

Taunton Charter Trustees AGM

Tuesday, 25th May, 2021,
6.00 pm

The John Meikle Room - The Deane
House



Somerset West
and Taunton

[SWT MEETING WEBCAST LINK](#)

Members: Francesca Smith (Chair), Sue Lees (Vice-Chair), Lee Baker, Chris Booth, Simon Coles, Caroline Ellis, Marcia Hill, Richard Lees, Libby Lisgo, Derek Perry, Martin Peters, Hazel Prior-Sankey, Federica Smith-Roberts, Alan Wedderkopp, Danny Wedderkopp and Brenda Weston

Agenda

1. Election of Mayor of Taunton

Councillor Richard Lees to propose and Councillor Simon Coles to second:-

"That Councillor Susan Lees be elected Mayor of Taunton for the ensuing year".

If the motion is carried, Councillor Susan Lees will arrange to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

2. Deputy Mayor of Taunton

Councillor Francesca Smith to propose and Councillor Lee Baker to second:-

"That Councillor Brenda Weston be elected Deputy Mayor of Taunton for the ensuing year".

If the motion is carried, Councillor Brenda Weston will arrange to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

3. Councillor Francesca Smith - A Councillor to propose and a Councillor to second:-

"That the best thanks of the Charter Trustees be accorded to Councillor Francesca Smith for the manner in which she has discharged the duties of the office of Mayor of the Town

during her two terms of office".

Councillor Smith will reply.

4. The Mayor will present to Councillor Smith her Past Mayor Badge.

5. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence.

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

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee.

7. Declarations of Interest

To receive and note any declarations of disclosable pecuniary or prejudicial or personal interests in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting.

(The personal interests of Councillors and Clerks of Somerset County Council, Town or Parish Councils and other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the minutes.)

8. To receive any questions or statements from residents of Taunton in accordance with Standing Order 30

The Chair to advise the Committee of any items on which members of the public have requested to speak and advise those members of the public present of the details of the Council's public participation scheme.

For those members of the public who have submitted any questions or statements, please note, a three minute time limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak before Councillors debate the issue.

Temporary measures during the Coronavirus pandemic

Due to the temporary legislation (within the Coronavirus Act 2020, which allowed for use of virtual meetings) coming to an end on 6 May 2021, the council's committee meetings will now take place in the office buildings at the John Meikle Room, Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton. Unfortunately due to capacity requirements the Chamber at West Somerset House is not able to be used at this current moment.

Following the Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), the council meeting rooms will have very limited capacity. With this in

(Pages 5 - 12)

mind, we will only be allowing those members of the public who have registered to speak to attend the meetings in person at the office buildings, if they wish. (We will still be offering to those members of the public that are not comfortable in attending, for their statements to be read out by a member of the Governance team). Please can we urge all members of the public who are only interested in listening to the debate to view our live webcasts from the safety of their own home to help prevent the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

9. Appointment of Members of the Standing Committee 2021/2022

(Pages 13 - 14)

To appoint Charter Trustees, from nominations received from each group, to serve on the Standing Committee for the year 2021/2021. The proposed 'Powers and Duties' of the Standing Committee are set out in the attached document. If the Committee allocated politically proportionally as per the Standing Orders there would be 6 Liberal Democrats and 1 Labour seat, though it was within the gift of the political groups as to whether they took up their full entitlement.

10. Any items which the Mayor considers to be Urgent Business

11. An intercessional Prayer will be offered by the new Mayor's Chaplain at the conclusion of the meeting.



**JAMES HASSETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Please note that this meeting will be recorded. You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected during the recording will be retained in accordance with the Council's policy. Therefore unless you are advised otherwise, by taking part in the Council Meeting during Public Participation you are consenting to being recorded and to the possible use of the sound recording for access via the website or for training purposes. If you have any queries regarding this please contact the officer as detailed above.

Following Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will be live webcasting our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, but you can also access them on the [Somerset West and Taunton webcasting website](#).

If you would like to ask a question or speak at a meeting, you will need to submit your request to a member of the Governance Team in advance of the meeting. You can request to speak at a Council meeting by emailing your full name, the agenda item and your question to the Governance Team using governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Any requests need to be received by 4pm on the day that provides 2 clear working days before the meeting (excluding the day of the meeting itself). For example, if the meeting is due to take place on a Tuesday, requests need to be received by 4pm on the Thursday prior to the meeting.

The Governance and Democracy Case Manager will take the details of your question or speech and will distribute them to the Committee prior to the meeting. The Chair will then invite you to speak at the beginning of the meeting under the agenda item Public Question Time, but speaking is limited to three minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes and you can only speak to the Committee once. If there are a group of people attending to speak about a particular item then a representative should be chosen to speak on behalf of the group.

Please see below for Temporary Measures during Coronavirus Pandemic and the changes we are making to public participation:-

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Full Council, Executive, and Committee agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Governance and Democracy Team via email: governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please email: governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Taunton Charter Trustees - 16 March 2021 held via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Councillor Francesca Smith (Mayor)

Councillors Sue Lees, Lee Baker, Chris Booth, Simon Coles, Caroline Ellis, Marcia Hill, Richard Lees, Libby Lisgo, Derek Perry, Hazel Prior-Sankey, Federica Smith-Roberts and Brenda Weston

Officers: Jo Comer, Marcus Prouse and Amy Tregellas

Also Present: Councillor Loretta Whetlor

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

37. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Martin Peters.

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

(Minutes of the meeting of the Taunton Charter Trustees held on 10th December 2020 circulated with the agenda)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Taunton Charter Trustees held on 10th December 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

39. 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 H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC & SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted

Cllr F Smith-Roberts	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr B Weston	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet	Personal	Spoke

Cllr H Prior-Sankey declared a personal interest in relation to Item 13 – Appointment of a Platinum Jubilee Champion, as her husband was the Assistant Secretary of the Rotary Club in Taunton and had written the letter included within the Agenda pack.

40. **Public Participation**

The Charter Trustees were advised that no members of the public had requested to speak or ask questions.

41. **Petitions**

The Clerk advised that no petitions to the Charter Trustees had been received.

42. **Motions to the Charter Trustees**

The Clerk advised that no motions to the Charter Trustees had been received.

43. **Communications**

The Mayor advised of the different events she had recently taken part in since the previous meeting of the Charter Trustees. The Mayor had attended that morning a meeting of the Taunton Heritage Trust as Patron.

Attached with the Agenda were further details of the vouchers which were distributed to those in need at Christmas, funded by the Alderman Spears contribution to the Mayor's Christmas Fund. In January the Mayor had attended the Somerset Scouts AGM.

For Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27th 2021, the Mayor had released a video of a poem reading. The Mayor had also attended several Town Centre Working Group meetings as one of the Charter Trustee's representatives alongside Councillor Derek Perry. The Mayor advised that she would be writing to the Bishop of Bath and Wells as he had recently announced their retirement, to wish him well in his retirement and thank him for all his support. The Legal Service usually held at Wells Cathedral is being held virtually on Sunday 21st March which she hoped to attend. The Deputy Mayor will be attending the Carnival Committee in the Mayor's absence. The Mayor thanked Jo Comer, Civic Specialist, on behalf of the Charter Trustees for delivering to the Police, Fire and Ambulance Services biscuits to thank them for their work, which usually would have been done at Christmas time but had to wait until the end of February due to the lockdown situation.

Cllr Lisgo requested further information and feedback to be circulated on the Town Centre Working Group in due course. The Mayor advised that she would confirm when these details could be shared more widely.

44. **To answer questions under Standing Order 8**

No questions were put by any Charter Trustee.

45. **To receive and consider reports, minutes and recommendations of the Standing Committee (if any)**

The Clerk advised members of the two decision notices which had been included within the Agenda pack. The first one set out the process for sign-off which would now be undertaken by the SWT Corporate Resources Portfolio Holder. The second decision form related to the last Standing Committee recommendations which had been approved in November. The Clerk had sent around a further update on the Whirligig Lane proposal via email earlier in the week.

Cllr Smith-Roberts advised that further conversations were needed on the Whirligig Lane matter, as it was understood to be a County Council asset that the Charter Trustees would like to see improved. It was disappointing that the County Council were not repairing the lane to a Heritage standard and/or covering the costs of this repair. She suggested that a letter was written to the Leader of the County Council to explain this in depth and get the involvement of more senior Councillors and Officers at the County Council. Councillor Prior-Sankey supported this and recommended Alyn Jones and Michele Cusack should be approached to establish what the issues are. Councillor Perry cautioned against setting a precedent. The Mayor requested officers to seek further clarification and a potential partnership on these matters before the next meeting of the Charter Trustees. Cllr Smith-Roberts suggested that there needed to be a mechanism for raising the public's concern on this matter to the County Council.

Councillor Lisgo queried that the change in decision maker sign-off from the Mayor of Taunton to the SWT Corporate Resources Portfolio Holder, that the best interests of the Charter Trustees were to be maintained?

The Clerk clarified that the change occurred in consultation with the SWT s151 Officer who had advised that the Charter Trustees should only have direct control over those funds needed to manage their own responsibilities for the Taunton Mayoralty.

46. **Community Governance Review for the Unparished Area of Taunton**

The Mayor advised that the Governance Manager of SWT was in attendance to speak to this item and explain the next steps.

The Governance Manager explained that a report was to be taken to SWT Full Council on the 30th March 2021 requesting a cross party working group is set up to look at the Community Governance Review for the Unparished Area of Taunton. The recommendations reinforced that the former Taunton Deane Borough Council had resolved to undertake this, with a view to a new entity being set up by May 2023, and would tie into Unitarisation plans for 1st April 2023. Whilst Charter Trustees would be kept informed via regular progress reports, the responsibility for the review still sat with Somerset West and Taunton Council. A timetable was attached to the report as an Annex.

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

- In regards to the Working Group, it was queried as to whether the significant number of Taunton based Councillors who had an interest in this matter would be ensured a place?
- *The decision was for SWT Full Council, but if Council was minded to agree the Group Leaders would come forward with the names of the appropriate Councillors on said Group. Members of the Executive could serve on the Working Group. Individual Councillors could respond to the consultation as well as the Charter Trustees as a body, and other Parish Councils on the boundary.*
- Concern was raised that there was sufficient staff resource to carry out this exercise?
- *The Governance team had a high workload and this project would be prioritised, a business case for extra resource would be taken to the Senior Management Team but this was not required at this moment in time. Other teams would be involved such as Communications and Elections.*
- A suggestion was made that a pre-agreement for extra resource was put in place before starting this work.
- What would be the position of the Charter Trustees if there were multiple parishes wished to be set up being the ultimate outcome of this exercise?
- *The Charter Trustees and Taunton Mayoralty would remain in existence until any future arrangements were stood up, the Working Group would look at the options and their impact on the Taunton Mayoralty.*
- It was raised as to why the option for a Town Council had not been identified as the proposed option already, as other localities of a similar size had this form of Governance and could SWT promote this as the preferred choice?
- *No option was off the table at the moment, but once the Working Group was set up and the preferred option was a Town Council that it is narrowed down when the Terms of Reference is considered, but it is inappropriate to do so at this stage.*
- There was a need for the Charter Trustees to have on their Agenda regularly to have a discussion and collectively feedback viewpoints to the Working Group.
- *The Working Group would be expected to meet with the Charter Trustees to understand their views.*

- It was requested that the recommendation was amended to reflect that a Town Council as well as a Parish Council was a potential option.
- *This would be taken on board and happy to be made more explicit.*
- It was urged that this process was kept as simple as possible.
- It was queried whether the Charter Trustees would continue if the area remained Unparished under a unitary position?
- *This would need to be investigated and legal advice sought.*
- Concern was raised as to how the Working Group would balance the strength and number of responses received from various parties to ensure justice and a fair result was given to the residents of the Unparished area?
- *A communications plan would outline how there would be an equality of opportunity to comment on the plans.*
- It was suggested that just looking at the Unparished area may be a simpler exercise now and then in a few years' time the question of including other Parishes nearby was looked at again rather than now.
- A query was raised as to whether the unitary campaigns were still suggesting that a Minister would be able to just take a decision to parish the Taunton area and thus make the Review redundant.
- *At the Somerset Monitoring Officers Group meetings, this review was discussed and Somerset County Council were keen for this to get underway and deliver the new arrangements by 1st April 2023. It would be a surprise for this process to be interrupted once underway and the Charter Trustees would expect to be consulted as the representatives of the Unparished Area of Taunton.*
- A query was raised as to the typical powers of a Parish/Town Council and what powers the new body would have?
- *The legal duties of a Town/Parish Council are clearly laid out in statute. As part of the scoping during the process, conversations with Officers would be expected to take place around Assets etc. in readiness for the Shadow arrangements.*
- It was commented that it would be a Shadow Unitary Authority that would be negotiating with the Shadow Parish or Town Council grouping.

RESOLVED that a letter be written on behalf of the Charter Trustees for Taunton to the SWT Corporate Resources Portfolio Holder to urge him to ensure that the Community Governance Review is considered SWT Council's highest corporate priority in the forthcoming year, in relation to governance matters under his portfolio. The letter was to also urge that resources are in place to complete this task, with a contingency built in now, so that if unexpected matters do arise in year this project does not get waylaid. The letter would highlight that with an impending decision on unitary status expected soon, it is considered fundamentally essential that this project is progressed at this time, so that the residents of Taunton do not continue to suffer any democratic deficit by the time any new unitary authority is stood up. Copies of the letter would be sent to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government, as well as the One Somerset and Stronger Somerset campaigns to ensure they are aware of the forthcoming Community Governance Review for the Unparished Area of Taunton.

47. **Appointment of Internal Auditor**

Following the recommendations of the External Auditor PKF Littlejohn LLP in their Notice of conclusion of audit – Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31 March 2020, that *“In future years, the smaller authority must maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems”*. Officers had sought quotations from various companies.

RESOLVED that the Taunton Charter Trustees appoint IAC Audit & Consultancy Ltd as their Internal Auditor for the 2020/21 and 2021/2022 municipal years.

48. **Purchase of Past Mayor and Past Consort Badges**

The Clerk introduced the item, which set out the quotes obtained and clarified the total expected price, which would be £1700 for the die and one copy of each. Past Mayor and Consort badges were given in recognition of the significant commitment made in undertaking the role, as an award to acknowledge and thank them for their contribution.

RESOLVED in principle to approve the purchase of x1 Past Mayor Pendant and x1 Past Consort Badge, to be funded from the Mayoral Civic Activity Budget, subject to final amendment of the design taking into account the comments provided.

49. **Appointment of Platinum Jubilee Champion**

The Rotary Club of Taunton was hosting an on-line gathering of as many ‘Jubilee champions’ as wished to attend. The initial get-together would take place at 7pm on Wednesday 24 March 2021, a meeting of an informal liaison group to share information about activities to celebrate The Queen’s Platinum (70th) Jubilee.

Councillors Booth and Francesca Smith would attend the meeting in an informal capacity and report back. If required to nominate a formal representative this could be affirmed at a future meeting of the Charter Trustees.

50. **Mayor Making 21/22**

As per the adopted processes of the Charter Trustees, the Clerk had written to all those who met the criteria asking if they wished to be considered in February, with announcements normally made in March, except during an election year. The Clerk had received two valid nominations for taking on the roles of Mayor of Taunton and Deputy Mayor of Taunton in 2021/2022, one for each role and the nominations period closed on 19th February 2021.

Councillor Richard Lees has proposed that current Deputy Mayor Councillor Susan Lees be nominated to take up the role of Mayor of Taunton for the municipal year 2021/22. This has been seconded by Councillor Simon Coles.

Councillor Francesca Smith has proposed that Councillor Brenda Weston be nominated to take up the role of Deputy Mayor of Taunton for the municipal year 2021/22. This has been seconded by Councillor Lee Baker. These nominations had been considered valid by the Clerk.

The Mayor Making ceremony where these nominations are to be affirmed is still expected to take place at the Annual General Meeting of the Taunton Charter Trustees in June 2021, but as each position is uncontested there was no need to undertake any further selection processes.

Councillors congratulated Cllrs Lees and Weston and wished them well for their Mayoral year.

(The Meeting ended at 7.55 pm)

The Charter Trustees of the Town of Taunton

Powers and Duties of the Standing Committee

A Standing Committee of seven Members representing Wards in the Unparished Area of Taunton will be appointed by the Charter Trustees of the Town of Taunton. Membership of the Standing Committee will reflect the political balance in the Unparished Area.

The Standing Committee will act on behalf of the Charter Trustees to:-

- 1 Select annually, for election by the Charter Trustees, the Mayor and a Deputy Mayor of Taunton and ensure a smooth transition of responsibility in the event of the Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor being unable, for any reason, to complete his or her term of office, according to the following criteria:-

Candidates for the roles of Mayor and Deputy Mayor shall be drawn from the 16 Charter Trustees. Nominations must be supported by the signatures of at least two fellow Charter Trustees on a form to be provided by the Clerk to the Charter Trustees. There will be no canvassing after nominations have closed.

The Standing Committee will expect to receive at least one valid nomination for each office during the month of February. If one or more nominations are received for the same office the final decision will rest with the full body of the Charter Trustees. Each Charter Trustee will have one vote. The Standing Committee will have the responsibility for resolving all issues relating to the selection of a Mayor and a Deputy Mayor.

The Charter Trustees will be responsible for ensuring that all potential candidates are given the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge to enable them to maintain the high standard of the Office of Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Candidates must represent a Ward in the Unparished Area of Taunton. They must have served at least three years as a former Taunton Deane Borough Councillor or as a Somerset West and Taunton Councillor to be nominated as Mayor and two years as a former Taunton Deane Borough Councillor or as a Somerset West and Taunton Councillor to be nominated as Deputy Mayor.

In February the Clerk will write to all those who meet the criteria asking if they wish to be considered. The announcements will normally be made in March, except during an election year, when the selection of Mayor and Deputy Mayor will be delayed until after the local elections.

If the Mayor or Deputy Mayor is unable to complete his/her term of office and stands down, the procedure detailed above will be followed but the timescale will be adjusted to permit the Clerk to write immediately to all those who meet the criteria asking if they wish to be considered and the announcement will be made as soon as the Mayor or Deputy Mayor (as the case may be) has been elected.

If the Mayor or Deputy Mayor is unable to fulfil his/her role but does not wish to stand down, after six weeks of incapacity the Standing Committee will be asked to consider whether or not the Mayor or (as may be the case) Deputy Mayor should remain in office and after twelve weeks of incapacity the term of office of the Mayor or (as the case may be) Deputy Mayor shall automatically terminate, unless the Standing Committee considers that there are extenuating circumstances.

- 2 Prepare and recommend to the Charter Trustees, the civic estimates and further required funding for the following Year.
- 3 Deal, in principle, with requests for civic hospitality.
- 4 Give advice or guidance to, and ensure the provision of proper support for, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor whenever appropriate.
- 5 Prepare and recommend to the Charter Trustees policies with regard to:-
 - A Civic twinning;
 - B Civic representation at community events; and
 - C The holding, safety, curation and care of all items of civic property which has been given to the Charter Trustees by Somerset West and Taunton Council.
- 6 (i) Consider applications from Charter Trustees or Community Groups in the Unparished Area of Taunton for grant funding towards projects or schemes which will be of benefit to residents of the Unparished Area. The funding is currently derived from the Special Expenses Precept levied on Council Tax payers in the Unparished Area. The Charter Trustee who has made an application will be expected to attend the meeting of the Standing Committee to present his/her application and be 'on hand' to respond to questions or queries Members of the Standing Committee might have. A representative(s) of a Community Group will similarly be expected to attend the meeting of the Standing Committee to present their application.

(ii) Recommend to the Mayor of Taunton whether funding should be awarded for the projects or schemes which have been considered. Circulate the Mayor's decisions to all Members of the Charter Trustees.
- 7 Delegate to the Clerk to the Charter Trustees such tasks and responsibilities as are necessary for him/her to provide the required support to the Charter Trustees.
- 8 Deal with all other matters falling within the powers and duties of the Charter Trustees, except for those matters reserved for decision by the full body of the Charter Trustees as specified in 'The Charter Trustees of the Town of Taunton - Functions and Responsibilities'.