

Councillor Tony Nixon (Mayor)

Present (for all or part of the meeting):-

Councillors:

J A Barron	P W Jones
R J Barron	W J Kemp
F Beatty	R Kenney
A R G Brown	P A Leason
R P Cooke	A M Loughran
B M Cross	B McKeown
M G Dodson	D McNaughton
A P Edgeller	J A Nixon
P M M Farrington	G P K Pardesi
I D Fordham	A N Pearce
A T A Godfrey	J M Pert
A S Harp	M Phillips
A D Hobbs	J K Price
M V Holmes	P Roycroft
J Hood	R M Sutherland
R A James	C V Trowbridge
E G R Jones	M J Winnington

Officers in attendance:-

Mr T Clegg	-	Chief Executive
Mr I Curran	-	Head of Law and Administration
Mr R Simpson	-	Head of Operations
Mr W Conaghan	-	Press and Communication Manager
Mr A Bailey	-	Scrutiny Officer

C40 Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 September 2021 were agreed as a true and correct record.

C41 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C A Baron, A G Cooper, M Green, L Nixon and R M Smith.

C42 Announcements

(a) Presentation of The Freedom Scroll to the Royal British Legion (Stafford Branch).

The Leader of the Council addressed the meeting followed by Councillor A T A Godfrey.

The Reverend John Davis, Chaplain to the Stafford Branch responded on behalf of the branch.

The Mayor then invited Mr George Wright, Honorary Chairman of the Stafford Branch, to sign the Roll of Freedom Book and to receive the Freedom Scroll.

Branch Members left the meeting at this point.

(b) Annual Civic Carol Service

The Mayor announced that the annual Civic Carol Service would take place at The Collegiate Church of St Mary, Stafford on Sunday 19 December 2021 at 6.30 pm.

C43 Public Question Time

The following questions had been received in pursuant of paragraph 11.1 of the Council Procedure Rules:-

(a) Susan Crookshank:

Question 1

“The new stone leisure strategy is proposing that s106 Sports money is allocated to increase the available total funds. The main new elements of the proposal at Westbridge are parking and a kiosk, hardly sports. The only element that could be described as sport is the MUGA, but funding for that has already been provided by the sale of land at Westbridge park. Would the Council please explain why it is not using the s106 sports money to fund the new astro pitch at Alleyne’s which was included in the original strategy and there is a clear need“.

Councillor C V Trowbridge provided the following response:-

“Thank you for your question. I am aware that the Council’s Chief Executive, and the Head of Operations will be meeting representatives of the Academy including yourself on Monday 29 November 2021, to respond to and discuss the Academy’s comments that were made as part of the recent consultation on the £1.5 million

transformation of Westbridge Park and I hope they will be positive discussions for future possibilities for the school and wider community.

Westbridge park is a very key part of the Stone leisure strategy and we must not forget that as well as the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) that has been mentioned in the question. There will be a fantastic new wheeled sports facility. I am sure very welcome with the increased popularity skateboarding has had since the Olympics, an outdoor gym, superb play facilities, and enhanced areas for walking and cycling which are so important to our health both physical and mental”.

Question 2

“The 2016 Stone Leisure Strategy was to improve sports provision with a new 3G astro pitch and the conversion of the swimming pool to a sports hall. The new strategy has wiped out these commitments removing funding for the new astro pitch and quietly dropping the words ‘conversion to a sports centre’ from the strategy. This will have a significant negative impact on sport locally.

Based on the Borough Councils own costings the conversion of the swimming pool will cost in excess of one million pounds, so the current strategy leaves the school nearly £600,000 short. This along with the removal of the £200,000 for the astro pitch will seriously financially damage the school. I would remind the council that a key principal of the original strategy was to “not impact adversely on the school either functionally or financially”.

The school wants to work with the community to invest in the sports centre to develop a sporting hub for the town and local area. To do this we need the funding for the new astro pitch to be reinstated and the £430,000 swimming pool money to be guaranteed. Would the Borough Council please reinstate the funding or explain why they have changed the strategy to damage sport and the school?”

Councillor C V Trowbridge provided the following response:-

“Thank you for your question. Along with the exciting plans for Westbridge Park we must not forget we are also still making a significant amount of money available to Alleyne’s Academy which will be of benefit for the community as well as the school. We have already funded the recent refurbishment and decoration of the sports hall changing rooms. We will also be working with the Academy to adapt the existing facilities to enable more community use. We have put aside £430,000 towards the decommissioning of the old swimming pool at the school. The Chief Executive and the Head of Operations will be meeting with representatives of the Academy on the 29 November to discuss potential options going forward”.

(b) Richard Jones:

Question 1

“With the uncertain future of Wellbeing Park, Yarnfield, Stone Old Alleynians Football Club have returned to its spiritual home at Alleyne’s Academy investing a significant amount of time and money to create a thriving community club with over 25 teams playing at the site meaning over 95% of all community football related activity now takes place at the school.

The current floodlit astro pitch is not in good condition and will last for maybe a couple of years. The pitch’s poor quality means it is quite rightly not licensed for matches and when it becomes unfit for practice hundreds of players will have nowhere to play mid week.

Both the Football Foundation’s Stafford plan and Borough Councils own pitch strategy have identified the need for a new 3g astro pitch in the Stone area. As a club we want to offer the various local leagues the option to use the facility as a central venue for both junior and veteran’s football, as well as bringing our first team, who have had to play ‘outside of Stone’ for over twenty years, back to the town facility.

Having seen and heard about the extremely positive community wide project, which has had very good press coverage, why is the Borough Council not actively supporting our thriving club to develop a football hub at Alleyne’s for Stone Town and the surrounding area by investing in a new 3G astro pitch at Alleyne’s?”

Councillor C V Trowbridge provided the following response:-

“Thank you for your question. Thank you for all you do to encourage boys, girls and adults to get involved in football in Stone and it is good to hear about the success of the club. Officers of the Council will be meeting with the Academy to see what can be achieved jointly for the benefit of the community. The Council wants also to continue working with local organisations to improve the leisure offer in the town and would be happy to work with Stone Old Alleynians Football Club to support our commitment to this”.

Question 2

“Stone Old Alleynians FC have hundreds of juniors based at Alleyne’s Sports Centre which is hugely important to the social, mental and physical wellbeing of hundreds of junior players, particularly since emerging from lockdown. If the astro pitch is not replaced we will not be able to train in the winter as we will not have a floodlit pitch.

Given the impact on so many young people's wellbeing how can the Council justify removing funding for the new pitch?"

Councillor C V Trowbridge provided the following response:-

"Thank you for your question. The Council wants to continue working with local organisations to improve the leisure offer in the town and would be happy to work with the Academy, Stone Old Alwynians Football Club, the Football Foundation and Staffordshire FA to provide excellent facilities for the community".

(c) **Andy Osgathorpe:**

"Whilst the Council will be aware of my support for the new play areas intended for Westridge Park, she will also be aware of my planning concerns expressed at the last Stone Town Council meeting on Tuesday 2 November 2021, which she attended and presented on the same subject. My concern at the time included possible conflict with policies within the Stone Neighbourhood Plan and the harm done to part of the current playing field in reducing its size, by building the play areas upon it. Given Sport England objections to the plan as emailed to Sally McDonald on Fri 22/10/2021, in particular not atoning to their playing field protection policies, how does the Council intend to mitigate against this".

Councillor C V Trowbridge provided the following response:-

"Thank you for your question. We thanked Sport England for their informal reply to the recent public consultation stage of the £1.5m transformation of Westbridge Park. I should also mention how pleased I was with the positive response we had from local people to our plans to transform the park as part of that consultation. Council officers and Sport England have now met, and discussed the response, before a formal planning application on the plans is submitted".

C44 Notice of Motion

Councillors A T A Godfrey and A M Loughran had given the following Notice of Motion in pursuant of Paragraph 12.3(a) of the Council Procedure Rules:-

"This Council is delighted with the support shown by Minister of State in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs The RT Hon The Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park, in a letter to Stafford Borough Council Chief Executive Officer Tim Clegg dated 28 September 2021, for the decision to ban the giving of live animals as prizes on Stafford Borough Council land. This issue was brought to the Council's attention in a motion, proposed by Labour member Councillor Ralph Cooke, concerning the welfare of goldfish given as prizes. This Council thanks Councillor Cooke

and all the members of the Council who supported his original motion. Sadly, the vote to adopt this policy was not supported by all members of the Conservative group. This seems to be at odds with the Government's position on this important animal welfare issue."

Members discussed the Motion as provided by paragraph 15 of the Council Procedure Rules, and at the conclusion of the debate voted on the motion which was declared to be lost.

C45 Fees and Charges Review 2022

Considered the report of the Head of Finance (V1 11/11/21).

The Leader of the Council referred to the following whilst introducing the report:-

- The criteria for the reporting fees and charges to Council
- The parameters used for fees and charges inflation
- The various Fees and Charges that had been frozen

The Leader of the Council concluded his comments by moving that the recommendations as set out in Paragraph 2 of the report be approved.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor J M Pert.

Members of the Council then considered the report as provided for in the Council Procedure Rules, after which they voted on the proposal as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that the proposed Fees and Charges for 2022 be approved.

C46 Gambling Act 2005 - Statement of Principles 2022 - 2025

Considered the report of the Head of Operations (V1 11/11/21).

Councillor J K Price referred to the following whilst introducing the report:-

- The need to publish a statement of the principles under the Gambling Act 2005
- The role of the Gambling Commission
- The Council's role in the licensing premises where gambling activities were to take place
- The three Licensing Objectives
- The consultation process for the Statement of Principles

He concluded his comments by moving that the recommendations as set out in Paragraph 2 of the report be approved.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor J M Pert.

Members of the Council then considered the report as provided for in the Council Procedure Rules, after which they voted on the proposal as set out, which was declared to be carried.

- RESOLVED:- that:-
- (a) The Revised Statement of Principles be approved;
 - (b) the Statement of Principles be published on the Council's website on or before 3 January 2022;
 - (c) the Statement of Principles would come into force on 10th January 2022.

C47 Appointment of External Auditors

Considered the report of the Head of Governance (V1 29/10/21).

Councillor A M Loughran referred to the following whilst introducing the report:-

- Appreciation to both the Audit and Accounts Committee and the Internal Audit Section for their work
- An explanation of the opt-in national scheme operated by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA)
- The need to review the decision as to whether to continue to opt-in to the national scheme
- The alternatives to opting out of the national scheme

Councillor A M Loughran concluded her comments by moving that the recommendations as set out in Paragraph 2 of the report be approved.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor R A James.

Members of the Council then considered the report as provided for in the Council Procedure Rules, after which they voted on the proposal as set out, which was declared to be carried.

RESOLVED:- that the opting-in to the national scheme for external auditor appointments from April 2023 be approved.

MAYOR