

Background and Explanatory Note Cheltenham Borough Council Committee Minutes, 1888 onwards

Sources

Cheltenham Borough Council records are held at Gloucestershire Archives (CBR/C2/2/1/1-16 for 1888-1903 and CBR/C2/2/1-34 for 1903/4-1936/7) and at Cheltenham Local Studies Library, reference CW/639352CHE/ followed by the year (1896-1937).

Introduction

The Borough Council was formed in April 1876, under the Charter of Incorporation, with powers and responsibilities set out in the Municipal Corporation Act, 1835. The Council took over the responsibilities of the Improvement Commissioners, who had run the local government from the early 19th century. The ratepayers, owners or occupiers, elected a Mayor, 12 Alderman and councillors and these appointed salaried Officers – a Town Clerk, a Borough Treasurer, a Borough Surveyor and a Medical Officer of Health. Other Committees were formed as and when deemed necessary. A further development was the Improvement Act, 1889. This set up was replaced in April 1974 under the provision of the Local Government Act, 1972.

A more detailed introduction to the local government records for Cheltenham is available in the digital catalogue of Gloucestershire Archives.

<http://ww3.gloucestershire.gov.uk/CalmView/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=CBR%2fC&pos=27>

Digitised Records

The Council records have been photographed (approx. 14,000 pages) and then digitised using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software. At that stage, the resulting documents were not always a true reproduction: examples would be 'Pruen' read by the OCR as 'Pruett' or '£' being read as '4'. Many hours have been spent hand correcting individual letters and words by comparing the OCR documents with the original images. However, it is recognised that not all errors have been corrected and if absolute certainty as to the correct reading and layout is important the original documents, either in the Local Studies Library, behind the main library on Clarence Street or at Gloucestershire Archives, should be examined.

The Volumes

Each volume has been digitised from 1888 onwards. However, the Council's 'year' often ran from November of one year to the October/December period of the following year. So, for example, the pdf dated 1927, will also contain the Minutes for the November and December of 1926.

The Committees

The makeup of the Council varied over time, depending on the current needs of the administration: A Committee could function for several years and then be wound up

and another one formed, as the need arose. Or Committees could combine to deal with special circumstances. Some familiarity with the general layout and form will help the understanding of how local government was carried out at the end of the 19th and into the 20th century.

Measurements Measurements were in Imperial units.

Money £ (pounds) s (shillings) d (pennies): also half penny or h'penny $\frac{1}{2}$ d, a farthing $\frac{1}{4}$ d

12d = 1 shilling; 20 shillings = 1 pound; 240d = £1; 1 guinea = 21 shillings

Weight

Tons, hundredweights (cwt), quarters (qtr). Also bushels (variable) and occasionally 'gross' = 12 dozen = 144

Conversation tables and further information is available on the internet. As are tables giving approximate values in today's prices.

An article giving further details of the digitising of the records and the uses that local historians can make of them can be found in the Society's Journal 34 – 2018, pp.51-55.