

**Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the Charter Trustees
for Crewe
24th September 2009**

Present: The Mayor, Councillor D Flude
Councillors T Beard, R Cartlidge, S Conquest, E Howell, M Martin, J Jones, M Martin and C Thorley

Officers Present:

Bill Howie, Democratic Services, Cheshire East Borough Council

17. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bebbington, D Cannon and J Weatherill

18. Declaration of Interest

All Charter Trustees present declared a personal interest in the agenda item as Members of Cheshire East Borough Council.

19. Public Speaking

The Mayor, invited the members of the public present to make any comments. Honorary Alderman made a short statement regarding the role of the Charter Trustees and the need to secure a permanent body to reflect the views of the people of Crewe

20. Community Governance Review for the un-parished areas of Crewe

The Charter Trustees were informed that the in response to a number of queries regarding the powers and duties of the Charter Trustees regarding their involvement in the consultation being carried out by Cheshire East Borough Council, legal advice had been sought.

The advice given to the Charter Trustees indicated that there no legal reason that prevented the Charter Trustees from responding to the consultation.

Councillor Jones made a statement to the meeting that, in his opinion, the meeting of the Charter Trustees was not legal on the grounds that the Charter Trustees were acting in a political situation which he considered to be contrary to the Charter Trustee Regulations 2009 (SI 467/2009). Councillor Jones stated that, in his opinion, the legal advice provided to the Charter Trustees was incorrect. Having made this statement declined to participate further in the meeting and left the room (time 6:12pm).

It was noted that Charter Trustees who were unable to attend the meeting had been invited to submit any views or comments, in writing, to the meeting. Councillor Cannon had submitted comments in the form of an e-mail circulated to the Charter Trustees. Councillor Jones, prior to his departure

from the meeting had submitted a letter (unsigned) from Councillor Bebbington. The contents of the email and letter were read to the meeting.

Councillor Cannon – in summary Councillor Cannon felt unable to support the Four Parish option; if the Charter Trustees felt unable to support this option it should be actively opposed. He raised issues concerning the sustainability of the Charter Trustees to operate effectively in the long term. In his view a single town council would be able to draw potential members from a larger pool than the 12 Charter Trustees and would be able to devote more time to civic activities. Councillor Cannon supported the option of a single town council for Crewe.

Councillor Bebbington – it was his view that it was neither appropriate nor legal for the Charter Trustees to meet to consider this matter. The meeting, if it went ahead should be chaired by an officer who did not represent either a political party or any group actively campaigning in this matter. The view was also expressed that the meeting had been called to gain political support and influence public opinion. The final comments related to Councillor Cannon's views and the validity of any collective view expressed on behalf of the Charter Trustees without the full support of all Charter Trustees.

After hearing these comments the Mayor invited each of the Charter Trustees present to make a short statement on their individual views on the consultation.

Councillor Howell – stated that she had not made any public statement on this matter prior to the submission of the petition. However, it was her view that the Four Parish option was not viable. In principle, the idea of a single was a good idea but in the current economic climate the addition of an additional precept on the Council Tax would be an unnecessary burden on the people of Crewe. She also stated that it seemed unlikely that Cheshire East Borough Council would devolve any of its powers or functions to a town council thus reducing its role to that of a 'talking shop'. Councillor Howell was not in favour of either a single town council or four parish councils.

Councillor Cartlidge – stated that the notion of more than one town council would be potentially damaging to community cohesion. One town council, although adding to the Council Tax burden could lead to improved service delivery that addressed local priorities such as dealing with footway repairs and maintenance. Councillor Cartlidge was in favour of one town council.

Councillor Beard – stated that the petition related to a single town council and that there was no evidence of support for the four parish option. At the outset this issue had not been political but had been turned into one. With regard to the cost a precept would be levied by the Charter Trustees to meet the cost of their activities and the cost to the majority of the households would not be as high as had been asserted by others. Councillor Beard expressed support for one town council as providing a voice for Crewe within Cheshire East; particularly as Crewe provided the economic heart of Cheshire East.

Councillor Conquest – stated that the Charter Trustees had, at the very least, a moral obligation to put their views forward. A single town council represented an opportunity to have a single, democratically elected body to represent the people of Crewe. A single town council also provided a chance to provide the unity of purpose to help drive Crewe forward. The Four Parish option was a purely political move to dissipate power and marginalise the people of Crewe. Councillor Conquest supported a single town council.

Councillor Martin – stated that a single town council represented an opportunity for the people of Crewe to have a voice within Cheshire East. Her support was behind whatever the people of Crewe voted for in the consultation exercise.

Councillor Thorley – Stated that he would, as ever, support whatever the people of Crewe wanted.

The Mayor, noted that no motion had been put to the meeting. In addition although it would be possible for the Charter Trustees present would be able to take a view it could be characterised as a political vote representing the views of only the Labour Group and would not be representative of the Charter Trustees as a whole.

In view of this the Mayor moved that

Because of the lack of consensus among the Chartered Trustees as a body, each individual Charter Trustee make their own, separate views known to Cheshire East Borough Council in response to the Community Governance Review consultation. .

The motion was seconded by Councillor Beard. The motion being put to the vote it was

Resolved unanimously: That Cheshire East be informed that because of the lack of consensus among the Chartered Trustees as a body, each individual Charter Trustee make their own, separate views known to Cheshire East Borough Council in response to the Community Governance Review consultation.

* * * * *

The meeting concluded at 7:05pm