

# BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO THE TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCIL FORUM

21 SEPTEMBER 2015

### REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE – LEGAL & REGULATORY SERVICES

#### CHARTER BETWEEN BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL AND TOWN & COMMUNITY COUNCILS

##### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform the Town and Community Council Forum of the current Charter as attached at **Appendix 1**, between Bridgend County Borough Council and the Town and Community Council of Bridgend County Borough.

##### 2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives / Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 Effective partnership arrangements between organisations supports the achievement of all Corporate Priorities.

##### 3. Background

- 3.1 In 2007 the Welsh Government published a Local Government Policy Statement “A Shared Responsibility” which set out the expectations of Local Authorities and the support that the Welsh Government aimed to provide. It focused on:

- ensuring that public services are centered on the needs and experiences of citizens
- encouraging specialisation and economies of scale to be achieved through cross boundary collaboration
- encouraging integration and responsiveness to the diverse needs of citizens to be achieved through cross sector collaboration.

- 3.2 This strategy for achieving much improved service delivery and citizen experience of services considered three key areas of development:

- the creation of conditions to help develop a new approach to local governance for public service delivery in the form of Local Service Boards and Local Service Agreements
- the commensurate development of a vibrant and effective, cross-sector model of scrutiny, blending participatory and representative democratic approaches
- finally the generation of excellent local and national information on citizen satisfaction and local authority performance.

- 3.3 In response to this policy statement a joint guidance document “A Shared Community - Relationship Building and Charters for Unitary Authorities and

Community and Town Councils” was released by the Welsh Local Government Association, One Voice Wales and the Welsh Government in 2008.

- 3.4 The focal point of the guidance is the emphasis on establishing formal relationships by agreeing a charter. Charters can enhance relationships within local government in a number of ways, not least because the process of agreeing a charter entails assessing the values and behaviour which underpin any interaction.
- 3.5 Joint working is always a challenge, and even more so where the number of partners is large and their nature diverse. This situation applies to relationships between unitary authorities and community and town councils since the number and nature of community and town councils differs in each unitary authority area. Consequently, although general principles and good practice will be applicable to all, a pro-active and flexible approach to developing and sustaining positive relationships will be vital.

#### **4. Current situation / proposal**

- 4.1 The existing Charter was developed by a member working group appointed by the Town and Community Council Forum which gave careful consideration to the document – ‘A Shared Community’.
- 4.2 Following the development of a draft Charter it was sent with a letter to all Town & Community Councils on 15th May 2009. They were requested to make arrangements for the Charter to be considered for adoption by their Council. They were advised that the draft Charter was expected to be adopted by the Cabinet of Bridgend County Borough Council at its meeting on 26th May 2009. They were requested to inform the Authority of their Council’s decision once that position had been determined.
- 4.3 On 26th May 2009 the Cabinet considered the draft charter and agreed that this be adopted as a basis for developing positive working relationships between Bridgend County Borough Council and Community and Town Councils within the County Borough.
- 4.4 By 24th December, 2009, all Town Councils confirmed that they had agreed to adopt the Charter.
- 4.5 In February 2015 the Welsh Government published a White Paper: [Reforming Local Government: Power to Local People](#). It recognised that Local Government in Wales is currently under severe pressure as a result of austerity policies and a rising demand for services. It proposed significant changes which would impact all Council’s in Wales and the delivery of services to their communities. It was proposed to create area boards within Local Authorities, in order to ensure the new, larger Authorities are closer to their communities. As part of this, the paper talks about raising the ambition of Community Councils so they are better placed to deliver important community services in the future. This means building their capacity and capability, as well as strengthening their governance and their engagement with other services and the third sector.
- 4.6 As part of the approach to transform Bridgend County Borough Council, the need to establish a change programme to look at building capacity in the third sector and with town and community councils has been identified.

4.7 Working with the third sector and the Town and Community Councils to deliver public services could bring many benefits:

- organisations are close to communities, especially those considered hard to reach, and have skills and experience of working with the most disadvantaged in the community.
- they are an independent voice, acting as a check or balance to the mainstream.
- they can be flexible and responsive to changing needs.
- investing in local organisations can have a multiplier effect in the local economy – local public money invested locally supports local jobs and suppliers and supports economic regeneration from within.
- it is a means of harnessing community energy and ideas to develop their own solutions and action and empowering local people to make a difference.
- the benefits can be broader than those initially conceived as outcomes and the concept of ‘social accounting’ can be used to demonstrate added value.
- organisations can deliver high quality, focused and innovative interventions based on a detailed understanding of local and individual needs and can be successful where other interventions may have failed.

4.8 The following four themes have been identified which should provide the focus for building capacity in the Third Sector and with Town & Community Councils:

- A stronger and empowered community – more people participating in local decision making
- A cohesive and resilient community – people from different backgrounds getting on well together
- A sustainable and independent third sector – building the capacity of the sector and supporting sustainable growth
- Neighbourhood partnerships consisting of local stakeholders with residents – facilitating regeneration within our communities

4.9 Within these themes a number of priorities will be considered and may form projects and work streams that sit under the programme. These may include:

- Area based regeneration
- Asset Transfer Capacity Building
- Communications
- Community Cohesion
- Community Engagement
- Corporate third sector funding
- Third Sector commissioning
- External Funding
- Social Enterprise
- Volunteering

4.10 It is acknowledged that the existing Charter between Bridgend County Borough Council and the 20 Town and Community Councils within Bridgend County Borough is considered a useful tool but has not progressed significantly since its implementation. However, it does provide a framework to take forward existing good practice, develop common priorities and to minimise the impact that the

significant budget cuts over the next few years will have on citizens within the County Borough.

4.11 It is proposed that a working group be established to:

- review the existing Town & Community Council Charter,
- 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

4.12 The previous working group was comprised of 12 Members; with equal representation from BCBC and the Town and Community Councils. The representatives included 3 from Town Council's, 3 from Community Council and 6 from Bridgend County Borough Council.

4.13 It is proposed that a meeting of the working group be scheduled for 2:00pm on 22 October 2015 to be held in Committee Rooms 2/3 Civic Offices Angel Street Bridgend.

4.14 The Lead Officer in respect of the review of the Town and Community Council Charter and the Third Sector Review will be the Head of Regulatory Services and Partnerships.

## **5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules**

5.1 There is no effect upon the 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.

## **8. Recommendation.**

8.1 It is recommended that the Town and Community Council Forum:

- notes the content of the report
- approves the establishment of a working group as identified in paragraph 4.11 of the report
- appoints representatives to the working group as proposed in paragraph 4.12 of the report
- approves that the first meeting of the working group be held on 22 October 2015 at 2:00pm.

**P. A. Jolley**

**Assistant Chief Executive Legal & Regulatory Services**

**24 August 2015**

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**Background documents:** - None