

CHARTER TRUSTEES FOR THE CITY OF DURHAM

At the **Meeting** of the **Charter Trustees for the City of Durham** held in the Committee Room 1A, County Hall, Durham on Wednesday 19 June 2019 at 12.00 pm.

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Durham, Councillor K Corrigan (in the Chair) and Councillors D Bell, J Blakey, L Brown, S Dunn, D Freeman, D Hall, A Hopgood, L Hovvels, B Kellett, C Marshall, E Scott, M Simmons, A Simpson, P Taylor, J Turnbull and M Wilkes.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors J Chaplow, J Lethbridge, E Mavin, L Mavin, M McKeon, R Ormerod, D Stoker, F Tinsley and M Wilson.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Revenue Outturn for the year ending 31 March 2019

Charter Trustees considered a report of the Treasurer that provided information on the 2018/19 final revenue outturn (for copy see file of minutes).

The Treasurer reported that the actual net revenue expenditure for 2018/19 was £62,184, an underspend of £5,231 against a budget of £67,415. He confirmed that £6,855 would be a transfer from reserves, reducing the reserve balance to £63,417 as of 31 March 2019.

The Treasurer highlighted that Charter Trustees were now attracting bank charges due to Durham County Council changing bank accounts and were no longer the overarching authority for Charter Trustees. He added that the Finance Team were in discussions with the bank regarding the charges and suggested that Charter Trustees may be required to change bank accounts. The Treasurer would provide an update on the outcome at the next meeting.

Councillor Wilkes questioned why Charter Trustees had not been made aware of the additional bank charges sooner and given time to consider changing banks as the extra £2,000 was not in the original budget. The Treasurer explained that there had been an oversight when Durham County Council changed banks resulting in Charter Trustees being charged for the account as the County Council were no longer the overarching authority.

Councillor Hopgood felt that it was unreasonable to incur charges when the Charter Trustee account was permanently in credit. She added that the account was not a business account, therefore should not incur any costs at all.

Referring to the oversight, Councillor Hopgood highlighted that Charter Trustees are charged for administration and support services which covers back office costs and felt it was unacceptable to have an additional £2,000 added for bank charges. The Treasurer advised that the Finance Team were currently in discussions with the bank to seek reimbursement. He assured that if the Finance Team were unsuccessful with the bank, then Charter Trustees would be reimbursed by the County Council and alternative banking arrangements would be sought.

Councillor Hovvells noted that banks often waive charges for charitable organisations and agreed with the course of action to ask to waive charges on this occasion.

The Treasurer confirmed that a proposal for alternative bank arrangements would be reported at the next meeting.

Resolved:-

- i) That the final outturn position for the financial year ended 31 March 2019 be noted;
- ii) That an update on bank charges and proposal for alternative bank arrangements be reported at the next meeting.

5 Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2019

Charter Trustees considered a report of the Treasurer seeking approval of the Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements for the financial year ended 31 March 2019, which were included in the Annual Return (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:-

That the Annual Return (Sections 1 and 2) for the financial year ended 31 March 2019 be approved.

6 Honorary Position - Pant Master

Charter Trustees considered a report of the Clerk which informed Trustees of the resignation of Miss Sharon Spence as Pant Master and sought confirmation of appointment of successor (for copy see file of minutes).

The Governance Solicitor advised that at the time of writing the report there had been one expression of interest from Dr Bill Moir. Since then, a further expression of interest had been received from Mr Mac Williams JP, details of which had been circulated to Charter Trustees in advance of the meeting.

Councillor Turnbull queried the process as the Pant Master position had always been filled by an officer of the Council. He added that the two interested parties were not officers of the Council therefore the position should be open to anyone. The Governance Solicitor acknowledged that historically the Pant Master position had previously been an officer of Durham County Council, however no expressions of interest had been received from officers.

Councillor C Marshall expressed concern with the overall process with regards to being open and transparent. He emphasised that Charter Trustees should ensure this role was being considered properly before any decision was made.

Councillor Wilkes commented that it would be more appropriate to have a vote on paper rather than a show of hands.

The Governance Solicitor confirmed that the situation was unique to previous years and that the process had been detailed within the report. She explained that it would be for Charter Trustees to consider how they would want to proceed with the vote.

Councillor Freeman highlighted that one of the candidates was also the Mayors consort and queried if there would be an issue in carrying out duties. The Governance Solicitor explained that the matter had been explored by the Clerk and assurances were given by the candidate that he would be able to distinguish between both roles.

Councillor Hopgood proposed that the Honorary Position of Pant Master be advertised inviting other expressions of interest and a ballot paper vote take place at a Special Charter Trustee meeting which could be arranged after full Council in July. The Governance Solicitor suggested a small working group be arranged to consider the points raised and then report back to a future meeting.

Councillor Hovvells was in favour of the working group and suggested that the working group also look at updating the Charter Trustee Standing Orders for these appointments as things have moved on and it was necessary to have a clear understanding moving forward to eliminate any confusion.

Councillor Turnbull referred to information received from County Durham Association of Local Councils (CDALC) and raised the question what would happen if Charter Trustees were dissolved. He explained that the information was originally circulated by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) which was forwarded to all Town and Parish Councils explaining procedures and the stance from Government with regards to Charter Trustees.

Following a brief discussion regarding communication of the information that not all Charter Trustees had received, the Governance Solicitor advised that she would obtain the information and report back to Charter Trustees.

Resolved:

- i) That a working group be arranged comprising of Councillors Hopgood, Hovvels, Kellett and Simmons to look at advertising the Honorary Position of Pant Master;
- ii) That the information circulated by the CDALC be obtained and details reported to the next meeting.

The Mayor agreed that in order to keep members informed, the next item of business could be reported.

7 Working Group for the Appointment of Deputy Mayor

The Governance Solicitor referred to the Charter Trustee meeting on the 27 March 2019 regarding a working group to look at criteria options for the appointment of Deputy Mayor. The Governance Solicitor asked for nominations for the working group and advised that the findings would be reported back to the meeting in October 2019.

Councillor Turnbull suggested that an email be circulated to include Charter Trustees who were not present at the meeting.

Seconded by Councillor Hovvels, Councillor Kellett moved that the working group consist of five Charter Trustees, three Labour members and two minority group members.

It was then moved and seconded that the working group consist of six Charter Trustees, three Labour members, two Lib Dem members and one Independent member.

Upon a vote being taken, it was **Resolved:**

That the working group consist of six Charter Trustees, three Labour members, two Lib Dem members and one Independent member.