

Stone Town Council – Environment Sub-Committee

Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 5 November 2024

PRESENT: Councillor R. Townsend in the Chair and
Councillors: J. Battrick, T. Kelt, B. Kenney, R. Kenney, J. Metters, N. Powell and
C. Thornicroft

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

By Chairman's Invitation: None

ABSENT: Councillors: A. Burgess, P. Leason and J. Powell

ENV25/019 Apologies

Councillor: P. Leason

ENV25/020 Declarations of Interest

None

ENV25/021 Request for Dispensations

None

ENV25/022 Representations from Members of the Public

None

ENV25/023 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Environment Sub-Committee meeting held on 17 September 2024 (Minute Numbers ENV25/011 – ENV25/018), were approved as a correct record.

ENV25/024 Environmental Sub-Committee Works Update

The Chairman drew the Sub-Committee's attention to the Grounds Maintenance Works Update which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

He referenced the most recent comments which included:

Asbestos on Allotment Plots

The asbestos removal work has been held up by the plot holder (where the asbestos is sited) renewing the lease of his plot for another twelve months. The plot holder has requested a replacement material be installed as it is in use to retain the ground.

The Town Clerk emphasised that the Council had been professionally advised that the asbestos was low risk and did not present a danger if left undisturbed.

The Sub-Committee raised questions about who had introduced the asbestos to the plot and questioned whether the installer should be held responsible for the costs of removal.

The allotment agreement now prohibits the use of asbestos, but the Town Council has committed a sum in the budget to remove existing asbestos as in this case.

Wooden Footbridge

The Grounds Maintenance Contractor has started work on the footbridge which will be completed soon.

Angler's Car Park

Repairs to the car park surface had not been possible during the summer months but the Grounds Maintenance Contractor will complete the work during the winter.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the Deputy Town Clerk was in regular contact with the Grounds Maintenance Contractor and updates were received monthly. He said it was hoped that much of the outstanding work would be finished by the end of the calendar year.

ENV25/025 Crown Meadow Update

i) Chairman's Verbal Report

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the important issues relating to maintenance and improvement work on Crown Meadow were in the Grounds Maintenance Update document.

He said that additionally an issue had been raised by a member of the public about feeding the swans and the Town Council was seeking advice on this point.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that additional information on Crown Meadow had been added to the website with lots of lovely photographs taken by Mr Dave Emley.

He said the plan was now to get more information out to the public about Crown Meadow. This could include a press release about the swans, why they were there and whether they should be fed or not.

The Town Clerk informed the Sub-Committee that safety signs (to be supported on long poles) were soon to be installed as a public warning about the potential risks to health and safety on Crown Meadow. One of the signs was brought into the Council Chamber to show Sub-Committee members.

Councillor Jill Hood expressed her view that she was against littering Crown Meadow and the fact that there was a river there was common sense.

The Chairman informed the Sub-Committee that warning signs had been recommended by the Town Council's Health and Safety Consultants (as a prevention measure) and would only be installed at the three main pedestrian entrance points (on the pavement side of the footbridge, on Anglers' Car Park, and the footpath on Trent Road by Workhouse Bridge), not within Crown Meadow itself.

ii) To consider 2025-26 Projects

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that there were two projects he would like to propose to the Working Group.

Footpath – The footpath across Crown Meadow is regularly under water making the route impassable and forcing people to walk wider. Following discussions with the Grounds Maintenance Contractor a solution would be to raise the footpath level (surface finish to be discussed) in some sections so that it was above the sitting water level.

Coppicing of Willow – The second proposal, originating from the Grounds Maintenance Contractor, was to undertake significant coppicing of tall mature Willow from the perimeter of the scrapes. This will reduce the seeds they produce from blowing and then setting within the scrapes.

One Sub-Committee member suggested that heavy cutting back of the trees might not sit well with everyone.

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that a proposal for the management and containment of Himalayan Balsam was almost ready for circulation.

The plan would involve a call for volunteers from late spring for two or three meets to pull up the Himalayan Balsam and manage safe disposal.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the Town Council had insurance to cover volunteers, but this was for a limited number of people and

would require monitoring, given the plan to use volunteers at the Heritage Centre.

ENV25/026 Reports of Working Groups

Environmental Working Group

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

Councillor Kelt advised the Sub-Committee that the next meeting of the Stafford Borough Community Panel would be held in December 2024.

Chairman