

Salisbury City Council
The Guildhall
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Minutes

Meeting of: Annual Parish Meeting
Date: Monday 28th June 2025
Meeting held in: The Guildhall, Salisbury
Commencing at: 6.00pm

Chair: Cllr John Wells, Mayor of the City of Salisbury

Supported by the Administration Group Leader Cllr S Charleston

Council Officers: Andrew Hunt and Marc Read

Members of the public: 2

Members of the press: None

1. Mayor's Welcoming Remarks

The Mayor, Cllr John Wells, welcomed all attendees and noted that the Annual Parish Meeting is a meeting of the electorate, not of the City Council. He introduced the agenda and invited Cllr Sam Charleston to provide an update on council activities.

2. Update on Current Activities by the Administration Leader

Cllr Sam Charleston delivered a verbal report on the work of Salisbury City Council over the previous year. He emphasised that while Salisbury remains a parish-level authority, it continues to operate as a "super parish" with a broad programme of work.

He reaffirmed the Council's commitment to supporting environmental initiatives, community outreach, public events, and maintaining financial stability. He noted that the Council's financial position had significantly improved over the past year, which would allow for continued service delivery and the potential for new projects, albeit with an initial focus on consolidation.

3. Open Forum

The Mayor invited members of the public to comment or ask questions.

Public Engagement and Communications

A wide-ranging discussion followed concerning public engagement and communication. Several attendees and councillors raised concerns about:

- Low attendance at public meetings.
- Difficulties in accessing event and meeting information.
- Public scepticism and negativity towards local government, particularly on social media.

Councillors and officers acknowledged these issues and emphasised the importance of rebuilding trust, improving online visibility, and communicating more proactively about council decisions and activities.

Suggestions included:

- Promoting meetings with clearer, topic-based agendas to attract interest.
- Making better use of digital channels and physical noticeboards.
- Exploring more accessible formats for participation, such as workshops or assemblies.

Event Publicity and Festival Information

There was feedback on missed opportunities to promote city events effectively, particularly concerning the “Experience Salisbury” programme and links between partner organisations. It was suggested that greater collaboration is needed with event organisers to ensure consistent, up-to-date information is available across platforms.

Toilet Provision in the Market Square

Questions were raised about the withdrawal of a planning application related to toilet facilities in the Market Square. It was noted that the lack of accompanying explanation had led to confusion. Cllr Charleston confirmed that internal discussions were ongoing and that further updates would be provided once available.

Trust and Negative Perception

Several councillors spoke about the challenge of public trust and engagement, including difficulties in encouraging people to stand for election. Cllr Charleston referred to a recent rumour regarding parking charges at the crematorium as an example of misinformation and emphasised the need for better communication to counter such narratives.

Access to Council Information

It was noted that while council meeting information is available on the website, more proactive promotion is required. The idea of an email newsletter, improved signage, and better coordination with community groups was discussed. GDPR constraints were mentioned in relation to collecting resident contact information.

Closing Remarks

The Mayor thanked all attendees for their contributions and confirmed that notes from the meeting would be shared with the Council's leadership team to inform future engagement strategy and meeting formats.

Meeting closed at **6:50pm**.