

Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 1 October 2024

PRESENT: Councillor R. Kenney in the Chair, and
Councillors: A. Best, J. Davies, L. Davies, K. Dawson, I. Fordham, J. Hood, T. Kelt,
B. Kenney, P. Leason, J. Metters and C. Thornicroft

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

ABSENT: Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Burgess, A. Mottershead, J. Powell, N. Powell and
R. Townsend

GP25/054 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: J. Battrick, A. Mottershead,
N. Powell and R. Townsend.

Where a reason for absence is given, this reason was approved for the purposes of
Section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.

GP25/055 Declarations of Interest

None

GP25/056 Requests for Dispensations

None

GP25/057 To receive the report of the County Councillors

County Councillor Jill Hood

The Chairman invited Councillor Hood to address the Committee.

Road Resurfacing and Pothole Repairs

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that she had been contacted by several
residents asking to know the reason Staffordshire County Council were resurfacing
some roads when work didn't appear to be needed and many potholes in other
areas of the town were badly in need of repair.

Councillor Hood said that programmed resurfacing works was organised to take
place on an 11-to-15-year cycle, irrespective of the condition of the road, as a way
of managing the network and hopefully ensuring it will last until the next
resurfacing programme. In contrast, repairs to pothole and road defects
depended on members of the public reporting them to the County. She said there
had been a lot of complaints about the road surface in Mount Street which was in
a bad way.

* 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.

Endometriosis in Women

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that the County Council had been working on a paper about endometriosis, a condition suffered by females where tissue normally covering the inside of the uterus, grows outside (in areas such as the ovaries, fallopian tubes, intestines, bladder and bowel) causing pelvic pain and heavy bleeding.

The County has been working with agencies of the NHS to highlight the problem women are having in receiving late diagnoses (which is taking on average eight years and ten months) and to try to understand how women can manage their symptoms in the workplace.

Councillor Hood said that she would distribute the paper to Town Councillors when it became available.

High Street Bollards

Councillor Hood said she was thrilled the bollards at the top of the High Street were now being installed on Saturdays which was making a difference to the safety of pedestrians in the town. She said she was hopeful the bollards would soon be installed routinely on Sundays as well.

County Councillor I. Parry

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

GP25/058 To receive the report of Borough Councillors

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee but there was no report presently.

GP25/059 Representations from Members of the Public

None

GP25/060 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 6 August 2024 (Minute Numbers GP25/039 – GP25/053), be approved as a correct record.

GP25/061 Minutes of Sub-Committees

- a) Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee held on 17 September 2024 (Minute Numbers TTP25/009 – TTP25/015), that the draft minutes be noted.
- b) Environment Sub-Committee held on 17 September 2024 (Minute Numbers ENV25/011 – ENV25/018), that the draft minutes be noted.
- c) Estates Sub-Committee held on 17 September 2024 (Minute Numbers EST25/001 – EST25/008), that the draft minutes be noted.

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GP25/062 Financial Regulations

The Committee considered new model financial regulations recently published by NALC for town and parish councils which were proposed by NALC for adoption following adjustments to accommodate local needs. A copy of the model financial regulations had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that after undertaking an initial review of the financial regulations, which seemed to be primarily aimed at smaller parish councils, he recommended that consideration of any changes to the Council's current Financial Regulations be deferred until February/March 2025 when the annual review of both Financial Regulations and Standing Orders would normally take place.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council adopts the recommendation of the Town Clerk to defer consideration of any changes to financial regulations until February/March 2025.

GP25/063 Health & Safety Audit

The Committee considered the Town Council's updated Health and Safety Policy and Handbook prepared by health and safety consultants. Both documents had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the Town Council employed health and safety consultants to provide advice and represent the Council on any health and safety issues that may arise.

RESOLVED: That the Committee accepts the updated Health and Safety Policy and Handbook without amendment.

GP25/064 Grievance Procedure

The Committee considered the Town Council's updated Grievance Procedure which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that from October 2024, employers will be under a new statutory duty to take "reasonable steps" to prevent sexual harassment within the workplace. One of these steps is to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to deal with any allegations of sexual harassment.

Following guidance received from the Staffordshire Parish Council's Association regarding what a sexual harassment policy/procedure needed to contain, the Council's Grievance Procedure had been updated to meet the needs of the new statutory duty.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the updated Grievance Procedure also provided a better balance for the protection of the person accused as well as the accuser and set out the lines of reporting in the event of an issue.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council's updated Grievance Procedure is adopted without amendment.

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GP25/065 Friendship Agreement Working Group

The Committee considered the appointment of members and a co-ordinator to a Friendship Agreement Working Group which had been recommended to the Committee by the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee at its meeting on 16 July 2024 (Minute Reference TTP25/007).

The Working Group will report to the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee and its purpose will be to develop a friendship policy between Stone and other towns, nations or bodies.

RESOLVED: That the following Members be appointed to the Friendship Agreement Working Group:

Councillors: J. Davies, L. Davies, J. Hood, J. Metters and R. Townsend.

The Town Mayor and the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee are ex-officio members of all committees, sub-committees and working groups.

RESOLVED: That Councillor J. Davies is nominated as co-ordinator to the Friendship Agreement Working Group.

GP25/066 VE Day Working Group

The Committee considered the appointment of a VE Day Working Group which had been recommended to the Committee by the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee at its meeting on 17 September 2024 (Minute Reference TTP25/014).

The Working Group will report to the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee and its purpose will be to develop the Town Council's arrangements for the Victory in Europe Day on (known as VE Day) commemorating the end of World War II in Europe and celebrated on Thursday 8 May 2025.

RESOLVED: That the following Members be appointed to the VE Day Working Group:

Councillors: J. Davies, L. Davies and J. Hood.

The Town Mayor and the Chairman of the General Purposes Committee are ex-officio members of all committees, sub-committees and working groups.

RESOLVED: That Councillor J. Davies is nominated as co-ordinator to the VE Day Working Group.

GP25/067 Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service Consultation

The Committee considered a Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service consultation on its Community Risk Management Plan 2025-28 outlining how the Service will manage the many different risks within the county.

An email from the Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service and a summary of the draft Management Plan 2025-2028 had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting. A link to the draft Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2028 (in full) and survey had also been provided.

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RESOLVED: That each Councillor be invited to put forward their own individual views on the Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service Management Plan 2025-28 and that no collective Town Council response be submitted.

GP25/068 Policing and Fire & Rescue Consultation

The Committee considered a Policing and Fire & Rescue consultation on the key priorities in the Staffordshire Commissioner's Police & Crime Plan, and Fire & Rescue Plan 2024-28.

An email from the Staffordshire Commissioner and copies of the full draft Police & Crime Plan, and the Fire & Rescue Plan 2024-28, had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

A member of the Committee questioned the withdrawal of the community room as a community facility at the Fire Station and whether this course of action was in line with the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract for its construction.

RESOLVED: That each Councillor be invited to put forward their own individual views on the Staffordshire Commissioner's consultations and that no collective Town Council response be submitted.

GP25/069 Heritage Centre

The Committee considered an update on Stone Heritage Centre.

The Town Clerk informed the Committee that he had received a progress report from the Heritage Centre Manager which included the following items:

- Building – CCTV was in place, fire and gas safety assessments have been done, building insurance assessments have been made, the kitchen is fully equipped, tables and chairs have been received, the security system has been activated, display units are in place and the Heritage Centre Manager is first aid trained.
- Collections – The Heritage Centre Manager is in discussions about collections and is calling a collections group meeting of the Steering Group within the next week or two.
- Loans – The Heritage Centre Manager is recommending the Town Council take a loans approach to exhibitions rather than an owning one. The small room will be dedicated to the story of Stone and will always relate to Stone. The details of the process for loaning will be discussed with the Steering Group after the collections group meeting.
- Remembrance Sunday Opening – The Heritage Centre Manager has proposed opening the Heritage Centre on Remembrance Sunday with a Remembrance display on WW1 and WW2. During the exhibition he will take the opportunity to ask people whether they have items they would like to loan to the Town Council for future display at the Heritage Centre.
- Photographic and Art Exhibition – The Heritage Centre Manager is in discussion with the U3A Photographic Society with a view to creating an

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exhibition of their work based on Stone. He is also talking to the Staffordshire Society of Artists for a similar artistic presentation, sometime next year.

- The Heritage Centre Manger has started the process of accreditation which takes three to four years.
- The visitor numbers now total 363 (and are getting closer to the target of 500 visitors by December 2024) following the recent photographic exhibition, Operation Overlord exhibition and school visits. Further invitations have been sent to the Scout and Guiding groups to visit the centre.

GP25/070 Town Council Payments

RESOLVED: To note the list* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 July to 31 August 2024.

GP25/071 Update from Working Groups:

Stone Heritage Centre Steering Group

There was no additional update from the Steering Group.

Engagement with Young People

Councillor Dawson had no new information on the work of the working group, on this occasion.

GP25/072 To receive reports from Town Councillors on attendance at meetings of local organisations and outside bodies as a representative of the Town Council

Stone Area Parish Liaison Group

Councillor J. Davies advised the Committee that he was looking to hold the next meeting of the Liaison Group at the Heritage Centre in November 2024.

Stone ATC

Councillor J. Davies advised the Committee that the Squadron was doing very well and was keenly attended by lots of cadets. The Town Mayor and Councillor Davies will be attending the 2352 Sqn, Air Training Corps Dinner in a few weeks' time.

Age Concern Stone & District

Councillor Thornicroft advised the Committee that there had been no meeting of Age Concern Stone & District.

Stafford & Stone Access Group

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that the next meeting of Stafford & Stone Access Group would be held on 28 October 2024.

Stone Common Plot Trustees

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that there had been no meeting.

Stone Community Hub Liaison Group

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that no meeting of the Hub Liaison Group had taken place.

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SPCA Executive Committee

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that the last meeting had taken place on 2 September, but he had not been able to attend. The draft minutes indicated that the topics discussed included working with the Government to reduce the speed to 40 mph on rural roads which wasn't supported by the group. The Committee also looked at the Local Transport Plan. The next meeting will take place on 2 December and the AGM will be held on 16 December 2024.

Stone Traders Group Directors' Meeting

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that no meeting had taken place.

West Midlands Railway and other rail matters

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that he had nothing new to report since the last meeting.

The meeting was suspended and reconvened after the Planning Consultative Committee meeting.

GP25/073 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 items of business.

GP25/074 Confidential Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Confidential Minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 6 August 2024, Minute Numbers GP25/039 and GP25/053 be approved.

GP25/075 Confidential Minutes of Sub-Committees

- a) Estates Sub-Committee Meeting held on 17 September 2024, Minute Numbers: EST25/001 and EST25/007 and EST25/008.

RESOLVED: To note the draft Minutes.

CHAIRMAN