Chard Town Council

The Guildhall, Fore Street, Chard. TA20 1PP
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Mayor: Cllr Victoria Bates
Proper Officer Kevin Dyer

Minutes of the Chard Town Council meeting held in the Guildhall, Fore Street, Chard, TA20 1PP on Monday 18th November 2024 commencing at 7:00pm.

Present: Councillors Baker, Bates, Bulmer, Crook, Eggins, Hassan, Hussey, A Kenton, J Kenton, Richter, Watson and Webb

Apologies: Councillors Grief-Page, Williams and Shortland

In Attendance: Helen Nathanson (Locum RFO), Beverley Newman (DSO), Somerset Councillor Wale and 26 members of the public

Public Participation Time

Somerset Councillor Reports
Somerset Councillors; Wale, J Kenton and Baker provided updates.

2024/133 **Apologies for Absence**
It was resolved to accept the apologies from Councillors Grief-Page, Williams and Shortland for personal reasons.

Proposed: Councillor J Kenton Seconded: Councillor S Hassan
Unanimous

2024/134 **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any updates from members for declarations of interests which are not currently entered in the Register.

Declarations were received from Cllrs J Kenton and Baker in respect to agenda item 2024/137 b).

2024/135 **Council Meeting Minutes**
It was resolved to approve the Minutes of the Full Town Council meetings on 19th August 2024 and 16th September 2024. To include the agreed amendments: reflect the correct date of the August Full Council meeting, and full first name of the Mayor

Proposed: Councillor J Kenton Seconded: Councillor Bulmer
For: 9 Abstain 3

2024/136 **Committee Meetings**

a) Amenities & Events: It was resolved to note the minutes of the Amenities & Events Committee meetings held on 14th May, 1st July & 12th November 2024.

Proposed: Councillor Baker Seconded: Councillor J Kenton
For:10 Abstain: 2

Cllr Kenton requested that any recommendations from committee meeting minutes be listed again separately on the main agenda.

b) HR: To note the minutes of the HR Committee meeting held on 4th September and consider any recommendations.
Council noted the minutes.

The following recommendations were approved:

HR Committee 2024/38 Local Government Pay Claim 2024/25 Update
It was resolved to approve the recommendation that the pay offer be accepted for all staff as directed by NALC.

Approved: J Kenton Seconded: Watson
Unanimous

2024/137 **Finance**

a) To receive and note the Income and Expenditure Report.
This was noted.

b) To consider updates from the CAYC Task & Finish Group regarding a request for additional funding in the next financial year.

Councillor Webb raised considerations about the fairness, process and transparency of awarding such a large sum of money to only one youth group when there were other youth groups operating within the town. He proposed that the group should be given limited funding to allow them to continue to operate whilst they produced a plan for future sustainability.
The Mayor explained that the group does fundraise and that many grants are match-funded which means that the money from the Town Council would help with this.
Councillor Baker proposed that Standing Orders were suspended to allow the CAYC representatives present to speak in response to the comments raised by Councillor Webb.

Standing Orders were suspended by unanimous vote at 7.44pm.

Proposed Cllr Baker Seconded Cllr Eggins
Unanimous

The Mayor resumed Standing Orders at 7.51pm.

Councillors discussed the benefits of the Youth Club to the town and how to find a balance of protecting both the youth service and Town Council funds. It was generally agreed that the service was very valuable and that it would be a huge loss to the town if it ceased.

It was resolved that the Town Council would fund CAYC for another year by providing no more than £40k of funding in the financial year 2025/26, via monthly instalments. This money would be taken from the Devolution EMR because the situation had been caused by devolution of services from Somerset Council.

It was further resolved that the Town Council would investigate, with some urgency, either buying or asking Somerset Council to asset transfer, the Youth Club premises or a similar appropriate building in the town with a view to it having a broader community use.

Proposed: Councillor Baker Seconded: Councillor D Bulmer
For: 11 Abstain 1

2024/138 Chard Town Council Standards Regime
To receive the letter from Somerset Council regarding the Chard Town Council Standards Regime and to consider the recommendations for a response.

The following recommendations, as set out in the letter from Somerset Council, were considered:

1. SALC training courses, including:
The Councillor as Employer
Councillor Refresh/Update 2024
Councillor Essentials Part: 2 – Governance & Finance
Chairpersonship
Code-of-Conduct

2. Bespoke training that would include:

a. HR based training with an external consultant (via zoom) to cover Councillors' Legal Responsibilities as Employers, protocols on member/officer relationships and their respective roles.
b. Governance Review, to be either a desk- based review to look at Standing Orders, Terms of Reference, Financial Regulations, relevant policies; or a self-assessment and observational approach driven by the Nolan Principles and the Civility & Respect agenda. This could include:

i. Open-book review of previous reports/investigations
ii. A self-complete questionnaire for Councillors and Officers
iii. Observation of Town Council meetings and committees
iv. Engagement and participatory sessions with aims, objectives and expectations clarified and agreed.

c. Mediation or Facilitated Group Conversations – however for this to be successful all parties must agree that they want to participate and a willingness to improve the current situation without self or political interest.

3. The formation of an Independent Improvement Board. The terms of reference for the Improvement Board would be agreed between Chard Town Council and Somerset Council and would follow an independent peer review approach and produce a report and action plan for the Town Council.

It was resolved to ask officers to investigate the costs of all the options so that councillors could consider them. It was acknowledged that some options would take longer to investigate and it was requested that costs be presented as they come in.

Proposed: Councillor J Kenton — Seconded: Councillor Eggins
For: 11 — Abstain: 1

2024/139 **Date of Next Meeting**
To note the date of the next meeting which will be held on Monday 16th December 2024 in the Guildhall at 7pm.
This was noted.

2024/140 **Exclusion of Press and Public**
Councillors will be asked to resolve to exclude the press and public in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 as certain items are expected to include the consideration of exempt information as defined in the respective paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Proposed: Councillor Bates — Seconded: Councillor
Unanimous

2024/141 **Staffing Matters**
To consider the recommendations in the confidential notes to the minutes of the HR Committee on 5th November 2024.
See confidential notes to the Minutes.

7/5/25

Mayor: **Date:**