

Taunton Charter Trustees - 2 October 2019

Present: Councillor Francesca Smith (Mayor)

Councillors Sue Lees (Deputy Mayor), Lee Baker, Chris Booth, Simon Coles, Caroline Ellis, Libby Lisgo, Martin Peters, Hazel Prior-Sankey, Federica Smith-Roberts, Alan Wedderkopp, Danny Wedderkopp and Brenda Weston

Officers: Jo Comer, Kate Murdoch, Matthew Parr, Clare Rendell and Amy Tregellas

Also Present: Councillor Dave Durdan

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

31. Apologies

No apologies had been received and all Charter Trustees were in attendance.

32. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Taunton Charter Trustees

(Minutes of the meeting of the Taunton Charter Trustees held on 7th August 2019 were circulated with the agenda)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Taunton Charter Trustees held on 7th August 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

33. Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr L Baker	All Items	Cheddon Fitzpaine & SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Coles	All Items	SCC & SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr Mrs Hill	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Lees	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr S Lees	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Lisgo	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Peters	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr H Prior-	All Items	SCC & SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Sankey				
Cllr F Smith	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr A Wedderkopp	All Items	SCC & SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Wedderkopp	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Councillor Smith-Roberts declared a personal interest in respect of Item 10 – Twinning Arrangements for 2020, as she was a Friend of Konigslutter.

Councillor Smith declared a personal interest in respect of Item 10 – Twinning Arrangements for 2020, as she was a Friend of Konigslutter.

Councillor Prior-Sankey declared a personal interest in respect of Item 10 – Twinning Arrangements for 2020, as she had taken part in the Civic Visit.

34. **Public Participation**

No members of the public had requested to speak at the meeting.

35. **Petitions**

No petitions from residents of Taunton had been received.

36. **Deputations**

No deputations from residents of Taunton had been received.

37. **Communications**

The Mayor confirmed that there were no communications to report.

38. **Motions to the Charter Trustees**

No motions to the Charter Trustees had been received.

39. **Presentation of gift from Friends of Konigslutter (FOK)**

The Mayor advised that a gift from the people of the twinned town of Konigslutter, Germany had been given to the Mayor when representatives from their town visited the town earlier this year. The Mayor informed Councillors that the town of Konigslutter had named a road after the Town – ‘Tauntonring’ and the possibility of this being reciprocated was mooted.

A letter had also been presented and this was translated and read out by Councillor Caroline Ellis, in which they apologised for the inability of the Mayor to attend the latest Civic Visit and stated that despite the recent political changes with the Council the friendship bonds with the town would remain.

The Mayor wished for this gift to be held in trust by the Charter Trustees of Taunton for the town, and this was officially presented by the Mayor to the Charter Trustees with a short recess for photographs to be taken.

40. **Twinning Arrangements for 2020**

Charter Trustees considered the circulated proposal to continue provision of a degree of financial support for the group's supporting Taunton's Twinning arrangements for 2020.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- The concept of twinning was fully supported. It was felt to not just be about the cultural links, but also economic and other learning benefits which would benefit the wider community.
- It was stated that as Charter Trustees for the town that the twinning groups should be supported, and the amount per household contribution to this was considered small.
- Twinning was felt to be more important than ever considering the wider position of the country, to building bridges and keeping good relationships with EU countries. It was queried as to the tangible outcomes from the funding that could be demonstrated to the people of Taunton to ensure Twinning stayed relevant.
- It was suggested that those that go on the foreign visits be invited to come back and share their insights upon their return.
- The Mayor clarified that she had gained an insight into the German Electric Car Industry upon her most recent visit to a Volkswagen factory near Konigslutter. She wished to see commerce and culture promoted far more.
- Concern was raised about the assertion in the report on the perceived unfairness of Somerset West and Taunton Council continuing to fund Taunton's Twinning support and not any other localities. Residents from the parished parts of Taunton went on these trips. It was stated that there seemed to be some inconsistency about which costs the Charter Trustees were expected to pick up.
- *This report had originally come before the Charter Trustees in June. From 1st April 2020 the Charter Trustees would be managing their own budget.*
- It was considered that the Charter Trustees did not have to provide a fixed sum and could request the twinning organisations to bid for an amount each year through the Standing Committee Grants process.

- Other Councillors felt that it was important to maintain the links and it was not unreasonable for the Charter Trustees to be approached for funding prior to the completion of a Community Governance Review.
- It was felt important to continue the widening of participation of the visits to Germany and France and including young people in Higher Education.
- It was clarified that the Lisieux link with Richard Huish was particularly strong and eight or nine students went across most years, with prizes given for their work.
- Concern was felt over the prospect of bidding in in terms of affecting the budget setting and not knowing the requirements of the organisation in advance, with a precepted budget for them to draw into.
- People that went on the trips paid for their own travel costs, with gifts and prizes funded.
- *Councillor Dave Durdan, Chair of Friends of Konigslutter (FOK), clarified that FOK raised a lot of their own funds throughout the year with meals, raffles, cream teas and other events, with the aim to raise £4000 over a two year period. This allowed the guests to be taken to various places when they visited Taunton for example, Sheppy's Cider. The number of Councillors they send over is not matched by Taunton.*
- *Magnus Stewart, Acting Chair of Lisieux Civic Twinning Link, stated that it was time for a renaissance for the twinning link, which would be 65 years next year from when the Charter was signed in 1955. The link had been started by Monsieur Parmin and Mr Trevett, two schoolmasters from Lisieux and Taunton respectively. An important part of the visits were the trip to the War Memorial in Lisieux. When the French visit all expenses were paid for by the Twinning Link apart from the Civic Dinner. There was no fundraising facility and the costs were met by the 25-35 participants. A new generation of people were needed to be involved. Plans were in motion for a celebration of the signing of the Charter, with the hope to give them an original copy and to plant a tree in memory in Vivary Park.*
- The Mayor stated that whilst the two groups were run and funded differently, the Charter Trustees should look to treat both equally as a principle.
- It was suggested that the twinning groups prepare a report to get the message across about who has benefitted from this, with possible involvement of young people and their gains from the trips.
- *Magnus Stewart clarified that the age of the pupils restricted their participation to those pupils that went to either Richard Huish College or Bridgwater and Taunton College. The link with the latter had fallen away but the former had been interrupted but was hoped to be restated. He had met with the SWT Portfolio Holder for Communications and Culture Councillor Allen which had been positive and believed that there was a much better understanding moving forward.*

RESOLVED that both Twinning Organisations were written to requesting more information on their costs and how they generate any funding for themselves, and the level of funding they required from Taunton Charter Trustees, which would form part of the Budget Discussions for 2020/21.

41. **Budget Options for 2020/21**

Charter Trustees were invited to discuss the initial budget options for 2020/21 financial year.

The SWT Monitoring Officer clarified that Finance were not able to attend the meeting. The s151 Officer had suggested that the Charter Trustees form a smaller sub-committee to meet with a couple of Finance Officers to discuss budgets, with the final report to come back to the main Charter Trustees to discuss. The powers and duties that fall on Charter Trustees was still being investigated as to whether an amount could be raised for Community Projects under s137 of the Local Government Act 1972. Legal advice was being sought on whether this applied to Charter Trustees as it did to Town and Parish Councils and this would be reported back.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- Concern was raised that the restriction under s137 Act of £8.61 would necessitate a larger leap once a successor body was formed.
- It was felt that the whole body of the Charter Trustees needed to be taken along together on the financials and not a smaller sub-set.
- It was raised that Councillors needed to be clear about their priorities and what we would want to spend that money for, with some serious consultation with residents of Taunton.
- *It was clarified that the priorities of the District were separate to the Charter Trustees as the entities were separate.*
- It was requested that a dedicated budget meeting was held before the end of October.
- *It was clarified that the Charter Trustee budget setting was standalone to the District, but would have to filter into the Billing process for Council Tax, as other Town's and Parishes were. The setting of a budget for a Town and Parish was very different to a District. The Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC) was suggested as a possible invitee into the process.*
- It was requested that guidance needed to be provided on what the Charter Trustees could do, with a breakdown of what the Unparished Area Fund was spent on in the last few years so that could be extrapolated going forward, for example, the cost of using the DLO for projects and whether we could go outside of the DLO.

RESOLVED that a meeting of the Charter Trustees was held to discuss budget setting before the end of October with Finance Officers from SWT and representatives from SALC invited.

42. **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) - Priorities**

Charter Trustees were given a verbal update on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for the Unparished Area of Taunton.

Kate Murdoch, SWT Strategy provided an update on what was currently in the CIL pot and what that could be spent on. CIL was a levy that was charged on development in the former Taunton Deane area since April 2014 and is calculated on the square meterage on new development. The Unparished Area was allocated CIL funding of 15% as a proportion of the levy is allocated to the Parish Council or other body in which that element has been collected. It was 25% if the locality had a Neighbourhood Development Plan. The CIL pot was just over £100,000 and should be allocated to specific infrastructure projects in the area. The CIL the District Council has to be spent on specific items on an Infrastructure List. The Trustees would need to look to mitigate development impact but would not be tied to this restricted list.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- Concern was raised over the time limit that applied, with potentially £45,000 of the pot needing to be spent by October 2020 or the charging authority requesting it back and the risk it could go into a wider strategic pot and not benefit the Unparished Area. Clarity was sought on whether the Trustees were acting in an advisory capacity in deciding how this was spent?
- The Strategy Officer's view was that the Trustees were still advisory until this body was a Town/Parish Council but this would need clarification.
- Clarity was sought on how elastic the term 'infrastructure' could be defined? Would material, and social considerations be able to be taken into account?
- *The definition was considered quite loose, as anything else addressing the demand development places on an area. The Trustees had more flexibility than SWT.*
- Concerns were raised that the Trustees did not have a plan in place as to how and where the £100,000 was to be spent and this would need to be codified.
- It was stated that this had been discussed at various meetings prior to the May Elections at the previous incarnation of this body and Cycling Infrastructure had been supported, and it also benefitted the Green Agenda.
- A suggestion was made that Climate Change was made a priority, with the emissions caused by Housing mitigated.
- *Infrastructure addressing Climate Change would probably qualify under the criteria e.g. solar panels for energy generation. The definition of infrastructure was fairly broad and if thought you could justify.*
- A query was raised as to whether CIL was subdivided by ward and whether there was an unfairness if it was not tied to where the development was in the Unparished Ward?
- It was felt that as the Charter Trustees had not declared a Climate Emergency then this body would need to pro-actively make that a priority with CIL monies. Councillors needed to take off their District Hat and look at what is the priority for the Unparished Area of Taunton as the guardians of the levy and what it is residents needed.

- A query was raised as to who policed what the Charter Trustee's decided to do with this money and whether there were any penalties for exceeding the boundaries. One of the priorities must be cleaning up the air in Taunton and providing a decent public transport system.
- It was stated that the support did not have to be tied to any specific development.

43. **CIL Funding Proposal - Cycling Infrastructure**

Charter Trustees were given information on the Taunton Town's Cycling Infrastructure Projects.

Matt Parr, Project Manager (Somerset West and Taunton Council) was in attendance along with Kate Murdoch. Kate Murdoch clarified that the purpose of this item was to seek a contribution from the CIL pot to the cycling infrastructure for the Coal Orchard development. However, Councillors may wish to make a wider contribution to address the concerns already raised. Councillors may have been made aware that SWT's bid to the Future High Street Fund was initially successful. As part of the Community Engagement Workshops that were undertaken one of the major issues raised was the need to improve cycling and walking pedestrian infrastructure in the Town Centre as well as cycle parking. A detailed draft business case was to be submitted to Government by the end of January, with the final one by April 2020. Officers were seeking an in principle decision to make a contribution from the CIL allocated to the Unparished Area pot to provide match funding SWT has already identified for cycling and walking infrastructure improvements. The Council would attract investment from Government if match funding was secured from the Charter Trustees. Officers would come back with further detail on what those projects were. Somerset County Council were currently working on the Local Cycling Infrastructure Plan, supported by the Taunton Area Cycling Campaign. Out of that work a list of projects would be prioritised and more detail would be provided.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- Councillors were keen to be provided with more detail and when this could be brought back for final decision?
- *Somerset County Council would submit to the Department for Transport at the beginning of November. The priority actions for the Town Centre from that plan will go into the Future High St Fund Bid. Officers could then come back to this body and ask for explicit support.*
- Councillors were supportive in principle but it was queried as to how much was required, was it the whole pot and how much were SWT providing? More detail was required for Councillors to have a view.
- It was felt that the Charter Trustees needed to create a set of priorities for the CIL pot before it was allocated to this project.
- Councillors felt that the Town Centre should not just be the sole focus of this pot of money as the Unparished Area encompassed a wider area than that.

- *Officers clarified that in terms of mitigating the impact of development cycling pedestrian developments were already on the Councils list and can be justified. Officers would be happy to come back when these projects were costed. SWT had £1.5 million for the Strategic CIL pot which could support the cycling pedestrian improvements in the bid. Officers were at this stage seeking a steer for an in principle commitment of some of that money or none at all?*
- It was considered that £100,000 would not pay for very much when it came to infrastructure.
- Some Councillors expressed support for putting the total amount of CIL money towards the High Street Fund Bid for improvements to the cycling pedestrian offer.
- Some Councillors were not in favour and felt this could be used towards a project of a cycle track from the Park and Ride into Taunton.
- Councillors queried when was the last opportunity to participate and decide whether in favour of committing funds to the Bid?
- The Draft bid would be submitted in January and so it was considered there was time to come back and for the Charter Trustees to identify their priorities in the interim.

RESOLVED that the Charter Trustees hold a meeting as soon as possible to discuss and agree the priority areas in recommending the allocated CIL funds in advance of a decision to provide financial support to the cycling pedestrian improvements in the Future High Street Fund Bid to Central Government.

44. **Community Governance Review Update**

Charter Trustees considered the briefing note on the Community Governance Review.

The Monitoring Officer introduced the proposed outline of a timetable for the Community Governance Review. It was important to note that any change would not come into effect until May 2023. It was considered prudent to leave a year of run-in time to complete the process by May 2022 to allow all policies and procedures to be taken into account. A wider governance review may be needed as other Towns and Parishes in the locality had requested this also. Terms of Reference would need to be drafted which would go out for consultation, with a final version reviewed and published in due course and once that was done the twelve month countdown for completion would start. Officers were currently scoping out what a review would look like and what dedicated resource would be needed to do this piece of work.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- *It would be researched into what other Councils have done and other models of good practice in Terms of Reference would be looked at.*
- *It was suggested that the Charter Trustees contact the Association to see if any other areas had gone through a similar process.*

- Councillors queried whether the District Council could undertake a review so soon after re-organisation and the Boundary Review undertaken for the formation of a new Council?
- *It was clarified that a Boundary Commission review was different to a Council Led Review which this would be.*
- Councillors were keen to know when the earliest start date might be and that a lot of big decisions were needed to be gotten right in the next 3-4 months.
- A query was raised on a scenario where the area might or might not be a Town Council and bigger or smaller than the current Unparished Area. Would the Boundary Commission be involved at all?
- *If required the Boundary Commission would need to be involved at the earliest possible date. Once the final terms of reference were agreed the consultation would involve the Boundary Commission.*
- Clarity was sought as to whether the Charter Trustees would contribute to the Review?
- *As the Review would be district wide the costs would be borne by the District. The Finance team could be requested to clarify.*
- *A report would be brought back providing further detail in early 2020.*

RESOLVED that the Charter Trustees of Taunton were supportive of the proposed Community Governance Review Timetable and in officers to move the review forward.

45. **Consultation Response - Electric Vehicle Charging Points**

Charter Trustees considered their consultation response to the Electric Vehicle Charging Points.

The Monitoring Officer stated that the SWT Portfolio Holder for Climate Change had written to all Town and Parish Councils about a pot of money that could be bid for to support the installation of Electric Vehicle Charging Points in the District. The timescales were too short but Councillors were recommended to suggest land for use even if the Council was not the owner.

RESOLVED that the Charter Trustees of Taunton were supportive of the District Council installing Electric Vehicle Charging Points where they thought appropriate in the Unparished Area of Taunton but were not able to submit a bid as they were not the owners nor had any responsibility for any land in the Unparished Area.

46. **Consultation Response - Phone Boxes**

Charter Trustees considered their consultation response to BT Phone Box consultation. All Town and Parish Councillors had been made aware of the potential closure of 39 phone boxes across the district earmarked by BT.

During the discussion of this item, Members made comments and asked questions which included:-

- It was felt that a response was needed to be provided, especially in areas of deprivation or vulnerability.
- This was not public money involved but a request of BT to keep these open.
- Concerns were raised around the risks, especially in areas of high domestic violence, where this could be the only route for some women to make a call.
- Had notices been put on each of the phone boxes advising of the closure?
- *None had been provided by BT.*
- As there was no cost to the Charter Trustees or to SWT, it was suggested that there was no incentive to consent to close any of the phone boxes and there would be no public goodwill to do so.
- It was requested as to whether the calls could be broken down into those that were for Emergency Services.
- The need to keep them open also was balanced with whether to do so would fuel anti-social behaviour such as drug dealing. It was suggested the local beat team were invited to comment as to whether they had concerns.
- It was requested to find out how many of these were of the classic red box design as these were hoped to be kept or turned into something else.

RESOLVED that the Charter Trustees be provided with the information on phone boxes in their ward area to feedback with a response as to whether to close via email to Officers go into the final consultation response.

(The Meeting ended at 8.37 pm)