

## Taunton Charter Trustees

Thursday, 10th December, 2020,  
6.00 pm

[SWT VIRTUAL MEETING WEBCAST LINK](#)



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**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. Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence.

**2. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Taunton Charter Trustees**

To approve the minutes of the previous meetings of the Trustees held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 and 27<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

(Pages 5 - 20)

**3. 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.)

**4. Public Participation**

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 Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will holding meetings in a virtual manner which will be live webcast on our website. Members of the public will still be able to register to speak and ask questions, which will then be read out by the Governance and Democracy Case Manager during Public Question Time and will either be answered by the Chair of the Committee, or the relevant Portfolio Holder, or be followed up with a written response.

#### **5. Petitions**

To receive any petitions from residents of Taunton containing over 200 signatures in accordance with Standing Order 30.

#### **6. Motions to the Charter Trustees**

To consider motions in the order in which notice has been received.

#### **7. Communications**

To receive such communications as the Mayor may desire to lay before the Charter Trustees.

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

A Charter Trustee may ask the Mayor any question upon an item which is under consideration by the Charter Trustees. Every question shall be put and answered without discussion. The person to whom a question has been put may decline to answer but shall give an explanation for declining to do so. An answer may take the form of :- 1. A direct oral answer; or 2. Where the desired information is contained in a publication of the Charter Trustees, a reference to that publication; or 3. Where reply to the question cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated to Charter Trustees.

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

#### **10. Report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (JIRP) - Review of the allowances for the Mayor of Taunton and Deputy Mayor**

The Chair of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel, John Thomson, will be in attendance.

In 2019 the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel prepared a report to the Shadow Authority on Members Allowances.

(Pages 21 - 28)

Included within it was a consideration of the roles of Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the Unparished areas of Taunton. At the time the Panel prepared the report, it was considered that there was insufficient information to make firm decisions, and so an interim recommendation regarding allowances was made, with a proviso that after “a year’s experience of the offices of Mayor and Deputy Mayor”, the allowances be reviewed by the Panel. This report is that review.

**11. Taunton Charter Trustees Budget 2021/2022**

(Pages 29 - 36)

To approve a Budget for the Taunton Charter Trustees for the 2021/22 financial year.



**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](mailto: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:-

Due to the Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will holding meetings in a virtual manner which will be live webcast on our website. Members of the public will still be able to register to speak and ask questions, which will then be read out by the Governance and Democracy Case Manager during Public Question Time and will be answered by the Portfolio Holder or followed up with a written response.

Full Council, Executive, and Committee agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: [www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](http://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

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

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**Taunton Charter Trustees - 2 July 2020 held via Zoom Video Conference**

Present: Councillor Francesca Smith (Mayor)

Councillors Sue Lees (Deputy Mayor), Lee Baker, Simon Coles, Caroline Ellis, Marcia Hill, Richard Lees, Libby Lisgo, Derek Perry, Martin Peters, Federica Smith-Roberts, Alan Wedderkopp and Brenda Weston

Officers: Jo Comer, Marcus Prouse and Amy Tregellas

Also Present: Councillors John Hunt and Mike Rigby

Councillors David Fothergill (Leader of Somerset County Council), Giuseppe Fraschini (Somerset County Council) and Rod Williams (Somerset County Council)

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

9. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Chris Booth, Hazel Prior-Sankey and Danny Wedderkopp.

10. **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 S Coles	All Items	SCC & SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Fothergill	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke
Cllr G Fraschini	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke
Cllr Marcia Hill	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr J Hunt	All Items	SCC & SWT	Personal	Spoke

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 M Peters	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr M Rigby	All Items	SCC, SWT & Bishops Lydeard	Personal	Spoke
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 B Weston	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr R Williams	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke

## 11. **Public Participation**

Four members of the public submitted statements and questions which were read out on their behalf:

### 1) Mr David Orr

I am a resident in the Unparished Vivary Ward of Taunton (formerly Killams and Mountfield). Taunton Unparished wards have long suffered from a democratic deficit when compared to the parished wards: No rights to statutory consultation on any community matter; no share of planning gain; no say, basically.

Highways England proposed an A358 Expressway but with just one flawed Orange route and a huge new M5 junction proposed at Killams adjacent to homes. Our Unparished ward had to fight to be heard and used our own money to fund the campaign for a meaningful consultation with multiple routes.

We worked closely with the parish of Stoke St Mary and envied their statutory consultation rights, paid clerk, community recognition and purpose. It took 3 years for this Council to be formed from Taunton Deane and West Somerset Councils. It is a major oversight that the issue of anomalous Unparished wards in Taunton was not addressed at the same time. The Charter Trustees were then formed but with the principal purpose of saving the ceremonial role of Mayor. However, that role and those costs are borne only by the Unparished wards and 45% of Taunton's population, which is neither ideal nor fair.

It is my view that the Charter Trustees should not behave as a Shadow Town Council given the limited geography and community tax base. When the coronavirus pandemic is over, the UK will be left with a wartime level of debt and effectively be in negative equity. Any "New Normal" cannot involve the costly and confusing two tiers of five councils for Somerset. The County Council unitary proposal has the merit that by removing one of the current confusing two tiers of Local Government, it creates space for a Town Council for Taunton for an area far wider than the Unparished wards. All wards in Taunton will then be equally represented.

I worked with the late Sir Chris Clarke OBE and former County Council Leader back in 2004 when he worked for the Ministry for Communities and Local Government. Our preferred unitary model in 2004 was to revert to the historic boundaries of the ancient County of Somerset (to include North Somerset and Bath & NE Somerset) and create two new unitary councils (from eight existing Councils). That is still my preferred option. In this initial survey by the County Council, I believe that each Taunton Unparished ward should make their own survey response, just as each parished ward will.

Any attempt at a single response would add to the impression that the Charter Trustees are a Shadow Town Council. It could also result in a majority vote whereby the Lib Dem in-built majority on the Charter Trustees could be seen as imposing a party political view without any serious or meaningful consultation with communities in each Unparished ward.

Should the Secretary of State start a formal consultation on options for the future of Local Government in Somerset then I would like the councillors for Unparished wards to plan to engage with their communities and give them the same consultation rights and voice as the parished wards.

That would involve the elected councillors for each Unparished ward being funded to conduct public meetings and conduct a meaningful consultation in each community before responding to the Government. Reform is long overdue and must now happen.

2) Mr Chris Mann

The Crescent in Taunton reminds us of how much business has changed in the last 50 years since your two tier management structure was last changed. All

those insurance companies moved away, using massive improvements in communication and technology to reduce costs. This is a difficult time to be considering local government reorganisation, but new home working will bring further opportunities which must be directed to reducing our unnecessarily expensive council tax which impacts severely on many who pay more council tax than income tax.

I know you have merged some services such as building control and housing standards so why not chief executives, managers and councillors like Cornwall, Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset and 150 other unitary councils?

In the UK, most monopolies have a regulator who, while allowing business choices, will disallow or fine inappropriate expenditure, waste or poor customer service. If democracy is ever to be the regulator of council services, you councillors should act as directors for your shareholder citizens, reducing costs and resisting the explosion in management consultancy that brought us CSL, Southwest One and the Ignite so called 'transformation'. IT led transformations may be fun, and a break from routine and great for your managers CV, but they are often compared to borrowing your watch to tell you the time.

The final proof of the need for a unitary Somerset council was your council's recent spending of £20m (£500 per household) on refurbishment of an unnecessary 1970s office and an unnecessary new IT system with unplanned redundancies, at the same time as a BBC Panorama programme on social care for the sick and disabled showed that Somerset County Council were desperate for more funding. In 2014, your council announced you would move into County Hall to reduce waste and duplication. This income misallocation would not have happened under a single unitary council.

One Somerset could save between £19 and £27m a year. If councillors had voted for a unitary Somerset at Express Park in 2007, your citizens could have been saved £250m plus £90m by not approving Southwest One and the Ignite transformation.

I am impressed with the One Somerset consultation and hope it could be implemented using the knowledge and common sense of your existing staff. I trust that this time you will be able to support this quite normal reform.

### 3) Ms Catherine Herbert

I strongly object to the trustees considering the idea of a unitary authority without actually asking the residents of the Unparished area what their views are.

For some time now many councillors from the Unparished area have made a big issue about how important the voice of the Unparished area is and how this has not been allowed to be heard. You have all promised that you will remedy this by putting in place the review that will allow wards to become parishes or become part of a town council, but nothing seems to be moving forward with this.



The idea of a unitary and if it is good or bad is not what I am really concerned about here, I (and many others if they realised) object to your small group giving an opinion on my behalf with zero consultation.

If we had a parish council then the details of this idea would be presented and discussed openly and residents would have opportunity to give their thoughts, undoubtedly there would be a variety of opinions and the council would then have to come to a consensus, but at least people would have had an opportunity to contribute and be heard. The charter trustees are an almost invisible group that 99% of the residents of the Unparished area know absolutely nothing about and do not know that you are spending their money and giving opinions on their behalf.

The Charter Trustees do not have the authority to act as a town council, it says this clearly on the webpage about you, so you do not have any authority to give an opinion on behalf of the Unparished areas residents.

I believe that you need to hold a consultation with the Unparished area and it will be a failing of democracy if this does not happen.

I look forward to be consulted about this and indeed other matters very soon.

#### 4) Mr Roger House

The choice of higher level Council is the most important item on tonight's agenda, but for a Unitary Council, Unparished Taunton must be changed hopefully to form a new Town Council.

My concern is that the 2007 Local Authority Act setting up Unitary councils as used by Dorset last year has clauses designed for a strong Unitary Council Base, by creating minimal assets for new parishes; legally these rules may not be able to be varied to create a strong Taunton Council.

In Dorset's case Weymouth (47,000 population) was the only Unparished area, in July 2019 newspaper stories told of the hope of retaining some car park income rumoured to be £3 million. But at the end of the year I attended at Dorchester a Shadow Unitary Cabinet meeting, despite a last ditch request by the Chair of Weymouth and Portland Council, all the car park income was retained by the big Council.

I have passed the committee a copy of the January 2019 Functions and Assets Report for the new Weymouth Town Council with rules and proposals defining the new arrangements like:

If bodies fail to co-operate and agree on asset and financial transfers, the Minister for Local Government will intervene to limit transfers to a town council".

One of the four key principals states there should be no financial detriment to the Unitary Council. All assets required for the delivery of council services and those capable of generating income are transferred to the unitary authority.

As a special case only beach income was left with the Town Council, then set up with annual expenditure of £3.3 million and local tax of £184 for a band home.

A decade earlier in a Wiltshire reorganisation, the county town of Salisbury City Council was formed owning its massive market and event square, income generating car parks and even a Crematorium, those days appear gone.

Can the Council and Charter Trustees seek legal advice to confirm if the Dorset rules and terms apply for Taunton, so there can be no income from car parks or re-acquisition of iconic Taunton buildings like the Municipal Buildings, Market House, or the old Produce Market on Firepool, to mitigate high town centre costs that we will inherit?

The Mayor thanked all those members of the public that had submitted statements and asked questions. She stated that as a Group, the Charter Trustees had requested of SWT Officers to look into the formation of a Town/Parish Council. It was stated that the proposed savings figures provided by Mr Mann could be verified with further information. The Mayor understood that the County Council were undertaking a separate public consultation on their proposals at the current time, whereas this meeting was to discuss responding to the Town and Parish Survey as a collective Charter Trustee body.

After a request from the Mayor to clarify whether the Charter Trustees could respond to the consultation as a collective, the Clerk confirmed that the Charter Trustees had been added to the consultee list by the County Council, so they had accepted and invited the Charter Trustees to respond, either individually or as a group. In terms of a precedent The Charter Trustees for Crewe in 2009 had been uncertain as to whether they could respond to their District Council's survey on a Governance Review, but they had received legal advice that this was acceptable. However, they as a group could not agree on a collective response. The Clerk confirmed that it was for the Charter Trustees to decide whether they wished to submit a response as a collective, individually or submit none at all.

## 12. **Unitary Proposal and its proposed impact on the Unparished Area of Taunton**

The Mayor of Taunton introduced the item and stated that it was disappointing that the Charter Trustees had received the survey eleven days after other Town and Parish Councils and an extension to the response deadline had been requested of Somerset County Council, which had been refused. The Mayor welcomed Councillor Fothergill, Leader of Somerset County Council and introduced him to the meeting.

Firstly, Councillor David Fothergill (Leader of Somerset County Council) attended and presented an update and overview of the One Somerset Programme.

Councillor Mike Rigby (Executive member for Somerset West and Taunton Council) followed and provided an overview of the District Councils views.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:-

- It was queried as to whether the timing was right to try and re-organise the whole of democracy in Somerset during a pandemic and the economic consequences of said pandemic.
- The impact on District Council staff who had already gone through a Transformation process was going to be difficult.
- The Unitary model in the right circumstances was felt to have some merit.
- The Leader of the County Council responded that now was absolutely the time and all Councils were going to face significant challenges during the Coronavirus and getting through this required organisations to pull together. South Somerset District Council and SWT had been doing work on how to improve the current system. SCC had spent £43m on the pandemic, with thousands of staff deployed in new areas. The direction from Government and the Local Government white paper was supportive of this move.
- Cllr Rigby clarified that the only work that had been done on this was in the last couple of weeks. SWT had done no work on this until SCC resumed.
- It was stated that One Somerset did not have overall support lacking the support of the District Councils. The last re-organisation did not have a public vote, and the lack of democratic engagement in the process was questioned, and why there was no referendum.
- The Leader of the County Council responded that the Government had a clear process for Local Government re-organisation based on geography, number of residents and level of support. The consultation process would be required by the Secretary of State who would then decide.
- It was queried that Somerset County Council was struggling due to the spiralling costs of Adult and Children's Social Care and that the Unitary question had been promoted as an idea by the Leader in 2018 when merger between the two former District Councils was taking place.
- The Leader of the County Council responded that the County Council had increased reserves dramatically last year, but did have to make difficult decisions two years ago.
- The Leader of the County Council responded that the residents do not belong to SCC or SWT and they are all the same people. The primary driver was inefficiency of service, not the finances.
- The Leader of the County Council responded that concern about West Somerset Council's solvency ensured the speed with which the former Councils were merged and why he had supported that measure at the time.
- Concern was raised that the merger of the two District Councils was on track at the same time as Unitary was being raised to the National Government and an opportunity had been missed.
- The Leader of the County Council responded that Unitary should have been done in 2008 and there would have been £250 million potential for savings.
- Concerns were raised around the unitary proposal and appropriate funding levels for Town and Parish Councils and the mention of the voluntary sector being involved in key council services.

- The Leader of the County Council responded that if a future Taunton Town Council had no ambition to run services there would always be a safety net.
- A query was raised as to whether a Community Governance Review would have to be undertaken if the Unitary was approved?
- The Leader of the County Council responded that the creation of a town council would form part of the business case and go through on the same orders, much like Salisbury City Council did under the Wiltshire re-organisation.
- A question was raised as to how a new Unitary would approach its Housing responsibilities?
- The Leader of the County Council responded that the Business Case would look to maintain housing stock and expand it.
- Further detail was sought on the decision making powers of the Local Community Networks (LCN) and how a Town Council and LCN at same time would sit together with other elements of local government.
- The Leader of the County Council responded that the LCN's were concerned with being a decision making body for wider responsibilities.
- A query was raised as to how a unitary model would benefit Halcon and Priorswood with pockets of deprivation.
- The Leader of the County Council responded that Unitary was about creating long-term sustainable services and all the levers we need with joined-up services.
- Concerns were raised around the transfer of assets to Parish Councils and the lack of a cap on parish precepts.
- The Leader of the County Council responded that this could not be a cost-shunt exercise. It was really important to understand from Taunton their potential appetite for service delivery and conversations with Frome and Bridgwater were already being lined up.
- Cllr Rod Williams (Rowbarton and Staplegrove – SCC) commented that the Councillors were at a disadvantage without having seen the business case. He was passionate in the potential of Taunton as the County Town of Somerset. He felt that no change was not an option and that the public does not understand difference between District and County.
- Cllr Giuseppe Frascini (Taunton North – SCC) commented that the County Council was a leader on that front of Social Care. He had always been a strong supporter of a unitary model and considered that the merger of the former District Councils was when this should have been addressed.

The Mayor thanked all Councillors for attending the debate.

### 13. **Response to One Somerset Survey**

The Charter Trustees considered the Somerset County Council survey Questions and drafted their response. The SCC survey closing date was Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July.

**RESOLVED** that The Charter Trustees for Taunton at their meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 were to submit the following collectively agreed comments to the One Somerset Survey being conducted by Somerset County Council and sent to all Towns and Parish Councils;

- Now was the completely wrong time to initiate this discussion and to be looking at the issue of a complete re-organisation of public services in Somerset, due to the effects and upheaval of the current Coronavirus pandemic crisis being dealt with at the current time. The economic effects of the crisis are not yet fully known and this issue should only be looked at when this situation had further stabilised.
- There were mixed views on the issue, but without sight of the Business Case, the Charter Trustees were not convinced of the evidence of benefit at this time. Without having had sight of the Business Case, the Charter Trustees have not been in full possession of the supporting evidence on which to comment, and were therefore not in a position to consult residents on an informed basis.
- The consultation was felt to be flawed, with elected representatives being given no time or opportunity to talk formally with their unparished area local residents to seek their views and feed this into the process. The process so far seemed confused, apparently involving two stages (pre-and post- publication of the Business Case?) with different questions asked of parish and town councils from those asked of the public in this first round.
- The Charter Trustees for Taunton were sent this survey 11 days after other towns and parishes were sent it, and the request for an extension to the 3<sup>rd</sup> July deadline was refused despite this oversight and this was disappointing.

(The Meeting ended at 8.47 pm)



## Taunton Charter Trustees - 27 August 2020 held via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Councillor Francesca Smith (Mayor)

Councillors Sue Lees (Deputy Mayor), Lee Baker, Chris Booth, Simon Coles, Caroline Ellis, Richard Lees, Martin Peters, Alan Wedderkopp, Danny Wedderkopp and Brenda Weston

Officers: Jo Comer and Marcus Prouse

Also Present: Councillor Loretta Whetlor

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

### 14. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Hill, Lisgo, Perry, Prior-Sankey and Smith-Roberts.

### 15. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Taunton Charter Trustees

(Minutes of the meeting of the Taunton Charter Trustees held on 29<sup>th</sup> April and 9<sup>th</sup> June were circulated with the agenda)

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Taunton Charter Trustees held on 29<sup>th</sup> April and 9<sup>th</sup> June were confirmed as a correct record.

### 16. 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 M Peters	All Items	SWT	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	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
Cllr L Whetlor	All Items	Watchet & SWT	Personal	Spoke

## 17. Public Participation

One member of the public submitted a statement which was read out on their behalf:

### 1) Mr Chris Mann

I am pleased that the four Somerset district councils are not opposed to a unitary authority.

Firstly, because two tier causes misallocation of income and priorities between district and county that would not happen under a single unitary council. While Somerset County Council has struggled with funding essential social and child care, your council seems to have plenty of money for diverse projects.

Secondly, because the cumulative savings are huge. If councillors had voted for a unitary authority in 2007, they could have saved their citizens £200m in total annual savings plus £89m by not approving the defensive Southwest One, the unnecessary Ignite transformation and recent property renovation and speculation.

Devolving some services to parish and town councils if they want it would bring new clarity, focus, democracy and authority to the area where people actually live, especially to 30,000 Taunton citizens who don't have a town council.

I have always considered council tax very expensive for what it delivers compared to income tax, and I am impressed with the One Somerset business case. The One Somerset programme director has over ten years' experience with Wiltshire Council during which period it became a successful single unitary council with 500,000 residents.

A single unitary Somerset council with 560,000 citizens would be better than two unitaries in matching the health system area critical to support an ageing population and thereby avoid the need for time-consuming negotiations across two authorities. One authority avoids unbalance and a larger concentration of deprivation in the west, and would also most reduce costs by properly utilising the massive improvements in communications and technology over the last 50 years. A single unitary has the big advantage over two unitaries of twice the annual transition savings, nearly four times the estimated five year savings and the shortest payback time.

Of course, it also gives the strongest voice for Somerset.

## 18. Petitions



The Clerk advised that no petitions had been received.

19. **Motions to the Charter Trustees**

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

20. **Communications**

The Mayor of Taunton advised that she had recently attended the opening of the Turmeric Kitchen restaurant in Station Road and she wished them well in their new venture.

The Mayor of Taunton also hosted the VJ Day commemorations at 40 Commando and thanked the commanding officer Simon Rodgers and his staff for making the day possible. The Mayor had also attended the VJ Day commemoration evensong at Wells Cathedral and also had laid a wreath at Vivary Park, Taunton.

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

No questions were asked under Standing Order 8.

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

The Clerk to the Taunton Charter Trustees advised that the Decision sheets would be formally attached to the next meeting Agenda, however he verbally advised that the Standing Committee had met on the 30<sup>th</sup> July and awarded the following amounts from the Unparished Area Small Grants Scheme.

1) Unlocking Potential Somerset - A bid to support the costs of running one of the three, three year 'Insights to Apprenticeships' programmes being run across the Taunton Deane area and specifically the UPA. (The bid is for £12,000 per annum with a total expected cost of £36,000 over the life of the three year project.)

RECOMMENDATION: The Standing Committee recommended the approval of £12,000 to cover the first year of the project, with an 'in principle' agreement for the remaining £24,000 for the two subsequent years which would be earmarked in subsequent financial years if available. The applicants were requested to provide an annual progress report.

2) Stoke Road Allotments CIC – A bid for a contribution of half the total costs towards capital works related to the irrigation of the allotment. (The bid is for £550 of the £1100 total).

RECOMMENDATION: The Standing Committee recommended the approval of the bid for the amount requested (£550).

23. **Annual Governance Statement 2019/20**

The Clerk advised that the report had been circulated. The Clerk advised that part of the requirements for a Charter Trustee body, which had been established in the Unparished Area the previous year by Statutory Instrument, was an offer to become part of the Small Auditors Appointments Regime (SAAA), which the Charter Trustees had accepted previously to be a part of. Every year the Charter Trustees will need to submit an Annual Governance Statement and Accounting Statements for audit, to ensure that the proper use of public funds is being discharged.

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

- The Mayor of Taunton affirmed that she would apply the wet signature to the documents the next day if approved, which would then be sent off electronically.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2019/2020 for submission to the Taunton Charter Trustees External Auditors, PKF Littlejohn LLP.

24. **Accounting Statements 2019/2020**

The Mayor of Taunton advised that the Draft Accounting Statements for 2019/2020 had been circulated as part of the Agenda.

**RESOLVED** to approve the Draft Accounting Statements 2019/2020 for submission to the Charter Trustee's external Auditors, PKF Littlejohn LLP.

25. **For Information - Research into the effect of any potential Government Unitary Orders on the Unparished Area of Taunton**

The Mayor of Taunton advised the Charter Trustees that this was not an item for discussion, but that she had asked the Clerk to provide an update now that there was a proposal for Unitary coming forward. The Mayor welcomed Councillor Whetlor as a Somerset Association of Local Councils representative.

The Clerk advised that there was still a lot of unknowns in this area, but from reading the One Somerset Business Case, there was reference to "*At present there is an Unparished area in Taunton. In order for the arrangements described in this Section to operate effectively across the whole unitary council area, the unitary council Shadow Executive would request a community governance review during the transition phase to enable a Taunton Town Council to be created and in place by vesting day.*"

The Clerk advised that there had been discussion at this body of the District Council undertaking a Community Governance Review, so it was presumed that whichever option was chosen by the Government, a Community Governance Review would need to be undertaken before establishment of a successor body.

Councillor Coles raised the issue of the Boundary Commission and the need for guidance when looking at those areas of Taunton Town that were part parished and part Unparished.

(The Meeting ended at 6.20 pm)



Joint Independent Remuneration PanelReport to Somerset West and Taunton Council on a review of the allowances for the Taunton Mayor and Deputy1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2019 the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel prepared a report to the Shadow Authority on Members Allowances. Included within it was a consideration of the roles of Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the unparished areas of Taunton. At the time the Panel prepared the report, it was considered that there was insufficient information to make firm decisions, and so an interim recommendation regarding allowances was made, with a proviso that after “a year’s experience of the offices of Mayor and Deputy Mayor”, the allowances be reviewed by the Panel. This report is that review.
- 1.2 The Panel thanks Somerset West and Taunton Council for information provided, and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for their views and is indebted for the advice of the officers supporting the Panel.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Panel has reviewed the workload of the Mayor and Deputy with information supplied by the Council, and has considered how the allowances compare with other areas with Charter Trustees. The Panel has noted that the workload of the Mayor, and particularly the Deputy has not met expectations, but acknowledges that, in part, this is due to the coronavirus pandemic.
- 2.2 Accordingly the Panel recommends that :
- the allowance for Mayor remain as it is, whilst that of the Deputy should be reduced by half to reflect the reduced workload;
  - the index linking of the allowance be retained;
  - the situation be reviewed again in a year, when hopefully ‘normal’ (post Covid-19) activity has taken place.

3. Members’ Allowances and Remuneration Panels – the legal position

- 3.1 As a reminder to members, the legal provisions in relation to members’ allowances are set out in the Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021) and subsequent amendments to the regulations (SI 2003/1022 and SI 2003/1692) [“the Regulations”].
- 3.2 Under the Regulations each Council must appoint an Independent Panel to make recommendations on its Scheme of Members’ Allowances. The Council must have due regard to the recommendations of the Panel before it makes any decisions in relation to its Scheme, although it may accept, reject, or amend any of the Panel’s recommendations, but give reasons if rejected. The Regulations provide for a single panel to advise more than one Council.

## 4. Joint Independent Remuneration Panel

- 4.1 Somerset West and Taunton Council forms part of the Panel, along with Mendip District Council and Somerset County Council. The Panel's membership comprises three independent representatives appointed by the County Council and one each by the other Councils. All of the members of the Panel are residents of Somerset. There is currently one vacancy. The make-up of the Panel is outlined in brief below:

### **Panel members:**

#### John Thomson (Chair)

From a housing background, initially worked for local authorities and then was Chief Executive of SHAL Housing, a Bridgwater-based housing association, for 20 years and now retired. John represents Somerset West and Taunton on the Panel.

#### Colin McDonald

Semi-retired after over 30 years full-time employment in social housing, 25 (in total) of these at South Somerset District Council (over two occasions) including several years as Head of Housing & Welfare.

#### Bryony Houlden

Chief Executive of South West Councils. Provides advice and support on a range of member issues, including serving as a member of several Independent Remuneration Panels.

#### Alan Wells

39 years' experience in financial services. Specialist in benefit and remuneration structures.

### **Technical Advisers to the Panel:**

Scott Wooldridge, Monitoring Officer, Somerset County Council

Julia Jones, Governance Specialist – Democratic Services, Somerset County Council

## **5. Panel Assessment**

- 5.1 In our report of March 2019, the Panel stated that, with regard to the "Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Charter Trustees body, we have identified the following relevant, core roles/activities:

Chairing the Charter Trustee body;  
An ambassador for the area both locally and on a wider national/international platform;  
Representing the area and its citizens;  
Supporting the local community;  
Hosting events."

We went on to say that, "being elected as Mayor is an honour, and there

should be an element of personal pride in carrying out the role, analogous to the idea of a ‘public service’ contribution by ordinary councillors in the execution of their role, i.e. part of the role for which there is neither payment nor other material recognition.

The Mayoral role, in the context of working in conjunction with the new Authority (SWTC), is one that will develop over time. However, it is clear that there are certain special characteristics that can be identified now. These are: a significant time commitment and high level of sustained personal commitment in attending functions and other events throughout the year; constitutional relevance, particularly observing agreed protocols; a degree of complexity in understanding the context of each event/function/activity.

The Panel has been advised of the probable number of events (the likely figure will be high – perhaps between 300 and 400), that the Mayor, and to a lesser extent the Deputy Mayor, could attend in any year. Similarly, the Panel has considered the impact of having both a local authority Chair and a Mayor for the unparished area. It is clear to us that effective working arrangements will need to be put in place so that the Chair and Mayor, and the local community, are clear about both roles and their relevance.”

5.2 As a consequence of the above, the Panel sought information from the Council on how these roles were working out in practice. Table 1 below indicates activity during the year 2019/20 with a comparison to the previous arrangements the preceding year, as provided by the Council.

	Mayor	Deputy Mayor	Past Mayor	Leader	Chair	Vice Chair	TOTAL
03/05/2018 – 23/05/2019	324	85	5*	x	x	x	409
23/05/2019 – 16/03/2020  (The Covid lockdown stood down events from 16 March 2020)	132	26	1**	5	90	22	276

\*Deputy Mayor not installed until 10 July 2018

\*\*The Mayor of Taunton was not installed until 4 June 2019

**Table 1**

5.3 As can be seen, the year 2019/20 covers a period of about 10 months, due

to the imposition of the lockdown, giving the town Mayor approximately 13 functions a month. The Chair of the Council fulfils about 9 functions a month. By comparison, the Mayor of Taunton Deane carried out about 27 functions a month, slightly more than the combined total of the town Mayor and the Chair. However, these are unusual times, and the position of Mayor is still new. It must be stated that the figure is nowhere near the 300-400 expected when the Panel reported in 2019.

5.4 The role of the Deputy Mayor is, as can be seen, even quieter with only 2.6 functions a month. The Vice Chair fulfils a further 2 functions, totalling under 5 functions in total. Under the old system, the Deputy Mayor completed about a quarter of the number of functions completed by the Mayor; the Panel, in 2019, accepted that this situation might continue after the merger of the Councils and the creation of a Mayor and Deputy for the unparished area. In actuality, whilst the Vice Chair is completing about a quarter of the functions of the Chair, the Deputy Mayor is completing about a fifth. So, whilst both the Mayor and Deputy are completing fewer functions than anticipated, the Deputy is proportionally completing far fewer.

5.5 It has also been pointed out that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor carry out principally ceremonial roles not requiring taking decisions or responsibility, and the previous Borough Mayor was responsible for the whole of the Borough of Taunton Deane, which encompasses a much larger geographical area, while the current Mayor is responsible only for Taunton.

## **6. Comparison with Charter Trustees Under Other Councils**

6.1 The following comparative information in Table 2 was obtained:

<b>Town</b>	<b>Duties/Responsibilities Of Trustees</b>	<b>Duties/Responsibilities Of the Mayor</b>	<b>How Long In Existence</b>	<b>Overseeing Council</b>	<b>Allowances</b>
Bournemouth	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 Trustees ensure the continuation of the civic, historic and ceremonial traditions of the former Borough of Bournemouth and is responsible for choosing a Mayor and Deputy Mayor from the appointed Trustees annually. Own the plate etc.	Their role is to chair full Council Meetings, preside over Citizenship Ceremonies, promote local businesses and charities, open events and welcome visitors. The role of Mayor is non-political.	Since 2019	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council	The Mayor and Deputy Mayor do not receive allocated allowances but there is a provision for out of the pocket expenses.
Durham and Framwelgate	The trust ensures the continuation of the civic traditions for the City of Durham and is responsible for choosing	The position is non-political and the ceremonial head of the city, and intended to benefit both the city and	Durham City Council was abolished in 2009.	Durham County Council	The Mayor receives £3,500 and the Deputy Mayor



	the Mayor and Deputy Mayor from the appointed trustees. The trustees are county councillors from within the Durham City boundaries.	its citizens. •attend civic and ceremonial functions and local community activities as he/she determines appropriate	Durham retained its city charter status through the appointment of charter trustees.		£1,500. This was not claimed last year.
Margate	Elect a Mayor. Empowered to pay the Mayor a reasonable allowance for the expenses of office. Safeguard the historic and ceremonial attributes of former boroughs. Whilst having no executive powers the Charter Trustee body is responsible for ensuring the continuance of the historical, ceremonial and social links of the Town. Members of the Charter Trustees are expected to support the Town and its Mayoralty.	Chair the meetings of Margate Charter Trustees and act in a ceremonial role at local, state and many other functions	Since 1974	Thanet District Council	Mayoral allowance is £12,000 and Deputy Mayor is £6,000.
Poole	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 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.	Duties as Mayor include chairing all meetings of the Full Council, overseeing all citizenship ceremonies for people becoming British citizens in Poole and representing residents as their ambassador at the many functions she will attend in her mayoral year	Since 2019	Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council	Civic parties do not receive an allowance from the Bournemouth and Poole Charter Trustees. However, there is provision for out of pocket expenses, £3000 for Poole CT's – Poole have to take into account they have a Civic party of three as they also have a Charter for the role of Sheriff, who is the Mayor-elect.
Worksop	The Worksop Charter Trustees comprise of all 18 Bassetlaw District Councillors who represent the six wards in Worksop, once elected to Bassetlaw, they automatically become a Charter Trustee. The Trustees meet formally on several occasions each year, they receive reports from the Mayor and	Chair the meetings of the Charter Trustees.	Since 1974	Bassetlaw District Council	Mayor receives £3,000 a year. Last year was the first year there was an allowance.

	Clerk, and they set an annual budget which covers the running cost of the Trustees. They make a formal precept for funds to the Bassetlaw District Council, in the same way that Parish and Town Councils do. The cost of the Trustees is paid for solely by the residents of Worksop, and the annual cost works out at just 1 pence per household.				
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**Table 2**

6.2 The Charter Trustees detailed in Table 2 above indicate a wide variety of approaches. In terms of recent creation, Bournemouth and Poole were both formed in 2019 and neither have allowances, whereas those of longer standing do, with Margate having an allowance of £12,000 a year. For the reasons outlined in 5.1 above, the Panel believe allowances continue to be appropriate in Taunton and the current sums are very similar to those paid in Durham and Framwelgate and Worksop.

Data from Bournemouth and Poole, indicates the number of engagements carried out by the Civic Parties of Bournemouth and Poole between 1 June 2019 and 16 March 2020 (suspended due to lockdown) as follows:

	Bournemouth Charter Trustees	Poole Charter Trustees
Mayor*	162	152
Deputy Mayor	20	7
Sheriff		20

**Table 3**

\* Note: Following the creation of BCP Council and the election of the Chairman and Vice Chairman, the Chairman, now being the First Citizen of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, has undertaken engagements that historically the Mayors of Bournemouth and Poole would have attended.

## **7. Recommendations**

7.1 The Panel understand that we are all experiencing unusual times and that this has impacted a little upon the role of Mayor and Deputy Mayor towards the end of their first year. Nevertheless, the number of functions carried out has been less than was expected and particularly so in the case of the Deputy Mayor.

Accordingly, the Panel recommends that:  
the allowance for Mayor remain as it is, whilst that of the Deputy should be reduced by half to reflect the reduced workload;  
the index linking of the allowance be retained;  
the situation be reviewed again in a year, when hopefully 'normal' (post

Covid-19) activity has taken place.

John Thomson

Chair, Independent Remuneration Panel

5 October 2020



## **Taunton Charter Trustees Budget 2021/2022**

### **Introduction**

This report provides an overview to the Taunton Charter Trustees on the costs that will need to be precepted for on Council Tax Ratepayers in the Unparished Area of Taunton for the 2021/22 Financial Year. This will be finalised at the meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

The following totals are based on officer investigation and the elected Members representing the Unparished Area of Taunton are able to suggest further areas to precept or different options, but this will have to be justified to local ratepayers and managed responsibly, and most importantly there is the need for a direct link to the civic role of the Mayoralty in Taunton and the limitations to scope under the relevant legislation.

This is only the second year that the Charter Trustees are setting a precept. The legal basis for the Chartered Trustees is covered in the Local Government (Structure and Boundary Changes) (Supplementary Provision and Miscellaneous Amendments) Order 2019. The borough of Taunton Deane was abolished as part of the Local Government changes in 2019 in this area which led to the establishment of Somerset West and Taunton Council. The Taunton Charter Trustees were set up to maintain the continuity of the Town Charter and was drawn specifically within the Unparished Area of Taunton.

The Charter Trustees body will need to set its own budget and precept as long as it is in existence.

### **Breakdown of Cost Areas**

#### **Mayoral Activities and Events**

Analysis of the Budget spend for 18/19 and previous years under Taunton Deane Borough Council had shown spend of around £8,000 – £10,000 over the course of the financial year, not including staffing. This would cover activities and events associated with;

- Civic Service.
- Civic Events e.g. Flag raising, Remembrance and carol services.
- Special Anniversaries
- Visit to Twin Towns (France, Germany) & Travel Insurance and Gifts
- Mileage allowance and travel costs for the Mayor and Deputy.
- Printing and Design costs.
- Dry-cleaning and robe adjustments including new robes.
- Tickets and travel.
- Gifts and refreshments.
- Publicity and Promotion e.g. Sign Writing
- Photography (Mayoral Portrait)
- Subscriptions (e.g. Modern.gov)

- Other Events Contingency e.g. Freedom Parade.

For 20/21 £10,000 was ring-fenced for this particular area of spend but in all likelihood there will be an under spend on this by 31 March 2020 due to the impact of the Coronavirus of around 5-£6000. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the number of events and activities that the Mayor of Taunton would usually attend or host. A further report on the final spends for 20/21 will be brought back to a future meeting of the Charter Trustees once the financial year has ended. The underspend from 20/21 from this particular budget is thus proposed to be utilised and carried over to support the budget for the forthcoming year, meaning a lower amount to be precepted on ratepayers.

Therefore, depending on the type of events planned for 2021/22 by the Mayor, it is proposed to set this at **£4000**.

### **Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for Mayor and Deputy**

The Charter Trustees predecessor committee the Unparished Area Committee formally requested that the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel look at the allowances for the Mayor and Deputy on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019, whose independent recommendations were then supported at the meeting of the SWT Shadow Council on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2019. The recommendation was also passed that this would be looked at again after a year by the JIRP to test whether the SRA sat at the right level. This was endorsed by the Charter Trustees on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2019. The JIRP have now reviewed the allowances in 2020 in time for the 2021/22 financial year and their findings are included below.

However, the Charter Trustees are able to choose to divert from the JIRP's recommendations. It is not essential to refer the matter back to the Panel for review before amending the financial values but that is an option particularly if there is substantive new information on the role that wasn't available to the Panel at the time of its consideration. Any formal decision to amend a Panel's recommendations has to be accompanied by clear reasons for departing from the recommendations and these need to be publicised.

CPIH inflation rate for September 2020 (usually used for budget/funding purposes) was 0.9%.

The current and proposed allowances are:

	2020/21	2021/22	Increase
Mayor	2,980	3,007	0.9%
Deputy Mayor	1,600	807	0.9%
Totals	4,580	3,814	

Total recommended budget for 2021/22 is therefore: **£3814**

### **Insurance for Insignia and Civic Silver**

The Civic Silver and Insignia that was associated with the Taunton Mayoralty transferred over to the Charter Trustees on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 and thus the Charter

Trustees are responsible for insuring such property. The premium SWT paid for Civic Insignia and Silver was £617.17 for the 19/20 Financial Year.

Cost: **£650 (rounded)**

### **Supporting Twinning Links**

Each of the Twinned Towns has a support group; the Taunton-Lisieux Civic Link and the Friends of Konigslutter and both operate on the basis of bi-annual visits to France or Germany taking place, with return visits occurring the year after. Without a degree of funding there is little doubt the twinning groups would be seriously compromised with little prospect of them being able to continue after a relatively short time. The funding historically comprised a grant of £1,000 per annum to the Taunton-Lisieux Civic Link which was used to provide trips for the French visitors to local and regional landmarks during their stay in Taunton. In addition, the previous Taunton Deane Borough Council had borne the cost of the attendance of the French visitors at the Civic Dinner which was attended by TDBC's Mayor. A grant was not made to the Friends of Konigslutter as they undertook much of their own fund-raising. It should be noted that TDBC did meet some of the costs associated with the Civic Dinner held in honour of the German visitors. With the formation of the new Council and a number of other well-established twinning arrangements across the enlarged area, the support given to Taunton's twin towns in the past was recognised as not able to be continued.

This matter was discussed at the final meeting of the Taunton Unparished Area Committee held on 30 January 2019. The Councillors present at this meeting accepted that a degree of financial support ought to be provided to the twinning groups in future especially if Charter Trustees for Taunton were put in place. There was a view however that both groups should be treated in exactly the same way in future. It has recently been discussed that the FOK link should be investigated as to how it could be formalised as a Civic Link in the same way as Lisieux.

In the circumstances, the Charter Trustees were requested to consider making financial contributions to the Taunton-Lisieux Civic Link and the Friends of Konigslutter on the following basis:-

- (a) The sum of £1,000 per annum be awarded to each of the twinning groups to support the activities and events put on for foreign visitors when they are in country.
- (b) The further sum of up to £1,500 be made available to meet the cost of hosting the French or German visitors attending the Civic Dinners held in their honour. Should this amount be exceeded, the twinning group concerned will be expected to meet the balance of the overall cost.

Note: In any financial year there is only one visit from either France or Germany. Therefore in Year 1 if Taunton receives visitors from Lisieux (usually towards the end of May), a party from Taunton will travel to Germany to visit Konigslutter in August. In Year 2, the visits are reversed.

This means that in any one year, the amount of funding needed to support the twinning groups will be no more than £3,500.

The Standing Committee of the Taunton Charter Trustees considered two bids by the two groups on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020 and awarded £4500 to the Friends of Konigslutter for 2020, 2021 and 2022 and £3500 to the Taunton-Lisieux Civic Link for 2020 and 2021 from the existing Unparished Area Grants budget from this year, it is therefore not proposed to precept on ratepayers for the cost of this in the following year in the case of both organisations.

It is understood that the bi-annual visit of visitors and dignitaries from the twinned town of Lisieux did not take place in 2020 and contact has been made with The Taunton-Lisieux Civic Link and the Friends of Konigslutter to understand the impact of Covid-19 on their activities and future requirements.

Twinning costs: **£0**

### **Staffing/Administration Costs**

The Mayor of Taunton usually attends on average some 300+ events in the municipal year and dedicated diary management is an important aspect of ensuring this runs smoothly. The role of Civic and Engagement Specialist also includes a range of other activities which support the Mayor of Taunton such as organising events and the Civic Service.

The Specialist in Democracy and Governance role would be there to support the smooth running of the expected 8 meetings per annum. (4 CT's and 4 Standing Committee's) and the setting of a Budget and Audit of Accounts acting in a role much like a Town Clerk.

- The estimated cost of Marcus Prouse (Specialist – Governance and Democracy) will be £276 per day next year.
- The estimated cost of Jo Comer (Specialist – Civic and Engagement) per day will be £209 next year.

Please note the costs are based on assumptions related to 2021/22 pay award, national insurance and pension rates. SWT will aim to confirm the actual rates by March 2021, which will be based on full cost recovery.

In terms of days to be bought it is suggested by SWT to continue that the Charter Trustees plan for 0.1 FTE (0.5 days per week) of Specialist-Governance support and 0.5 FTE (2.5 days per week) of Specialist-Civic and Engagement support.

The Mayor's Sergeant at Mace was a role historically undertaken with the TDBC Mayor. It is the duty of the Sergeant-at-Mace to carry the Mace before the Mayor in civic ceremonial processions. The Sergeant-at-Mace is also responsible for ensuring that on civic ceremonial occasions the Mayor is appropriately robed and that on such occasion all necessary ceremonial robes etc. are available. The Sergeant-at-Mace usually also ensures that the Mace and all other civic silver is kept clean.



It is considered prudent to build in a budget for this, as the extra pressure on the Mayor to drive themselves to events and then robe themselves may be considered an undue pressure in what is a highly visible role and a busy year for the person occupying it. The current hourly rate for the role is set at £10.00 on a casual or 'zero hours' contract, due to the uncertain demand for work, depending upon the bookings for the Mayor. Holiday pay is also accrued at 12.1% of salary, taking the hourly rate to an estimated £11.21 plus on costs.

It is estimated the SAM for next year would be required to work approximately 20 hours per month averaged over the year, which is 240 hours per year. It would be prudent to budget for 250 hours per year, so the annual costs are estimated as: £11.21 x 250 hours = £2,803. Additional costs for National Insurance and Pension are in the process of being clarified, so at this stage it is proposed to include c£700 for on costs, giving a total budget of £3500 (rounded). However, due to the Coronavirus epidemic, the SAM budget was not utilised in the previous financial year, so this under-spend can be off-set against this year's budget: £3500 – £2250 = £1250

The costs are therefore estimated as:

	Full Pay and On Costs	FTE	Approx. Days Per Year*	2021/22 Cost Estimates
Specialist-Governance	54,900	0.1	22	5,490
Specialist-Civic and Engagement	41,470	0.5	110	20,735
Sergeant at Mace	3500	Flex	24	1250
Sub-total				27,475
Contribution to overheads @ 10%				2,620
Total				30,095

\*assumes 220 chargeable days

As a comparison, Bath employ two full time staff and incur costs of £114,060 per annum on accommodation and staffing costs. If the Charter Trustee's did wish to explore the employment of a full-time Town Clerk they would be looking at a salary bracket of £32,000 – 36,000 per year, which does not include staff on-costs.

Estimated Staffing Cost: **£30,095**

### **Accommodation/Room Hire Costs**

For 2020/21 an agreement had been reached with the Assets team at SWT for the commercial rate for hire of the JMR in the evening on an expected basis of 8 evening meetings and including the use of coffee and tea facilities.

For the use of the JMR in The Deane House for public meetings a Security Guard is required to be hired (for which SWT are charged £15 an hour), so 15 x 3 hours 5.30-8.30pm = £45 x 8 Meetings a year = £360. This cost would also apply to other meetings where the building is required to be available later than standard closing time of 7pm.

Hire charges are in the range of £175 for a 4 hour booking. If there are an estimated 8 meetings a year this works out at  $175 \times 8 = £1400$ .

An indicative estimate of £1760 for venue costs is considered prudent as last year.

Estimated Cost: **£0 (2020/21 Budget of £1760 rolled over due to Covid)**

### **Mayoral Vehicle Lease**

I have enquired with the Procurement team at SWT for quotes on the lease of a Mayoral Vehicle for the Sergeant at Mace/ or Mayor to use throughout their Mayoral Year. The option of using the existing pool car fleet at Deane House and re-charging the costs back (which could conceivably be cheaper) has been explored and is not possible.

In the previous three years under TDBC the previous car (a Hybrid Ford Mondeo Saloon Car) did around 18,000 miles (6000 miles per year) and charged around £300 per month and £3600 for the year. I had suggested that as the Mayor is not the Mayor of the Borough of Taunton Deane but the Unparished Area that they quote for a low mileage rate of 3000 miles for 20/21 financial year ( by previous cost this should thus be an approx. cost of £1800). It is prudent at this stage to include an indicative estimate of £2000 for a Vehicle Lease.

Work has been undertaken with the Fleet Manager at SWT who provided an assessment of the lowest mileage available for a lease car is 6000 miles and the shortest Lease possible lease being 2 years on a Petrol/Hybrid. From the range of vehicle options the lowest quote was for £1452 and the highest quote was for £3817 (March 2020). The expectation is that a suitable vehicle would be chosen at the lower end of the scale.

The Mayor of Taunton does attend various events throughout the Mayoral year outside of the unparished area of Taunton (for example other Somerset Mayor's Civic Services) and it may be considered as to how the Mayor is supported to do this, either no financial support for outside of area travel spend, mileage claimable if using a personal car, or the use of the Lease Car outside of area.

Cost: **£0 (2020/21 Budget of £2000 rolled over due to Covid)**

### **Audit of Accounts**

The Charter Trustees are bound by the same requirements of town and parish councils in terms of financial accountability and the accounts will need to be audited each year.

The Charter Trustees have been opted-in to the central appointments regime Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments (SAAA) and the external auditor for our county area is PKF Littlejohn LLP.

Estimated Cost: **£400.00**

## Reserves

It may be considered prudent for the Charter Trustees to build up a small reserve to deal with any out of the ordinary expenses which may come up in any given year (for example, a 40 Commando Freedom Parade) and to also balance the budget by the years end if there are any overspends. The impact of Covid-19 will in all likelihood there is underspend on the 20/21 financial year, so it is not proposed to precept to add to this reserve.

Reserve: **£0**

## Summary of Budget for 2021/22

The indicative tax base for the Unparished Area is 15,208.33. However, this is subject to a recalculation as at the 30<sup>th</sup> November (due to be worked on imminently) and approval as the Section 151 Officer.

The following table provides an overview of the amount and areas to be precepted broken down on a Band D property in the Unparished Area of Taunton.

<b>Taunton Charter Trustees Budget 21/22</b>	Charter Trustees £	Estimate 20/21 underspend £
Mayoral Civic Activities and Events Spend	4000	6000
Special Responsibility Allowance for Mayor and Deputy	3814	0
Insurance for Insignia/Regalia	650	+150 overspend
Supporting Civic Twinning Links	0	0
Staffing/Administration Costs	30,095	2250
Accommodation	0	1760
Mayoral Vehicle Lease	0	2000
Audit of Accounts	400	+200 overspend
<b>Total Estimated Costs:</b>	<b>38,959</b>	51,569
Contingency/Reserves:	0	1000
<b>Total Precept/Budget:</b>	<b>38,959</b>	51,569

Yellow = Mayor of Taunton Costs

Orange = Taunton Charter Trustees Costs

So when looking at the budget for next year, you need to divide it by this tax base figure to get the Band D basic rate;

**£38,959 / 15,208.33 = £2.56 per Band D property.**

Marcus Prouse

[m.prouse@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk](mailto:m.prouse@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

Specialist – Governance and Democracy

1st December 2020

