

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM

19 MARCH 2018

REPORT OF THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCIL WORKING GROUP

REVISION TO THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCILS (TCCs) CHARTER AND THE FORMAT OF THE TCC FORUM MEETINGS

1. Purpose of Report.

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the TCC Forum of the recommendations of the Town and Community Council Charter Working Group regarding the review of the Town and Community Council Charter and to the format of the TCC Forum meetings.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 The Charter and the TCC Forum meetings links to the following priorities supported by the Corporate Plan:

1. **Supporting a successful economy** – taking steps to make the county a good place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of all people in the county.
2. **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
3. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's priorities.

3. Background.

- 3.1 The Town and Community Councils Charter is designed to build on existing good practice and embrace the shared principles of openness, respect for each other's opinions, honesty and a common priority of putting citizens at the centre. The Charter is based on equality of partnership. It is a set of guiding principles by which Councils will work together without compromising the autonomy of the individual Councils.
- 3.2 The Town and Community Council Charter was previously reviewed in 2016. As part of that process it was agreed that the Charter be reviewed annually to ensure that it remained fit for purpose.
- 3.3 In October 2017 the TCC Forum established a Working Group to undertake a review of the Charter and to identify opportunities to:

- develop capacity within the communities of the County Borough
- minimise the impact of budget reductions to citizens
- extend relationships with Third Sector and other organisations

- 3.4 The Working Group consisted of 6 Elected Members from Bridgend County Borough Council and 6 Elected Member representatives from the Town and Community Councils. In addition there were two invitees representing the Clerks of the Town and Community Council.
- 3.5 Additionally, the Working Group was tasked to consider the format of the meetings of the Town and Community Council Forum to maximise participation and engagement with all Councils of the County Borough.
- 3.6 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee (COSC) of Bridgend County Borough Council made a recommendation to the TCC Forum for them to consider more regular meetings in order to ensure momentum and consistent monitoring of any future collaborative work. This recommendation was hoped to provide an opportunity to maximise the potential of all Councils to work more effectively together. As this fell within the remit of the Working Group it was considered as part of their deliberations.

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1 The TCC Charter Working Group met on 3 occasions to undertake the review. The existing Charter and covering report as presented to the TCC Forum in October 2017, was circulated to all Town and Community Councils. They were requested to identify any opportunities to improve the Charter and invited to submit proposals to develop the format of TCC Forum meetings.
- 4.2 Fourteen responses were received from the Town and Community Councils with others responding that they would be in a position to provide their response following their council meeting in March. To date seven councils have accepted the revisions to the Charter as identified in the covering report. Many Councils have made comments which need clarification, additional information and further investigation.
- 4.3 Progressing the Charter
- 4.3.1 To progress the development of the Charter, the TCC Working Group recommend that representatives of the Working Group supported by a BCBC officer visit each Town and Community Councils. It is intended that the Working Group representatives meet with the Chairperson and several members of the Town or Community Council including their Clerk to engage with the Council, clarify their responses and develop a comprehensive picture of how the Charter could be improved.
- 4.3.2 Feedback from the Council engagements could be collated by the Working Group and updates provided to the TCC Forum on a regular basis. The collated information would enable an accurate representation of all Council views and enable appropriate improvements to be made to the Charter.
- 4.3.3 It was proposed that the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 with its

seven wellbeing goals and its five ways of working be used to provide the basis of the discussions with the Councils to progress the development of the Charter.

4.3.4 It should be acknowledged that this is an intensive approach and with the current limitation of available resources, it will be difficult to progress this proposal unless the relevant resources are identified and appropriate funding is made available.

4.3.5 Following the determination of any amendments to the Charter, the Charter action plan will be considered at each meeting of the Forum and be used to progress key activities to enhance the effectiveness of the Charter.

4.4 Format of TCC Forum meetings

4.4.1 The Working Group considered the format of the meetings of the TCC Forum and identified a number of recommendations.

4.4.2 The remit of the TCC Forum in the BCBC Constitution is identified as: "To consult with representatives of Town and Community Councils within the County Borough on matters of mutual interest." The Working Group determined that consideration of only one item at each meeting of the Forum would mean that some items of interest may never be able to be considered by the Forum. Without relevant or engaging agenda items being presented for consideration to the Forum was likely to result in lower attendance levels. This would negate any benefits that the Forum was intended to achieve. The Working Group proposed that the forward work programming for the Forum be enhanced and that its meeting considered a wider range of items including current and planned consultations, the sharing of good practice and information, and identifying opportunities for Councils to work together.

4.4.3 The Working Group were advised that not all TCC Clerks were able to attend meetings of the TCC Forum due to their limited working hours and the workloads within their own Councils. However, the TCC Clerks meetings were well attended and proved useful to discuss operational issues with other Clerks, provide each other with support and share good practice across the County Borough. It was proposed that the Clerks meetings should be amalgamated with the TCC Forum meetings to provide a focused approach to collaborative working.

4.4.4 The Working Group recommended that the frequency of TCC Forum meeting be increased to 6 per year with the agenda items being supplemented by those which would be considered at the TCC Clerks meetings.

4.4.4 With the proposed increase in the number of meetings of the Forum it is acknowledged that having a single identified representative from each Town and Community Council is a significant increase in the commitment from an individual Town or Community Councillor. The Working Group proposed that representatives of Town and Community Councils were able to provide a named substitute if they were unable to attend a meeting of the Forum. Appointed Town and Community Councils representatives would be required to provide sufficient notice of any substitution and an email address for the substitute Town or Community Councillor.

4.4.5 The Working Group proposed that a survey of meeting timings be undertaken to

determine the preferred day and time of future meetings of the Forum. This would potentially remove any barriers preventing member's attendance at meetings.

4.4.6 The Working Group also recommended that these proposals be reviewed after 6 months.

4.4.7 Resources to facilitate an increase in the number of public meetings has not been identified. The additional TCC Forum meetings will need to be supported by Democratic Services and each of the Directorates within BCBC who will be required to provide the additional resources to address the extra work, answering queries, drafting and presenting reports generated by the enhance Forward Work Programme of the TCC Forum.

4.5 Other Recommendations

4.5.1 It was proposed by the Working Group that each Town and Community Council be requested to have a standing item on their agenda to:

- consider items for inclusion on the Town and Community Council Forum agenda
- consider feedback from meetings of the Town and Community Council Forum
- Identify proposals for inclusion on the TCC Charter Action Plan which would aid the development of the Charter.

4.6 The recommendations listed above are not all within the remit of the Town and Community Council Forum and therefore a report would have to be presented to Bridgend County Borough County Council or the appropriate Town or Community Council for approval.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

5.1 There is no impact on the Council's Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However the cost of redesign and translation of the revised Charter will be met from existing budgets.

8. Recommendations.

8.1 That the TCC Forum note and consider the recommendations of the TCC Charter Working Group as shown in paragraph 4 and outlined as follows:

- (a) that representatives of the Working Group supported by a BCBC officer visit each Town and Community Council to clarify their responses and develop a comprehensive picture of how the Charter could be improved.

- (b) the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 with its seven wellbeing goals and its five ways of working be used to provide the basis of the discussions with the Councils to progress the development of the Charter.
- (c) Feedback from the Council engagements be collated by the Working Group and updates provided to the TCC Forum on a regular basis.
- (d) that the Forward Work programming for the Forum be enhanced and that its meetings consider a wider range of items including current and planned consultations, the sharing of good practice and information, and identifying opportunities for Councils to work together.
- (e) that the Clerks meetings should be amalgamated with the TCC Forum meetings to provide a focused approach to collaborative working.
- (f) the frequency of TCC Forum meeting be increased to 6 per year with the agenda items being supplemented by those which would be considered at the TCC Clerks meetings.
- (g) representatives of Town and Community Councils be able to provide a named substitute if they were unable to attend a meeting of the Forum.
- (h) a survey of meeting timings be undertaken to determine the preferred day and time of future meetings of the Forum to remove any barriers preventing member's attendance at these meetings.
- (i) that these proposals be reviewed after 6 months.
- (j) each Town and Community Council be requested to have a standing item on their agenda to:
 - consider items for inclusion on the Town and Community Council Forum agenda
 - consider feedback from meetings of the Town and Community Council Forum
 - Identify proposals for inclusion on the TCC Charter Action Plan which would aid the development of the Charter.

8.2 That the TCC Forum note that any agreed recommendations not falling within the remit of the Town and Community Council Forum will be reported to Bridgend County Borough County Council or the appropriate Town or Community Council for approval.

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Background documents: None