

# Stone Town Council – General Purposes Committee

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

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

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

**ABSENT:** Councillors: A. Burgess, L. Davies, A. Mottershead and J. Powell

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### **GP25/076** Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors: L. Davies and A. Mottershead.

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

### **GP25/077** Declarations of Interest

None

### **GP25/078** Requests for Dispensations

None

### **GP25/079** To receive the report of the County Councillors

#### **County Councillor Jill Hood**

The Chairman invited Councillor Hood to address the Committee.

#### Tree Work

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that Staffordshire County Council had started work on the uneven blockwork around the trees in the High Street.

#### **County Councillor I. Parry**

Councillor Parry was not in attendance at the meeting.

### **GP25/080** To receive the report of Borough Councillors

The Chairman invited Borough Councillors to address the Committee.

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that he had called in planning application 22/36231/OUT (Stonefield Works, Oulton Road). He suggested the plans did not fully meet local planning policy and further clarification was needed on retention of the central block on the Longton Road which a lot of people believed was a non-designated heritage site. He said the building had the potential

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to be retained and converted into apartments. There was no objection to demolition of the rest of the site to make way for new housing. The developer has been asked what research has been done on the options to save the building. He said there had been deficiencies in sports provision and a problem with drainage.

Councillor Leason advised the Committee that he had attended the Licensing Committee which endorsed the Statement of Licensing Policy for 2025. He said there had been updates on Pavement Licences and Drink Spiking guidance, and Counter Terrorism guidance had been added to the policy.

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that planning application 22/36231/OUT (Stonefield Works, Oulton Road) had been deferred by the Borough Council which she said was due to Councillor Fordham's magnificent presentation at the Planning Committee meeting.

Councillor Fordham advised the Committee that there were three reasons for deferral: the non-designated heritage asset aspect; questions about the quality of the drainage around Cross Street and whether it could cope with additional water run-off; and the Section 106 Agreement which did not contain any monies for additional sports facilities.

Councillor Kenney reported on Stafford Borough Council's 'High Street Boost Stone' Programme advising the Committee that the primary focus was on regeneration of the High Street but also looked to offer support to non-High Street businesses. Councillor Kenney expressed disappointment at the low turnout of High Street traders. The Programme had been well supported by traders in other towns (Eccleshall and Stafford) and attendees had the opportunity to receive one to one support from an expert, within the setting of their business. Of the six attendees in Stone, five represented start-up businesses.

**GP25/081 Representations from Members of the Public**

None

**GP25/082 Minutes**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 1 October 2024 (Minute Numbers GP25/054 – GP25/075), be approved as a correct record.

**GP25/083 Minutes of Sub-Committees**

There were no sub-committee minutes.

**GP25/084 Budget Monitoring – September 2024**

The report\* of the Town Clerk was noted.

A question was raised about the underspend in some categories which was particularly relevant to Environment Sub-Committee budgets due to challenges in getting bus shelters repaired and grounds maintenance work completed on Crown Meadow and the allotment sites.

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The Town Clerk confirmed that receipt of invoices for work done could be slow sometimes, but inclement weather and other factors also had an impact. He said that discussions with the Grounds Maintenance Contractor were ongoing in respect of what might be achievable by the end of the year. Project updates were routinely given at Environment Sub-Committee meetings.

**GP25/085 National Pay Award 2024-25**

The Committee considered the report\* of the Town Clerk (which had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting) on the outcome of the 2024-25 national pay award negotiations for local government staff and its impact on the Council.

RESOLVED: That the Committee accepts the recommendations of the Town Clerk and adopts the new salary levels for staff for 2024-25, as set out in the report.

**GP25/086 Heritage Centre**

The Committee considered an update on Stone Heritage Centre.

The Town Clerk put forward to the Committee a proposal to set the opening date for the Heritage Centre as Thursday 12 December 2024, on a three-day week basis on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

The Heritage Centre Steering Group would like the people of Stone to get involved in offering their own heritage items for display but until the Heritage Centre was open, people wouldn't know their treasures were needed.

The Town Clerk confirmed that there would be a number of displays, but the primary function of the opening initially would be to attract and communicate to people that artifacts were needed for display.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the Heritage Centre Manager had been holding discussions with several organisations about loaning artefacts and options to swap them around and was also looking to compile a loans catalogue locally.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that from Sunday 10 November 2024 (and for some days after) the Heritage Centre would be open with an exhibition on Remembrance.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that £35,000 of the Government's £40,000 grant has been spent with further expenditure in progress. He said they were well on target to reach the 500-visitor requirement by the end of the year.

RESOLVED: That the Committee approve the public opening of the Heritage Centre on Thursday 12 December 2024 on a three-day week basis on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

**GP25/087 Government Consultation on Remote Meetings**

The Committee considered a government consultation seeking views on the introduction of remote attendance and proxy voting in local authority meetings in England.

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Links to the full consultation and online survey had been provided with the agenda for the meeting.

The Town Clerk advised the Committee that the national consultation could be supported by Councillors individually or collectively as a Town Council.

The Committee agreed that, as the consultation close date was 19 December 2024, the item would be brought forward to the next meeting (on 10 December 2024).

**GP25/088 Members' Motion under Standing Order 4**

**Councillor Jill Hood**

*We have heard that Stone Community Fire Station is to become known as Stone Fire and Police Station, dropping the word community. The change to the name also means that the free community facility, originally offered in the contract as a condition of PFI Funding will no longer be offered to various community groups.*

*There seems to be little or no consultation with local community groups even though the original PFI Funding promised free use of the facility.*

*I ask Stone Town Council to ask the Fire and Police Commissioner (Ben Adams) what plans have been made for the removal of the free community room facility and does he have an offer of free alternative facilities for community use.*

Councillor Hood advised the Committee that she was aggrieved on behalf of a number of groups as the town was promised a community facility at Stone Fire Station when the buildings were constructed ten or so years ago and now that the Police were relocating there the community facility has been lost with no consultation with the groups who used it and no offer of an alternative option.

RESOLVED: That the Town Council write to the Police and Fire Commissioner, Mr Ben Adams, to ask what provision had been made for the loss of the community facility and his plans to offer an alternative free facility for community use.

**GP25/089 Nominations for SPCA Executive and AGM Arrangements**

The Committee considered an invitation to nominate a representative to stand for election to Staffordshire Parish Councils Association's Executive. It was noted that the election will take place at the Association's AGM on the evening of Monday 16 December 2024 (with a closing date of Friday 15 November 2024 for nominations).

The Committee noted that Councillor Tom Kelt was halfway through his term of office on the Executive Committee which ended in December 2025.

No further nominations to the Executive Committee were made and no motions for debate were put forward to the Annual General Meeting.

**GP25/090 Town Council Payments**

RESOLVED: To note the list\* of Town Council payments made during the period 1 to 30 September 2024.

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**GP25/091 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 report on the work of the working group, on this occasion.

**GP25/092 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 in the Heritage Centre and would soon be setting a date.

**Stone ATC**

Councillor J. Davies advised the Committee that a meeting of the Squadron's Civilian Welfare Committee had been arranged for 17 November 2024.

**Age Concern Stone & District**

Councillor Thornicroft reported on Age Concern Stone & District's AGM held on 18 October 2024. The office opens on Mondays Wednesdays and Fridays. There is usually a lively discussion at coffee mornings, ably manned by former Stone Town Mayor, Kristan Green. The Tuesday lunch club was well attended and expecting a busy winter. There is high demand for the hospital car scheme and new volunteer drivers are always welcomed.

The treasurer reported that the accounts were in good order and running with a small surplus. The existing committee members were re-elected unopposed for a new term. The volunteers spoke of their experiences at working at Age Concern and said what an honour it was to support local people.

**Stafford & Stone Access Group**

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that at a recent meeting the Access Group were considering uploading agendas and minutes of meetings to their website.

**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.

**SPCA Executive Committee**

Councillor Kelt advised the Committee that two meetings were coming up in December with one of them being the Annual General Meeting (discussed above).

**Stone Traders Group Directors' Meeting**

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

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**West Midlands Railway and other rail matters**

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

**GP25/093 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.

**GP25/094 Town Council Office Accommodation**

The Committee considered the report of the Town Clerk about Town Council office accommodation.

RESOLVED: That the Committee delegate to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, the authority to secure additional office accommodation for rental.

**CHAIRMAN**