

# The Charter Trustees for Harrogate

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 14 November 2024 commencing at 10.00 am at the Civic Centre, Harrogate.

Councillor Chris Aldred, the Charter Mayor of Harrogate, in the Chair. Councillors Philip Broadbank, Michael Harrison, Peter Lacey, John Mann, Monika Slater and Andrew Timothy,

Officers present: Jennifer Norton, Assistant Director Legal; Karen Iveson, Assistant Director Finance (remote) and Elizabeth Jackson, Principal Democratic Services Officer

## 54 Apologies for Absence

The Charter Mayor of Harrogate, Councillor Chris Aldred, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Sam Gibbs, Paul Haslam and Mike Schofield.

## 55 Minutes of the Meetings held on 12 September 2024 and 4 November 2024

The Minutes of the meetings of the Charter Trustees held on 12 September 2024 and 4 November 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

The Mayor referred to Minute 44 of 12 September 2024 and reported that three charitable organisations had submitted proposals for funding from a company which had recently moved to Harrogate. St Michael's Hospice had been selected and put forward to the national scheme for consideration.

## 56 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## 57 Public Participation

A public statement had been received which was read out at the meeting and a response provided.

### 1. Statement from Stuart Holland, Harrogate Town Neighbourhood Plan Forum

I am interim chair of Harrogate Town Neighbourhood Plan Forum. Interim, because until we are designated by North Yorkshire Council, we cannot say publicly that we are a forum. The area, which is also awaiting designation, covers the unparished areas of Harrogate. Designation is due within 13 weeks of our application (made on 1st September 2024) and until that time we are not able to apply for Government funding. A six week public consultation period is approx. half way through.

In the meantime, 3 interim Forum meetings have been held over the last few months.

The first was to set up the Interim Forum.

Second to look at topical issues and the third to concentrate on the Economy of the town.

A meeting on 13th November will look at Transport issues and a final meeting for this year, on 28th November, will look at Housing

Each meeting has been attended by approx. 40 members. The full Interim Forum comprises approx. 65 and our database holds approx. 140 names.

Further meetings will be held in the new year to look at the remaining planning issues that may be included in a Neighbourhood Plan. Public consultation will also take place once formal designation has been made.

The overriding aim of the Forum is to work on a Neighbourhood Plan to sit alongside the North Yorkshire Local Plan when it is published. The Forum exists because, in the absence of a Town Council, the Community is free to appoint a Forum. This may change next springtime when a Town Council for Harrogate is elected.

At that time, it is our intention to ask the newly elected Town Council to take on the work completed up to then, or to endorse the existing Forum as a sub-committee of the new Town Council.

As the Charter Trustees of Harrogate consider the setting up of a town council, I would urge you to consider the importance of a Neighbourhood Plan and to make sure funding is earmarked for the process.

It is understood from NYC that after the public consultation is complete, the Executive will be asked to approve the designation. The Charter Trustees are asked, in this meeting, (14th November 2024) to agree their support for a designated Area and Forum and to encourage the Executive to approve designation very quickly after the six week period expires.

***Response:***

Thank you for your statement and comments in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan Forum.

North Yorkshire Council is currently consulting on proposals to establish a Harrogate Neighbourhood Plan Forum. If confirmed, the Forum would be the 'responsible body' for preparation of a neighbourhood plan for Harrogate.

The Council is also consulting separately on the proposed area for a Harrogate Neighbourhood Plan. Both consultations will end on 27 November 2024, more detailed information is available on the Council's website.

Decisions on area designation and forum designation are anticipated to be for Executive Member sign off and decisions are expected at the end of November / early December.

When the Town Council is formed, any Neighbourhood Plan Forum for the area must cease to exist and any area designation would also cease to operate. If the Town Council wished to continue work to prepare a neighbourhood plan, it would then need to apply for area designation. As long as the areas was contiguous with the Town Council area this would be a formality.

The Town Council may wish to work with a pre-existing Forum in the form of a 'working party'.

The Charter Trustees welcomed the work to commence development of a Neighbourhood Plan for Harrogate and it was agreed that the Charter Mayor would write to the Executive Member for Open to Business requesting support for the establishment of the Forum.

It was confirmed that where there was a town council, it must be the designated body for producing a neighbourhood plan, and the Forum would cease to exist once Harrogate Town Council was established.

## **58 Charter Mayor's Report**

The Charter Mayor reported that he had circulated an email to Members listing the events he had attended since his last report to the Charter Trustees on 10 September. It was confirmed that he had attended 18 events as Mayor, and the Deputy Mayor had attended 10 events.

A highlight had been the Remembrance Sunday commemorations on 10 November, including the service at the Cenotaph in Harrogate. The Mayor placed on record his thanks to those staff who had worked hard to make the event a success and in particular Pamela Barnes who had co-ordinated the arrangements.

Councillor Peter Lacey moved thanks to the Charter Mayor for carrying out the function of Mayor, which was appreciated by the people of Harrogate.

## **59 Creation of Harrogate Town Council**

A report of the Assistant Director Legal, Jennifer Norton, which provided information on work being undertaken to support the creation of a town council for Harrogate following the decision by Council on 24 July 2024. The next step would be the making of the Reorganisation Order, which would confirm key information in relation to the geographical area, electoral arrangements, and assets to be transferred. The report detailed the work required to ensure the town council would be able to operate from 1 April 2024 when it came into existence. The report also described the effect on the Charter Trustees, which would be dissolved on Tuesday 6 May 2025 when the newly elected town councillors would come into office.

It was also proposed that the Charter Trustees act as a shadow town council for the purposes of being a consultative body in relation to the actions set out in the report, in particular where costs were incurred.

The Mayor thanked the Leader of North Yorkshire Council, Councillor Carl Les, for his statement at Executive on 18 July 2023 that he was not minded to charge Harrogate Town Council for its first elections, given that they would be outside of the electoral cycle.

In response to questions on recruitment of a town clerk the Assistant Director Legal advised that options were still being considered and these included NYC officers doing some work, requesting help from the YLCA and the appointment of an interim clerk to enable the town council to appoint its own town clerk once established.

The Charter Trustees noted the report and confirmed that the Charter Trustees act as a shadow town council for the purposes of being a consultative body in relation to the actions set out in the report.

## **60 Finance Report**

A report by the Assistant Director of Finance and Responsible Financial Officer to the Charter Trustees, Karen Iveson, presenting the in-year budget position to the end of September 2024 for the Charter Trustees, for approval.

It was noted that any budget underspend at the end of the financial year would be carried over to the newly created town council.

**61 Any Other Items**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting concluded at 10.45 am.