

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 Monday 11 November 2013 at 1.00 pm

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Durham, Councillor P Charlton (in the Chair) and Councillors J Blakey, D Bell, J Chaplow, P Conway, N Foster, K Corrigan, S Guy, G Holland, N Martin, B Moir, M Nicholls, R Ormerod, M Plews, P Taylor and M Williams

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Armstrong, A Bonner, J Buckham, D Freeman, D Hall, A Hopgood, M Simmons, J Turnbull and M Wilkes.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

3 Declarations of interest, if any

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Financial Arrangements for the Shared Mayor of the City of Durham and Chairman of Durham County Council

Charter Trustees for the City of Durham considered a report of the Treasurer which updated upon the impact of the Charter Trustees Budget of the revised arrangements for the Mayor of the City of Durham and Chairman of the County Council (for copy see file of minutes).

The Treasurer proceeded to highlight the key areas of the budget which were impacted upon by the new arrangements. It was reported that the savings made from the new arrangements, would set the Charter Trust up to reduce its costs by circa 50% in 2014/15.

Trustees also welcomed the decision taken by the Mayor and Deputy to not accept allowances for their roles, however it was noted that they would be entitled to claim for out of pocket expenses.

Councillor Martin raised a query regarding town hall costs and office charges at County Hall for the Mayor's Secretary. The Treasurer advised that at this current time there was no charge being passed to the Charter Trust for the use of office space in County Hall. Councillor Martin asked for further clarification regarding this issue as he did not feel it was appropriate for the county tax payer to be subsidising the Charter Trustees, and felt it may damage the reputation of the Trust.

Some Trustees however were of the opinion that the Trust would not wish to incur further costs and welcomed the assistance from Durham County Council and queried what the alternative option would be. The Treasurer agreed to investigate this further and report back to a future meeting.

Resolved:

That the new financial arrangements be approved by the Charter Trust.

5 Conclusion of Audit for the year ended 31 March 2013

Charter Trustees for the City of Durham considered a report of the Treasurer which advised of the completion of the audit of the annual return for the financial year ending 31 March 2013, which was carried out by BDO LLP (the external auditor of the Charter Trustees) (for copy see file of minutes).

The Treasurer reported that the audit had concluded that there were no matters which required the issuing of a separate additional issues arising report.

Resolved:

That the Charter Trustees approve the audited annual return for 2012/13.

6 Revenue Outturn for the period ending 30 September 2013 and Projected Outturn to 31 March 2014

The Charter Trustees for the City of Durham considered a report of the Treasurer which provided information on the actual expenditure compared to the profiled budget, for the period ending 30 September 2013; and forecasted expenditure to 31 March 2014 in comparison to the 2013/14 original budget (for copy see file of minutes).

The Treasurer reported that at 30 September 2013 actual net expenditure was £22,472; an underspend of £11,161 against a profiled budget of £33,633. However as a consequence of the decision that the roles of Mayor of the City of Durham and Chairman of Durham County Council be undertaken by one person; it was anticipated that actual expenditure at 31 March 2014 would be significantly lower than the original budget and subsequently there would not be a need to draw from reserves, in order to balance the budget.

Explanations for the main variances were contained in the report and it was noted that there would be further variances during the course of year as a result of the new arrangements.

The Treasurer further provided details of the forecast of expenditure to 31 March and details regarding the general reserve balance. It was reported that a contribution of £27,353 would be available towards the reserves, giving a total reserve balance of £62,708.

Councillor Holland raised a query regarding the transport aspect of the budget and asked whether there had been no transport provided during August and September as no costs were shown in Appendix 3 for these months. In addition he queried whether the contract with Lee's Coaches had been discontinued. In response the Treasurer advised that transport would have been used during those months, however it was likely that the invoices for those trips had not as yet been issued from the supplier. With regard to the use of Lee's Coaches, it was noted that there was no contract in place, but the firm were simply used on an adhoc basis.

The Mayor advised that the County Council's vehicle was being used on a trial basis to transport the Bodyguard and their equipment and had significant cost benefits.

Councillor Holland advised that one of the guards had approached him and had advised that they had experienced some difficulties with the new arrangements. It was noted that using a bus firm did have significant cost implications however; the Mayor advised that she would follow this up and transport arrangements would continue to be monitored and reviewed.

Councillor Martin raised a query regarding the cost of the collection of the Mayors Robe. In response the Clerk advised that due to the delicate nature of the fabric of the robes, they had been returned to the Company who had produced the garment for specialist cleaning. This had been after being advised by a local robe making company to use the original manufacturer as they were not prepared to risk damaging the robe through the cleaning process. On this occasion some necessary refurbishment was also required which should help prolong the life of the garment. As it was essential that the robe was cleaned, refurbished and returned in a short space of time for Mayor Making the robe had been sent by courier, the method used previously when the robes had been cleaned by the former Durham City Council. The robe, which was 30 years old, had not been cleaned for 7 years.

Resolved:

- (i) That the outturn position for the period ended 30 September 2013 be noted.
- (ii) That the forecast outturn to 31 March 2014 be noted.

7 2014/15 Budget Setting Process

The Charter Trustees for the City of Durham considered a report of the Treasurer which sought agreement on the timetable and process for setting the budget and council tax requirement for the Charter Trustees for 2014/15 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Treasurer advised that early indications showed that the council tax base for 2014/15 would reduce by 46.4 (from £23,854.0 to 23,807.6) as a result of this decrease the council tax receivable would decrease by 176.32 from £90,645.20 to £90,468.88 at the current Band D rate.

Further information was provided in respect of the anticipated Local Council Tax Support Scheme, and it was noted that the amount payable to the Charter Trustees for 2014/15 would reduce by £9,360 (by £1,038 from £10,398 in 2013/14).

In addition it was also reported that there was also a possibility that a Council Tax capping control could be imposed on Town and Council Parish Councils from 2014/15.

In conclusion the Treasurer proposed that members of the budget working group meet early December to discuss the budget prior to the full meeting scheduled to be held on 8 January 2014. Further information may also be available at that time from the Council's Constitution Working Group.

Resolved:

- (i) That a working group be established to consider options on the level of budget and council tax required for 2014/15 and report their recommendations to Charter Trustees at the meeting on 8 January 2014;
- (ii) That the precept be agreed at the meeting scheduled to be held 8 January 2014;
- (iii) That the deadline for agreeing the precept for 2014/15 be noted.

8 Any other business

Councillor Williams suggested that the Clerk write to the Pant Master and ask if he was still interested in attending future occasions/events as his absence had been noted at recent events.

Resolved:

That the Clerk contact the current Pant Master to determine if he was still interested in holding the position.