

Stone Town Council – Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber
at 15 Station Road, Stone, on Tuesday 14 January 2025**

PRESENT: Councillor J. Hood in the Chair and
Councillors: A. Best, A. Burgess, J. Davies, K. Dawson, P. Leason and R. Kenney

Co-opted Member: J. Cook

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

By Chairman's invitation: No Councillors

ABSENT: Councillors: L. Davies, B. Kenney, A. Mottershead and J. Powell

TTP25/026 **Apologies**

Councillors: L. Davies, B. Kenney, A. Mottershead and J. Powell

TTP25/027 **Declarations of Interest and declarations under Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992**

None made.

TTP25/028 **Requests for Dispensations**

None received.

TTP25/029 **Representations from Members of the Public**

None received.

TTP25/030 **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the Tourism & Town Promotion Sub-Committee meeting held on 19 November 2024 (Minute Numbers TTP25/016– TTP25/025), were approved as a correct record.

TTP25/031 **Calendar of Events**

The Sub-Committee considered the Town Council's Calendar of Events for 2025-26 and gave updates on events that had taken place:

* 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.

2024 – Events that have taken place

- Christmas Lights Switch-On (Thursday 21 November 2024)

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the Christmas Lights Switch-On event had gone very well. The evening had been a brilliant night in bitterly cold temperatures with a peppering of snow.

She said a debrief would be arranged and Town Councillors were invited to contribute their thoughts.

The Chairman announced that Sue Campbell Kelly and Mary Gale, who had supported the Christmas lights Switch-On for 25 years, were stepping down from their roles, making 2024 their last year. She said they had done a wonderful job running the musical entertainment alongside Kieron Harrison at Christ Church Academy. Each year these elements of the programme had ran like a dream and she asked that the Town Council take the opportunity to recognise their service and register its thanks.

The Sub-Committee suggested the ladies be invited to a future Council meeting to be formally thanked by the Town Mayor and Town Councillors (marking the occasion with a photograph and coverage, if possible, by A Little Bit of Stone).

The Town Clerk informed the Sub-Committee that Stone Lions had reported they were not able to continue with the lost children duty in 2025. It was suggested they be asked to continue using the Age Concern office as their base.

Thankfully Stone Lions would continue to arrange the attendance of Father Christmas who did a wonderful job on stage.

The Chairman thanked everyone who took part in the event.

Texas Flag Raising, marking the anniversary of Texas joining the Union on 29 December 1845 (Sunday 29 December 2024)

The Chairman invited Councillor Davies to report on the Texas Flag Raising, which was well attended, particularly by the Army Cadets. Mr Dave Cranswick looked after the flags.

Councillor Davies suggested using the PA system next year for playing the Texas State Song.

2025/2026 – Upcoming/Agreed

The following events were agreed in principle by the Sub-Committee (with the need to set some of the dates):

- Texas Flag Raising, marking Texas State's independence from Mexico (Saturday 1 March 2025)

The usual arrangements to apply.

* 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.

- St George's Day Re-enactment (Saturday 26 April 2025)
The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the Re-enactment Group were pleased to be returning to Stone to perform on Saturday 26 April 2025.
- VE Day Commemoration (Thursday 8 May 2025)
As there is no proposed VE Day Bank Holiday, and the weekend clashes with the Stone Food and Drink Festival, the Council's main 'end of World War II' event has been programmed for around the time of VJ Day rather than VE Day (see below).

The Council will be observing the national commemoration timetable on VE Day including flag raising at 9.30am, a church service and the lighting of a beacon beside the canal at 9.30pm.

- Floating Market/Waterside Events (24, 25, 26 May 2025)
The Chairman said she hoped the successful Floating Market would return in 2025 and suggested the Heritage Centre have a special display which would bring people into to the town.
- Puppet Tree Jamboree
The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that she had spoken with Mr Leech with a view to setting a date for a Puppet Tree Jamboree in the summer.
- Florence Brass Band Concert & Burma Star Commemoration
The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that the Florence Brass Band were keen to perform in Stonefield Park in August 2025.
- Summer Children's Event
The Chairman called for ideas for a children's event to take place in Market Square in the summer.
- Classic Car Event
The Sub-Committee supported the arrangements for a classic car event in 2025.
- Vegan Market
The arrangements for a return of the vegan market will be discussed with the organiser to iron out some small teething problems.
- VJ Day Commemoration (Saturday 16 August 2025)
A music event would be held on Saturday 16 August with an 'End of WWII theme'.
- Music Event/Street Party (Saturday 16 August 2025)
This will be linked with the VJ Day Commemoration (see above).
- Christmas Lights Switch-On (Thursday 20 November 2025)
The usual arrangements will apply.

* 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.

- Texas Flag Raising, marking the anniversary of Texas joining the Union on 29 December 1845 (Monday 29 December 2025)
The usual arrangements will apply.
- Any other suggested new events for 2025/26
The Chairman invited Sub-Committee members to put forward new ideas for events in 2025.

RECOMMENDED: That the items listed above form the Council's events programme for 2025.

TTP25/032 Stone Traders' Group

The Sub-Committee considered Stone Traders' Group's proposed event schedule for 2025 which had been enclosed with the agenda for the meeting.

It was noted that several of the Traders' Group's events had been removed from the schedule as they were similar to Town Council events.

TTP25/033 Budget 2025-26 – 2026-27

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Town Clerk* (issued with the agenda for the meeting) which considered the level of budget that the Sub-Committee may wish to recommend to the General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 4 February 2025 for the services under its control.

The Sub-Committee reviewed the standstill budget, and the amounts included for each service. It also considered potential costs and savings when setting the budget for 2025-26 and future years.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that an additional £5,000 had been included in the base budget to enable the Council to hold a music festival or street party as this type of large-scale event had begun taking place regularly.

In addition, following comments about the hanging baskets being poor in quality last year (2024) Stafford Borough Council had given 50% off for the 2025 display delivering a saving of £3,000 which was reflected in the budget.

The Town Clerk advised the Sub-Committee that no provision had been made in the budget for the VE and VJ Day celebrations (other than the street party/music festival) and that it may wish to add £1,000 for these events.

RECOMMENDED: That the standstill budget set out in the Town Clerk's report is accepted, after making the adjustment set out below:

1. An allowance of £1,000 should be made for the additional costs of VE day and VJ Day events. These events would be in addition to a VJ Day themed High Street event on 16 August 2025, which would be funded from the existing Tourism and Town Promotion budget.

* 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.

TTP25/034 Reports from Working Groups

The Chairman invited co-ordinators from each Working Group to address the Sub-Committee:

Remembrance Plaques Working Group

Councillor J. Davies advised the Sub-Committee that the VE 80 and heritage centre exhibition provided an opportunity to move the project forward. He said that a test/prototype plaque would be ready by May 2025.

Councillor J. Davies reminded the Sub-Committee that the project would be ongoing over an extended period and was not targeted at this year's VE and VJ Day celebrations exclusively.

Market Strategy Working Group

The Chairman reported that no meeting of the Market Strategy Working Group had taken place.

Friendship Agreement Working Group

Councillor J. Davies advised the Sub-Committee that the Group was waiting to see how things were clarified regarding Bagnacavallo. He was aware that Comune di Bagnacavallo had extended an invitation to the Town Mayor to express greetings for the Christmas and New Year festivities.

Councillor Davies reminded Councillors that the purpose of the Working Group was to produce a Council policy that ensured control was maintained whenever people were travelling around the world and speaking on behalf of Stone. He said Stone was lucky to have many links and co-ordinating them enabled the sharing of experiences.

Councillor Leason advised the Sub-Committee that a number of groups in Stone had previously enjoyed active links with Dreieich in Germany, but the Stafford Borough twinning connection had sadly ceased.

VE/VJ Day Working Group

Councillor J. Davies advised the Sub-Committee that a useful meeting had taken place on Monday between the Chairman of the Sub-Committee, Town Clerk and Marketing and Events Organiser to consider the arrangements for the VE and VJ celebrations.

He said it was important to make sure the children of the town were included along with the Army and Air Cadets, Scout & Guide Band and school children. It was agreed that schools would be asked about their plans for celebrating the occasions to ensure there was no repetition.

* 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.

It was proposed that the programme in Stone would include the raising of the VE Day flag at 9.30am and culminate with the lighting of the beacon by the canal at 9.30pm in line with the national recommendations of the Pageantmaster, Bruno Peek.

Councillor Davies advised the Sub-Committee that people of the town felt strongly that VJ Day was not forgotten. The Forgotten Army were continuing to fight in the Far East for some weeks after VE Day.

It was suggested the Town Council seek local people who were in the town on 8 May 1945 to capture their experiences as a valuable record of social history.

Councillor Davies said he would be sending out notes on what was agreed to take forward, assuming the General Purposes Committee was willing to agree the recommendations included at TTP25/031 above.

Councillor Leason suggested incorporating the Peace Pole into the commemoration and for the Quakers to be approached.

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.