



POOLE CHARTER TRUSTEES



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The Charter Trust

Borough of Poole was abolished in 2019 following the reorganisation of local government in Dorset, Poole retained its borough charter status through the establishment of a charter trustee in the Local Government (Structural Boundary Changes) (Supplementary Provision and Miscellaneous Amendments) Order 2019, which was laid before parliament on 16th January 2019 and subsequently made on 20 March 2019.

The trust ensures the continuation of the civic historic and ceremonial traditions of the former Borough of Poole and is responsible for choosing a Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Sheriff from the appointed trustees annually. The trustees are the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council councillors representing the wards falling wholly or partly within the historic boundary of the former borough council.

The Charter Trustees Regulations 2009 provides that any historic property of the Borough of Poole and which relates to the charter trustee area shall transfer to the charter trustees on 1 April 2019. An inventory of all such historic property has been produced which the Charter Trustees shall be responsible for maintaining and securing.

Meetings of the Charter Trustees

The Annual General Meeting of the Charter Trustees shall be held within 21 days of the Annual Council Meeting of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. The meeting shall be held at such a time and place as the Charter Trustees may determine. All meetings of the Charter Trustees shall be held in the Council Chamber unless otherwise agreed.

Including the AGM, no less than two meetings shall be held each year to conduct the general business of the Charter Trustees, a Budget Meeting and the Annual General Meeting of the Charter Trustees at which the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Sheriff are sworn in. The dates of such meetings will be determined by the Mayor.

The Mayor may call extra meeting if he/she considers this necessary and except in emergency, 5 days notice will be given.

Political Neutrality

Trustee members must be a councillor and by definition, a politician, with responsibilities to the electors of his or her electoral ward and will, in most instances, possess a tie to a political group on BCP Council.

Conversely, the Charter Trustee is a non-political and non-statutory body with the primary objective being to maintain and promote the historic and ceremonial traditions for the area.

As such trustee members, when acting in that capacity, must not act in a manner or behave in such a way which conflicts with this primary objective, or which would give a reasonable person the impression that you have brought the office or the Charter Trustee into disrepute.

Selection and Election to Office

SELECTION AND ELECTION TO OFFICE

This draft procedure for discussion is intended to apply to the filling of any office of the Charter Trustees. Each Charter Trustee may determine the order in which office-holders progress from one office to another in subsequent years.

Selection

The principal objective of the selection procedure should be to reach agreement between all trustees to ensure that the formal decision at the Annual Meeting of the Charter Trustees is unanimous. It is recognised that this cannot, unfortunately, always be achieved, however, the dignity of the Office of Mayor, Deputy Mayor and any other Designation (e.g., Sheriff) is likely to be impaired by any public disagreement on such a matter at the Annual Meeting.

Whatever procedure is adopted, the following points are important to bear in mind:-

- The selection of a new office-holder should ordinarily be made in good time before the Annual Meeting to allow the person selected sufficient time to make adequate preparations for their year of office.
- If the person selected is subsequently defeated at the polls in an election year, a fresh selection will have to be made in the very short time between election day and the Annual Meeting of the Charter Trustees.

At all stages it should be quite clear that until the formal election at the Annual Meeting, all that is being done is to select the person who will be proposed to fill the office in question. This is because the only occasions when the appointment to office of Mayor, Deputy Mayor or other designation can be considered are:-

- (i) at the Annual Meeting of the Charter Trustees; or
- (ii) when filling a casual vacancy in the office in question.

The procedure for selection of office-holder elect is set out below.

SELECTION OF THE CHARTER MAYOR, DEPUTY MAYOR ELECT [AND SHERIFF]

Procedure (in a non-election year)

Each year all Charter Trustees who are eligible to fill the office are invited to indicate whether they are willing to be considered by the Charter Trustees for the Office of in question for the following Municipal Year.

The invitation is sent out at the end of November/beginning of December with a return period of at least 21 days, avoiding the Christmas and New Year period.

If there is more than one candidate, the Clerk to the Charter Trustee informs each candidate of any other names submitted and any candidate who wishes to do so may withdraw at that stage.

If there is more than one candidate then remaining, a ballot will be held. If the result of the ballot does not show a clear majority for any one candidate, the ballot will be repeated as often as necessary.

Where the Charter Trustee decides to schedule additional meetings, the result of the ballot shall be reported to the next ordinary meeting for the appointment of the Office-Elect/Designate. Where there is no ordinary meeting scheduled, the result of the ballot shall be reported electronically to all Charter Trustees. Of course, the formal appointment takes place at the Annual Meeting.

Procedure (in a year of ordinary elections)

In the event that any or all of the Office-Elect/Designate are not returned at the elections, then the selection procedure outlined above shall be commenced as soon as practicably possible following the elections.

Due to the time-constraints, the period permitted for the return of nominations shall be reduced to not exceed 14 days. Where there is more than one candidate, the same withdrawal and ballot process will be held. The result of the ballot shall be reported electronically to all Charter Trustees.

No trustee member may stand in a ballot for more than one office. Failure to withdraw all bar one nomination in the permitted time will result in the automatic withdrawal of all nominations.

The Mayor

In Poole, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Sheriff are elected from the charter trust members and the positions are installed at Mayor Making at the Annual Meeting.

After being invested with the Chain of Office and Robe, the Mayor shall be asked to take the oath of acceptance of office. The trustees will then proceed to appoint a Deputy Mayor and Sheriff.

The position of Mayor is non-political, serves as the ceremonial head of the historic borough and intended to benefit both the town and its citizens. The Mayor may be a major influence in promoting the image and importance of Poole at a local, regional, national and international level complementing the work of BCP Council.

The Mayor should endeavour to promote and enhance the role of the Mayoralty and in turn, the people of Poole will continue to have the highest regard for the Mayor and the Office. They will expect the Mayor to carry out a full range of duties on their behalf throughout the former borough area.

The Mayor's role is to:

- maintain the historical and ceremonial traditions of the office of Mayor
- promote the town as a place to live and visit
- promote the town locally, nationally and internationally
- promote, liaise and link with private and voluntary sector organisations
- participate in and help initiate activities that enhance the economic, social, cultural and environmental well-being of the former borough and its residents
- act as host to official visitor to the town
- attend civic and ceremonial functions and local community based activities as the Mayor determines appropriate
- represent the trust at ceremonial events
- support chosen charities for the mayoral year
- carry out all duties in a manner appropriate to the status and tradition of the office
- preside over Citizenship Ceremonies on behalf of BCP Council

In addition to the ceremonial role, the mayor has the following responsibilities:

- to uphold and promote the purposes of the trust's constitution
- to preside over meetings of the trust and ensure meetings follow the procedures set out in the constitution
- to be the conscience of the trust

The Deputy Mayor may also represent the Office of Mayor if they are unavailable and when it is important that the Mayor is represented and appropriate for the invitation to be passed on.

The Sheriff may not attend an event unless accompanied by the Mayor.

With permission from the event organiser the Deputy Mayor may also represent the Office of Mayor if the Mayor is unavailable or already engaged. With permission from the event organiser, in the event of the Mayor or Deputy Mayor being unavailable the invitation to be passed on to a past Mayor provided that they are also a serving Trustee.

Mayoral Protocol

The Mayoral protocol is designed to help clarify the events and functions that the Charter Mayor and the Chairman of BCP Council will attend.

The Chairman of BCP Council is the first citizen of Poole and shall have precedence in the town unless a member of the Royal Family, Lord Lieutenant or High Sheriff is present. However, the role of the Chairman of BCP Council is to prioritise and focus on promoting and enhancing strategic unitary-wide initiatives, hosting high profile business and political visitors, events of regional, national or international significance and activities that enhance the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.

It is anticipated that both roles will complement each other but it will be vital that there is close liaison between the relevant office and office-holders to ensure each role is afforded appropriate respect. The protocol arrangements will as a consequence require refinement as the new arrangements are embedded and the roles defined.

Where a role is identified as being of a secondary responsibility, the Chairman of BCP Council must be afforded the opportunity to rule and define expectations.

History – Mayor

Mayor and “Major” derive from the same Latin word “Magnus” meaning “great”; the office of Mayor was brought to this country by the Normans as the office had existed on the continent since the 5th century. The first English Mayor was the Mayor of London, appointed in 1189 by Richard I.

Mayor of Poole

The history of the Mayor of Poole goes back to the Charter of Longspee in 1248; the first recorded Mayor of Poole was in 1422 and the Roll of Honour is on the plaques in the Council Chamber.

The Mayor of Poole also holds the honorary titles of:

Admiral of the Port

This title is now honorary but derives from the “Exempt Admiralty” jurisdiction when the Mayor presided over the local Admiralty Court which was abolished in 1835. The year of origin is not recorded but we know the Admiralty Courts have been held since the 13th century. The Winchelsea Certificate of 1365 is the document usually quoted as it was the acknowledgement by Winchelsea – one of the Cinque Ports and a great port of the day – of Poole’s rights which were being disputed by Wareham.

Mayor of the Staple

The Charter of King Henry VI in 1433 gave Poole its status as a Port of the Staple. Thereafter Poole had a customs jurisdiction in its own right. Previously Poole had been defined only as a “creek” and Melcombe Regis was the customs station in whose jurisdiction Poole Creek lay.

Clerk of the Market

A consumer protection officer of the period responsible for ensuring accurate “weights and measures” for all goods in the local open air markets of the day. In the past providing short measure was punishable by imprisonment or a very heavy fine!

Deputy Mayor

During the third municipal year of Civic Office, the Deputy Mayor carries the honorary title of Senior Bailiff of the Borough of Poole

History – Sheriff

The name Sheriff comes from the old English “Shire Reeve” who was the King’s representative in the County (Shire). In ancient times the Sheriff had responsibility for the administration of justice, the collection of taxes, seizing the property of debtors, keeping the gaol, hanging criminals and even command of military force.

The office of Sheriff in Poole was created on 23 June 1568 by the Great Charter of Queen Elizabeth I, which made Poole a County Corporate, in deed and name, distinct and separate from the County of Dorset. Poole was the only town given this honour by the Queen. This Great Charter virtually ended any control over Poole by the Lord of the Manor. The Charter allowed the town to choose its own Mayor, Sheriff, Justices of the Peace, Recorder and Coroner. Poole was only one of 19 towns that had the right to elect a Sheriff. Today there are only 15 Sheriffs in the whole of England and Wales.

The duties and responsibilities of the Sheriff today are not as onerous as in the past. The title of Sheriff became purely honorary as a result of the Local Government Act 1972, which reorganised Local Government from 1974 onwards. Poole, at this time, asked if it could keep its “Borough” status and retain its historic titles and privileges within the district of Poole. This was granted and the “Charter of Queen Elizabeth II” was granted on 1 April 1974, including the honorary title of Sheriff. At the Annual Council meeting each year, the Sheriff is presented with a key, symbolically representing the past duty as Keeper of the Town Gaol, and he/she is also given a staff or wand surmounted with a crown, signifying the former connection with the Monarch. The chain of office dates from the 1880’s and has been gradually built up to its present length of 37 links. It is believed that Poole is unique in that the two charters of Queen Elizabeth I and Queen Elizabeth II gave Poole the right to have a Sheriff. The Roll of Honour goes back to 1568 and is shown on the plaques in the Cattistock Room.

Today the Sheriff’s role is almost entirely ceremonial, acting as a support to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor when carrying out their civic duties and responsibilities. The Sheriff will not attend any engagements/functions alone, unless for the sole purpose of talking about the office of Sheriff.

The Coat of Arms

The first Coat of Arms was a confirmation by Clarenceux, King at Arms, in approximately 1563. It dated back to a seal of the late 1300s and so predated the setting up of the College of Heralds in 1484 and also the order of King Henry V in 1417, which forbade the bearing of arms without authority from the Crown. It was in 1948 that a written description of the Arm was confirmed but the College of Arms; clarifying the many variations in the colouring of the Blazon, authorising the Crest and incorporating a mermaid which had been used without authority for about 200 years.

The wavy bars (black and gold) typified water and the dolphins “the king of the sea”, just as the lion represents “king of the beasts”. The dolphin reminds us of past and present customs ie. Maritime activity.

The three scallop shells derive from the emblem of St James and remind us that St James is the Patron Saint of the Parish Church, Old Town Poole. The scallop shell was the badge of the pilgrim and crusader. On the Poole Coat of Arms it may be an allusion to William Longspee, Lord of the Manor, who was a gallant knight and crusader who gave Poole its first Charter in 1248. The pellet (or ogress) in the mermaid’s left hand may represent a canon ball and in the right a cable and anchor which calls to mind Poole’s maritime past.

The present Coat of Arms now has two supporters. This addition was granted by the College of Arms in 1976 and described in Heraldic terms as follows: “on the Dexter a lion holding a sword erect proper and on the Sinister a dragon supporting an oar argent upon a compartment per pale a grassy mound proper and water barry wavy azure and argent”. (Dexter means right, Sinister left; the custom of Heraldry is to speak out from the page and thus the Sinister supporter appears not on the left, but on the right, as one looks at the Coat of Arms). The supporters added to the Arms was a gift to the town by Lord Murton of Lindisfarne, the then Rt Hon Oscar Murton OBE TD JP MP, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, to commemorate his period of service as a Councillor and MP for Poole from 1964.

The motto – “Ad Morem Ville De Poole” means “According to the Custom of the Town of Poole”.

