

BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH AND POOLE COUNCIL
THE CHARTER TRUSTEES FOR POOLE

Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 October 2020 at 5.00 pm

Present:-

Cllr M Le Poidevin – Mayor

Cllr B Dion – Deputy Mayor

Present: Cllr M Andrews, Cllr P Broadhead, Cllr D Brown, Cllr R Burton,
Cllr D Butler, Cllr D Butt, Cllr M Earl, Cllr N Greene, Cllr A Hadley,
Cllr M Haines, Cllr M Howell, Cllr M Iyengar, Cllr D Mellor,
Cllr S Moore, Cllr T O'Neill, Cllr K Rampton, Cllr A M Sibley,
Cllr T Trent and Cllr M White

22. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors J Bagwell, S Baron, J Beesley, J Butt and L-J Evans.

Apologies were received after the start of the meeting from Councillors M Brooke and F Rice.

23. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations received for this meeting.

24. Confirmation of Minutes and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 August 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

There were no matters arising from the above meeting.

25. Charter Mayor's Report

The Mayor reported on her activities since the last meeting of the Charter Trustees meeting on 26 August 2020 and made the following statement.

"I'm pleased to be able to report that as a result of the application I signed at a previous meeting we have received confirmation of the Royal Warrant granting the transfer of the Poole Coat of Arms to the Charter Trustees, meaning we can use it in any lawful way we deem appropriate.

I also want to share with you the card sent to me by the Lord Lieutenant, thanking the people of Dorset for their contributions during this pandemic.

At the end of my report in August I mentioned that I had been invited to Poole Hospital to plant a tree to remember all those affected by Covid. The tree chosen was an apple tree with fruit already on it in early September. It was chosen so that the Spring blossom and fruit would be a sign of hope and encouragement. The tree is in the garden by the roundabout at the bottom of Churchfield Road and is clearly visible from the road.

Other duties have been limited in number and scope: 2 welcomes to new

clergy in Poole: one by Zoom to the new Deacon at the Spire and one in writing to welcome the new incumbent at St. Peter's in Lower Parkstone.

That changed this weekend when on Saturday morning I had a date in Poole Park with a pink rabbit: actually, a member of the Lions who was doing a sponsored cycle ride to Shaftesbury in aid of Breast Cancer- hence the pink costume.

If you've been to Canford Heath, this week you'll have seen the poppies fixed to lamp posts on the main roads. Volunteers from ARCH made them all and they have been sponsored by local businesses and families in memory of specific individuals or as a tribute to all who have served in the forces. They have raised several hundred pounds for the British Legion. On Monday I was privileged to be given a conducted tour of other of ARCH's activities by Councillor Sandra Moore and members of the association. These included a group who tend the gardens in Adastral Square and outside the Library and the person who devised and set up a Pilot trail based on those who gave their names to roads on the Heath.

Yesterday evening I attended (virtually) the AGM of the Poole-Cherbourg Twinning Association. For the last year I have been trying to clarify the position of Charter Trustees in relation to Twinning. I was originally told that it was a BCP function: as you imagine I was not satisfied with that and did some googling. I found that other Charter Trustees (eg Bath) are responsible for their twinning groups. When I raised the issue, officers told me they had done the same research. It turns out the information from Civil servants was wrong: any new twinning will be under BCP Council, but the existing ones stay with the towns that set them up. The Twinning Association are very keen to be linked with us and to give us an annual report on activities, so I will be taking that forward with their Chair Councillor Mohan Iyengar.

Remembrance this year will be very much scaled back. There will be a limited wreath-laying ceremony at the War Memorial in Poole Park at some point on the 8 November. However, the suggestion is that we remember while on our doorsteps, so on 11 November I will probably be on the 'official' doorstep at Poole Civic Centre at 11am. While I can't invite you to join me in person, I hope you will join me in spirit on your own doorsteps."

26. Budget Update Report

The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) presented a report which provided an update on the budget, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'A' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The Charter Trustees were advised that the report covered three areas the first of which looked into the financial outturn for 2019/20. The RFO reported that at the August meeting of the Charter Trustees the high-level accounting statements had been approved and it was agreed that the detail of the statements would be submitted to this meeting. He explained that Appendix A to the report detailed the outturn position for last year against the approved budget which identified a contribution to reserves of over £37K and explained that there were significant savings in the civic budget

and civic events budget. The RFO reported that the second part of the report looked at the 2021 budget highlighting that there was significant underspend due to the Covid-19 restrictions and if this continued it was expected that an additional £52K contribution would be made into reserves with closing reserves of just over £90k 72% of the annual precept. Officers recommended that arrangements be made for a budget workshop for the Charter Trustees towards the end of November in preparation for the budget for next year to take account of aspirations for Council tax, understanding the tax base, recharges and the use of reserves.

Councillor Butler sought clarification on the budget costs for accountancy services. The RFO explained that the budget was the same for both years and accountancy recharges were likely to be £1k as internal audit had not been included therefore there would be £500 for accountancy and £500 for internal audit) The RFO reported that the reduction of £100 assumed less VAT as from 4 November 2020 the Charter Trustees would be able to reclaim VAT on it supplies and services.

RESOLVED that:-

- (a) The Charter Trustees note the budget outturn position for 2019/20; and**
- (b) The Charter Trustees note the in-year budget position for 2020/21.**

Voting on (a) and (b) – Agreed

Councillor Tony Trent abstained from the above decision as he had not heard the full presentation.

The Charter Trustees considered the nominations for the budget workshop. It was suggested that the Mayor, Sheriff, Sheriff Elect, budget signatories plus 3 other Trustees form the budget workshop. Charter Trustees were asked to contact the Deputy Head of Democratic Services to submit expressions of interest. Councillor Broadhead highlighted the opportunity for the Bournemouth and Poole workshops to co-operate with each other. The RFO reported that separate workshops would be sensible whilst asking similar questions there would be technical slides that portray the position of each Charter Trustee.

The Honorary Clerk reported on an issue raised by Councillor J Butt on the scales of reserves and suggested that a review would be accommodated as part of the budget workshop.

RESOLVED that:-

The Charter Trustees support in principle the above arrangements to form a budget workshop in November to discuss the draft budget for 2021/22 taking account of the above comments.

Voting – Agreed

27. VAT Update Report

The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) presented a report which updated on the VAT position, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member

and a copy of which appears as Appendix 'B' to these Minutes in the Minute Book.

The RFO reported that this report updated Charter Trustees on the process taken by Officers to make an application for the Charter Trustees to be registered under Section 33 of the VAT Act. He explained that if there were no delays to the statutory instrument, then the Charter Trustees would be able to reclaim VAT from 4 November 2020 but would not be able to reclaim VAT retrospectively.

The RFO reported that the HMRC had let officers know from 4 November 2020 onwards that the Charter Trustees can claim VAT but not retrospectively. He explained the report set out the process for registering and claiming VAT which depended on the legislation used to establish the Charter Trustees. Charter Trustees were advised that there were complexities which had been shown in the dealings with the HMRC in referring issues to their policy team. The RFO reported that the Charter Trustees had been set up alongside BCP Council and the priority was on a safe and legal landing. The RFO reported that the initial assumption had been that the Charter Trustees in the first year would be able to reclaim VAT under the BCP Council banner and the reason was due to the complex precept setting rules that applied to the Charter Trustees in that first year. He explained that BCP Council anticipated the amount the Charter Trustees needed to run its budget, but that amount scored against the BCP Council's Council Tax requirement and referendum limits so in terms of Council Tax legislation appeared to be part of the Council's funding. As officers went through the process with HMRC it became apparent that this was not the case and the Charter Trustees needed to be registered under section 33 of the relevant legislation in its own right.

The Mayor indicated that she was disappointed that the Charter Trustees could not reclaim the VAT but now was not appropriate to keep revisiting this issue. Councillor Iyengar asked if this was a one-off and were there lessons to be learnt. The RFO reported that there was an element of both as LGR was a learning curve in itself but Charter Trustees were now registered, and he was not sure if this exact circumstance would occur again.

RESOLVED that the Charter Trustees note the content of the report.

Voting: Agreed

28. Update on the development of the draft risk register

The Charter Trustees were updated on the development of the draft risk register.

Councillor Andrews reported on the work in progress by the Working Group and that it was proposed to bring back to a formal meeting of the Charter Trustees for adoption.

RESOLVED that the Charter Trustees note the update on this issue.

Voting – Agreed

29. Accommodation for the Charter Trustees

Graham Farrant in his role as Chief Executive of BCP Council reported on the decision taken to focus the Council's activities at the Bournemouth Civic Hub explaining that the Poole Civic Centre would become surplus to requirements at some point. He reported that there were a number of options including maintaining a mayoral facility in the Civic Centre. The Chief Executive reported that part of the Civic Centre was listed, and he would undertake to update the Charter Trustees if at any point it was not possible to maintain a mayoral facility, but he was optimistic that accommodation would be identified at the Civic Centre for the Charter Trustees and the Mayor.

The Mayor highlighted the importance of the heritage assets, that they were maintained in their expanded use and hoped that the optimism to retain elements of the building proved justified.

Charter Trustees raised questions and comments including:

- asking if the offices at the Poole Civic Centre would be available for Councillors to use and if there was space available for the civic regalia. Graham Farrant indicated that we would need to see how the project developed.
- being pleased to hear civic requirements were part of the proposed plans and emphasised the need to maintain the central part of the building in public ownership and protect the frontage of the civic centre.
- the Leader of the Council agreeing that the central part of the building be maintained and referred to a forthcoming paper coming to Cabinet on the establishment of a Civic Working Group for the Bournemouth site and suggested that this should include the civic needs in Poole. He also reported on his commitment to retain the mayoral process and heritage at that site.
- referring to the transfer of facilities in the Poole Library Service. The Mayor indicated that the Charter Trustees had no influence on that service. The Charter Trustee suggested that there was some influence on where the Charter Trustees met.
- A Portfolio Holder reporting that he had met with the Library staff who were supportive of the direction for the Library service which he highlighted would not be compromised and reported that he would champion the library service and highlighted that it needed to be monitored carefully throughout the transition.
- upholding the history, traditions and heritage of Poole and that Charter Trustees and the public should be involved in the future use of the civic centre.
- suggesting that the most obvious place was to hold meetings at the Guildhall albeit on a temporary basis. The Mayor reported that the intention was to continue to meet in the old Council Chamber.

The Mayor in conclusion explained that the heritage part of the building was listed, and it was hoped that it can be used as it was now and at this stage it was unnecessary to look at alternatives.

RESOLVED that the Charter Trustees note the update on this issue.

Voting – Agreed

30. Role and responsibilities of the Budget Signatories

The Deputy Head of Democratic Services reported on the roles and responsibilities framework which had been prepared for the budget signatories following the recommendation set out in the Internal Audit report agreed by the Charter Trustees at its last meeting. Charter Trustees were asked to consider the document and make any amendments.

Councillor Andrews referred to the title of the role and the Mayor suggested that authoriser would be more appropriate. Councillor Trent referred to the signing of cheques for the budget signatories. The RFO reported that the Charter Trustees used the financial systems of BCP Council and outlined the mechanism for raising orders and authorisation in accordance with the approved budget. Charter Trustees were advised that going forward they may want to have their own bank account and that such issues would be included in any bespoke Financial Regulations.

RESOLVED that the roles and responsibilities as circulated be agreed.

Voting – Agreed

The meeting ended at 6.00 pm

MAYOR