust you will be able to attend.

Les Trigg
Town Clerk

Councillors: R. Townsend (Chairman), T. Kelt (Vice Chairman), J. Battrick, A. Burgess, B. Kenney, J. Metters, J. Powell, N. Powell and C. Thornicroft.

AGENDA

1. **To receive apologies for absence**
2. **Declarations of Interest**
3. **Requests for Dispensations**
4. **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.

5. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment Sub-Committee held on 19 March 2024, Minute No's ENV24/037 – ENV24/044 (attached)

6. **Environment Sub-Committee Works Update**

To receive an update on the work being undertaken by the Council's Grounds Maintenance contractor (update attached) and to consider any variations required.

7. **Crown Meadow Update**

- i) To receive the report from the Chairman related to Hedgerows and Amphitheatre Trees (attached).
- ii) To receive a verbal update from the Chairman.

8. **Reports of Working Groups**

- Environmental Working Group (Co-ordinator: Councillor R. Townsend)

9. **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.

10. **Allotment Competition**

To consider the appointment of a new Allotment Competition judge.

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

Members of the public are welcome to attend the Environment Sub-Committee Meeting as observers and/or to make representations to the committee in accordance with the Council's scheme of public participation. Details of this scheme are displayed on the Town Council's noticeboards and website.

The Council Chamber is accessed from the rear of the building.

Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 19 March 2024

PRESENT: Councillor R. Townsend in the Chair and
Councillors: J. Davies, T. Kelt and J. Metters

Officers: L. Trigg, R. Edwards and T. Williams

By Chairman's Invitation: J. Hood

ABSENT: Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Burgess, K. Dawson, B. Kenney, R. Kenney, J. Powell
and N. Powell

ENV24/037 Apologies

Councillors: J. Battrick, K. Dawson, B. Kenney, R. Kenney, J. Powell and N. Powell

ENV24/038 Declarations of Interest

None received.

ENV24/039 Request for Dispensations

None received.

ENV24/040 Representations from Members of the Public

None

ENV24/041 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on 16 January 2024 (Minute Numbers ENV24/030 – ENV24/036), were approved as a correct record.

ENV24/042 Environmental Sub-Committee Works Update

The Chairman drew the Sub-Committees attention to the Works Update which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting. He provided an update on the following items:

Meeting with Grounds Maintenance Contractor

A meeting took place in March between the Grounds Maintenance Contractor, Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk.

The Grounds Maintenance Contractor has been seriously hampered by the wet weather and poor ground conditions but was aware of the jobs the Town Council were requiring.

Hedgerow

The ground was currently too wet to commence planting of the new hedgerow.

Climate

Councillor Hood drew attention to the effects of recent flooding and ground saturation on Crown Meadow, in particular that the pathway crossing the field has frequently been underwater. The Chairman added that the submerged pathway was causing walkers to circumnavigate the flooding which is causing damage and mud.

The Sub-Committee expressed concern about the effects of the growing wet weather conditions on Crown Meadow and the need to consider how to manage increasingly saturated ground and its effects in the future. It was acknowledged that thought needed to be given to developing a contingency plan for the effects of flooding.

Drug Paraphernalia

Councillor Mrs Hood informed the Sub-Committee about her concerning find of drug paraphernalia when accompanying a group of school children to Crown Meadow to litter pick this week. The debris was located around the amphitheatre bench which was noted.

ENV24/043 Crown Meadow Update

The Chairman provided an update on Crown Meadow:

Crown Meadow Volunteers

Volunteers met for the first time after delays caused by prolonged wet weather conditions. Five Councillors joined forces (two weeks ago) for a couple of hours to litter pick and remove fly tipped debris. The removal of fly tipped debris was a heavier duty job and there was still more to do.

The Chairman thanked those who attended the session for their support and said that more volunteer sessions will be organised for litter picking and grounds maintenance in collaboration with the council's contractor.

Publicity and Information Sharing

The need had been identified to improve communication and awareness of Crown Meadow, the work done there and how the town's money had been spent.

The Chairman said that he had recruited the services of Dr David Emley, a renowned naturalist and photographer, who had volunteered his time to report on and photograph flora, fauna and anything related to the natural environment on Crown Meadow. The material he produces will be used to add content and interest to the Town Council's website, postings on the Town Council's Facebook page and information releases. The Chairman noted that work on this will progress with the office at a manageable pace and with the limited human resources in mind.

ENV24/044 Reports of Working Groups

Environmental Working Group

The Chairman invited Councillor Kelt to address the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that he had attended a meeting of the Stafford Board Community Panel on 5 February 2024. The subjects under discussion were:

- Sustainability Stafford (a new event to be held as part of the Big Green Week from 8 to 16 June, highlighting Community Council actions to address the Borough's Climate Change and Green Recovery targets)
- Nature Recovery Strategy (which is being developed by Stafford Borough Council's Ecologist. All District and Parish Councils along with the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust will be involved in this strategy).
- Funding from last year's Biodiversity Net Gain Award (£250,000 is available this financial year to support the development).
- Mowing Regime Bee Friendly Status (which will be driven across the Borough).
- Local Energy Production (involving possible installation of solar panels at scale on large roofs).
- Repair Cafes (which continue to operate).

The next meeting will be held on 25 March 2024.

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that he had also attended the Stafford and Stoke on Trent COP – Celebration of the Possible on 15 March 2024.

This was the first event of the group which was run by the Globe Group (related to the Climate Expo). The group brings together various organisations interested in climate and environmental action and solution providers. The event introduced the concept of 'donut economics' which was interesting as a macro concept.

Councillor Kelt said he had met many contacts including someone who was working with Stone schools on environmental matters (more on a therapy

basis). This was interesting given the Town Council's contact with schools and not getting very much interest in response.

The Chairman suggested the Sub-Committee discuss whether any of these things could be supported and used by the Town Council.

Councillor Kelt said that he would consider whether there were, although he believed the higher tiers of local government would take forward the work.

Chairman

Stone Town Council - Environment Sub

Dept	Job Description	Details	Current Status	Approved Budget	Est Date
Allotments	Asbestos Removal	Remove and dispose of asbestos. Asbestos survey confirmed issues as low risk and requires monitoring.	MP has removed asbesto pile from plot 2A and stacked in a layby on the site. MP will add to the pile as he gradually clears asbestos items from other plots. MP will inform us when finished, and we will then obtain a quote to have asbestos professionally removed by a specialist. Raised borders on plot 13 to be dug out and replaced with sleepers as budget allows - MP is liasing with the plot holder on this, as they need to agree to the work.	1825	Work commenced Mar '24
Crown Meadow	Wooden footbridge.	Cleaning and re-treating wood.	MP confirms will be completed by June.	525	Jun-24
Crown Meadow	Scrape 1. Grasses cut back	Cut back grasses to encourage new growth and to allow other species to grow. Cut back a third of the area on a three year rotation. Strim and remove. Volunteers can assist if required.	Cut scheduled for 2023 not possible due to late flowering, floods and waterlogged ground. MP will aim to make new attempt in Autumn 2024 and before 31/12/24.	1000	Oct -Dec 2024
Crown Meadow	Scrape 1 willow saplings	Removal of invasive willow saplings. The saplings need to be uprooted using a digger and disposed of or offered to Bill Waller/SBC for replanting at another site	Some saplings were successfully removed in Dec 23 by MP with digger aided by Staffs Wildlife Trust volunteers. MP scheduled Mar 24 but was unable due to flooding. Flooding and waterlogged ground has made this impossible so far in 2024. Subject to conditions, MP aims to do this later in the year. Possible collaboration with Staffs Wildlife agan.	500	Sept -Dec 2024
Grounds Maint	Walton Roundabout pruning and re-planting	Cut back/prune existng shrubs & ivy to promote new growth. Insert new shrubs where required.	Has been rolled over from 2022/23. MP has now done some cutting back in Spring 2024. Remaining budget will be used for further cut back and planting new shrubs later in 2024	600	Sept to Dec 2024

Grounds Maint	Town borders pruning and re-planting	Cut back/prune existing shrubs & trees to promote new growth. Insert new shrubs where required.	Time sensitive. Has been rolled over from 2022/23. MP has now done some cutting back in Spring 2024. Remaining budget will be used for further cut back and planting new shrubs later in 2024	600	Sept -Dec 24
Grounds Maint	Re-install Lock Gate	Replace damage lock gate on Walton Roundabout	Canals Trust to source lockgate or MP to manufacture. Agreed that MP will make if Canals trust does not supply soon.	400	Before Dec 2024
Environmental Initiatives	New hedgerow	Mixed native species sourced by MP. To follow the fence line from the corner of the fence to Angler's Car Park.	Planned for Winter 2023 but flooding prevented planting. Ground has been persistently flooded and waterlogged so far this year. A proposal to put this project on hold has been put forward to the Env Sub Comm.	1400	Mar-May 24 /Autumn 24
Environmental Initiatives	Balance of carry over			1190	
Crown Meadow	Repairs and Improvements to Angler's Carpark	Reposition and replace the fence and resite the display board to increase the width of the entrance. Excavate the embankment, remove growth on Ampitheatre side. Resurface Carpark with crushed concrete and limestone.	MP will complete this project when he has a two day window in his diary and the conditions underfoot are dry.	3100	By Dec 2024
Crown Meadow Volunteers	Restoration of Scrape 2	Excavating Scrape 2 area to remove willow saplings, other overly dominant plants and some of the silt.	The scrape will need to be relatively dry in order for MP to commence work. MP to advise council office when work is scheduled so that notices can be published about what is happening. Timing is sensitive to protect plant, insect and animal species.	2800	Late Summer /early Aut 24

Environment Sub-Committee 16th July 2024

Crown Meadow Update - Report of Chairman

Problems with the New Hedgerow at Crown Meadow

Native species hedgerow saplings were planted in winter 2022 as the start of a project to create a green screen and wildlife habitat on the south side of Crown Meadow.

It is apparent the saplings are struggling to thrive or survive. Most of the hedgerow has been underwater or waterlogged for much of the last 8 months. There has been a lot of rainfall with very few periods of dry weather. Crown Meadow has been regularly flooded, which of course it is supposed to.



There are signs that a lot of the saplings are dead or failing to thrive. It is noticeable that the saplings planted on higher ground, closer to the road, are doing better as these have not been underwater. All the saplings are somewhat overwhelmed by thick grass and nettles.

The area of land around the hedgerow appears to have sunk slightly. As a result, it is flooding more frequently and retaining the water for longer periods.

Due to the changing landscape and weather events, it is possible that this part of Crown Meadow will continue to have long periods of wet and flood. The hedgerow may not survive.

You will be aware that we have £1560 of budget set aside for a further 80 metres of new hedgerow connecting the struggling hedgerow to the Angler's Car Park. This stretch of land is at a similar low level as the struggling hedgerow. It is heavily grown with grasses and flowers. Trees on this section have died, which this report addresses next.

Given that the existing new hedgerow is struggling I suggest that the plan for planting more hedgerow is put on hold.



(throughout page) Struggling saplings and whips. Dead whips. Gaps in hedgerow. July 2024



Struggling hawthorn saplings. July 2024



Saplings on higher ground doing better but affected by grass & nettles. July 2024

Problems with Dying Trees on Crown Meadow

There is evidence of some trees being dead or dying on Crown Meadow and the amphitheatre area.

Last month our contractor had to remove a large cherry tree by the amphitheatre that had died. Two more large cherry trees in the same area are also showing signs of stress with very few leaves on them and some broken branches. The cause is unknown, it could be disease or old age.

In Crown Meadow itself four trees along the fence line where the new hedgerow would be planted are dead or dying. Also, two small trees in scrape 1 are dead. The cause is unknown, but it is quite likely because the roots have been waterlogged for months.



Dead and dying trees on the fence line across to Anglers car park. July 2024.



Cherry trees in the amphitheatre area. Lacking leaves. July 2024.

This evidence of stressed or dying trees and the struggling hedgerow prompts a few issues for this Sub-Committee to consider that also have budgetary implications:

The dying trees on the amphitheatre will need to be felled for reasons of safety.

The dying trees on the fence line perhaps do not need to be felled but may indicate that this is not a good place to plant more hedgerow.

I propose that we put on hold the plan to plant the new 80 metres of hedgerow and that we seek approval to use the budget for another project that offers similar benefits to the natural and physical environment of Crown Meadow.

This revised proposal could include removing the dying cherry trees and planting new specimen trees in suitable locations. It could also include planting hedgerow/bushes on the higher ground of Crown Meadow and in the amphitheatre area that are native species and recommended for biodiversity.

If the proposal to cancel the 80 metre hedgerow and to use the budget for a similar but more secure project is accepted, then we can make a more detailed proposal for best use of the budget.

Cllr Robert Townsend

Chair of Environment Sub Committee

7th July 2024