

APPENDIX 1

The Community and Town Councils within Bridgend County Borough have agreed to develop this Charter which sets out how the Councils aim to work together for the benefit of local communities whilst recognising our respective responsibilities as autonomous, democratically elected statutory bodies.

The charter is designed to build on existing good practice and embrace the shared principles of openness, honesty and our common priorities of putting citizens at the centre and encouraging democratic participation.

Partners to the Charter

Bridgend County Borough Council; and

Brackla Community Council
Bridgend Town Council
Cefn Cribwr Community Council
Coity Higher Community Council
Cornelly Community Council
Coychurch Higher Community Council
Coychurch Lower Community Council
Garw Valley Community Council
Laleston Community Council
Llangynwyd Lower Community Council
Llangynwyd Middle Community Council
Maesteg Town Council
Merthyr Mawr Community Council
Newcastle Higher Community Council
Ogmore Valley Community Council
Pencoed Town Council
Porthcawl Town Council
Pyle Community Council
St. Brides Community Council
Ynysawdre Community Council

Recognition

We accept the legitimacy and benefits of partnership working whilst at the same time recognising and respecting each other's roles. We aim to work together as a partnership of equals rather than tiers, and encourage public participation in local government.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
<p>Acknowledges and recognises that community and town councils are the grass roots level of local government. In their role as democratically accountable bodies, community and town councils offer a means of engaging with local people, and of revitalising local communities.</p> <p>There is potential for the sharing of responsibility for the provision of certain services subject to agreement between the authorities on the financial implications.</p>	<p>Recognise the strategic importance of the County Borough Council and the economy of scale and equitable distribution of certain services it is able to achieve.</p>
<p>Recognises and respects the diversity of community and town councils and that the extent to which they participate in partnership working varies according to their needs and size.</p>	<p>Recognise that they function within the geographical boundaries of the County Borough and share a common interest in the needs of the local population.</p>

Local Governance and Ethics

We will be clear about the expectations that we have of each other in order to facilitate a smooth working relationship. In this regard, we will define the way in which we interact with each other. We will be clear about the role of councillors at all levels in the relationship and in community leadership. Elected members of Bridgend County Borough Council and Town and Community Councils acknowledge the need to provide an ethical service to local people and for all councillors to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
<p>Will hold liaison meetings with representatives of all community and town councils that wish to take part. This will be administered via meetings of the Town & Community Council Forum, to be held on a quarterly basis in the Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend. Additional meetings could be held when necessary.</p>	<p>Will contribute towards the agenda of the Town & Community Council Forum and contribute proactively to the attendance and discussion.</p>
<p>Will appoint a nominated member of staff to be a liaison officer between BCBC and community and town councils.</p>	<p>Will contact the nominated officer on the agreed issues and make them aware of any difficulties being encountered.</p>
<p>Community and town council councillors/officers (as appropriate) will be formally represented on key local partnerships and committee meetings. The unitary authority will seek to ensure that these arrangements are regarded as suitable and sufficient.</p>	<p>Will invite councillors/officers (as appropriate) of BCBC to meetings and will provide a space on its meeting agenda for presentations.</p>
<p>Will maintain the County Borough Mayor's Civic calendar on the BCBC website and ensure this is accessible to the clerks of the Town and Community Councils to help avoid diary clashes.</p>	<p>Will notify the BCBC Mayor's office of Civic events planned and of other significant local issues that might benefit from the Borough Mayor's attendance</p>
<p>Will administer the holding of community and town council elections.</p>	<p>Will inform the Electoral Registration Officer of vacancies as soon as practicable and ensure compliance with statutory requirements.</p>
<p>Will, through the appointed Monitoring Officer, support Town and Community Councils in the timely consideration and provision of advice in relation to the application of the Members Code of Conduct.</p>	<p>Will provide all such information as required by the Monitoring Officer to enable him/her to carry out his/her function effectively.</p>

Consultation

We appreciate the importance of meaningful consultation and set out a genuine commitment among all parties to consult on matters of mutual concern. We will agree clear, specific and time limited procedures and processes for consultation.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
<p>Will endeavour to give community and town councils the opportunity to comment before making a decision that affects the local community [e.g. children's play areas.] In furtherance of this, BCBC will make available a copy of its public reports to Cabinet, panels, committees etc; will publish the dates of its public meetings; and make copies of its agendas available on the Council's website as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Community and town councils will respond to consultation opportunities in a timely manner, addressing the key issues in the consultation document.</p> <p>Will make full use of the papers available to them to inform local decision-making.</p>
<p>Where BCBC consultation is specific to a Town and Community Council area, an undertaking is given that BCBC will endeavour to check the date of the Town or Community Council meeting beforehand.</p>	
<p>BCBC recognises the need for Town and Community Councils to have feedback on the outcome of consultation exercises to which they have contributed.</p>	
<p>Officers of BCBC will attend meetings with community and town councils (or groups of councils) at a mutually agreed time to discuss matters of common interest when requested to do so, having regard to the fact that town and community councils generally meet monthly.</p>	<p>BCBC Councillors and officers will be given an opportunity to speak at community and town council meetings on matters of mutual interest.</p>
<p>Will encourage scrutiny committees to liaise with community and town councils on relevant local issues.</p>	<p>Will respond to requests to input views to scrutiny committees.</p>

Information and Communication

We appreciate the need for timely, clear and relevant information and communication in fostering good relationships and better joint working for the benefit of local people.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
Will provide to community and town councils a list of named contacts, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and maintain this up to date.	Will utilise the agreed contact points and respond to communications in a timely manner.
Will provide documents for members and Clerks of community and town councils electronically where appropriate, and in hard copy on request.	Will ensure that town and community councillors have opportunity to access the appropriate documents.

Joint working and engagement

The Charter defines 'Partnership' as working together towards a common set of goals, based on equality in terms of ownership, decision-making and recognition of each party's distinctive contribution. It is recognised that an equal and effective partnership brings benefits and responsibilities to all those involved and that we must work together to engage with citizens and promote the economic, social and environmental well being of our area.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
Will provide opportunities for clerks of town and community councils to meet to promote good working arrangements, discuss common concerns and resolve issues.	Will offer opportunities for clerks to network, share good practice and discuss common concerns.
Should seek ways in which local information from communities might be used to enhance service delivery to better meet citizen needs	Should engage with the citizens and the voluntary sector in the communities they serve to understand better their needs and convey these needs in a constructive manner to BCBC, such that they can be taken account of in service design and delivery.
Will give due consideration to devolving services that would provide better value for money and/or enhanced services.	
Will invite bids, when budgets allow, from Community and Town Councils for joint	

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
projects/ working which meet joint objectives and the BCBC priority themes.	

Land Use Planning

Community and town councils know and understand their local area and must be able to comment effectively on planning matters. The County Borough Council is able to take an overview of the needs of the whole local area and make decisions, taking local views into account.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
Will uphold its statutory duty to consult community and town councils on all planning applications in their communities, preferably in electronic form, in the interests of efficiency.	Will make appropriate responses to BCBC recognising the parameters imposed by planning law and agreed planning policy within the specified consultation period.
Will allow representatives of the community and town councils to address the Development Control Committee on applications appearing on the Committee's agenda in accordance with the public speaking arrangements.	Will ensure that councillors receive appropriate training on planning issues and develop a sound understanding of how planning law works. (Two copies of Planning Aid's booklet providing advice to town/community councils on planning matters have been previously circulated to each community/town council).
Will inform a community or town council electronically (within five days of the decision being made) or in writing (within seven days) of the decision made with respect to a planning application in its area. The report on each application will explain why any decision is different from the point of view put forward by the community/town council. Individual town and community councils will therefore be provided with feedback on views that they have submitted.	Will maintain an objective and professional approach to planning matters at all times, and recognise the statutory constraints in which the Planning Committee operates.
Will give community and town councils information about relevant planning committee meetings so that they may attend as observers.	Will enable Councillors to take up the opportunity to attend planning committee meetings at the unitary authority.
Will invite a representative from a community or town council – a local ward member wherever possible - to participate in site visits relating to	Will contribute to identifying relevant planning issues for fact finding site visits.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
planning applications in its area.	
All members of the Council serving on the Development Control Committee, or if making a decision in respect of a planning application, will abide by the provisions of the Council's Planning Code of Practice.	All members of Town and Community Councils will abide by sections 1 and 4 of the BCBC Planning Code of Practice when deciding upon the appropriate consultation response to a planning application.
Will continue consulting with community and town consultees for each and every stage of the Local Development process.	Will make appropriate responses to BCBC recognising the parameters imposed by planning law and agreed planning policy within the specified consultation period.
Will consult with the community and town councils on new Supplementary Planning Guidance.	Will make appropriate responses to BCBC recognising the parameters imposed by planning law and agreed planning policy within the specified consultation period.

Practical Support

In order to be effective, elected members and officers must be well-trained and have the support they need to carry out their roles.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
The County Borough Council will, where practical, provide community and town councils access to support services, to enable them to take advantage of facilities such as printing and purchasing at a mutually agreed price.	Will follow procedures set out to access certain BCBC support services, but also have opportunity to make own arrangements.

Expertise

We will encourage continuous development of officers and members in both BCBC and community and town councils, either in their individual groupings or together. Improved expertise leads to professionalism and more effective joint working. Access to information is also recognised as being an important issue for Town & Community Councillors.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
<p>Will offer assistance with member induction training for town and community councillors to enable them to understand the role and functions of BCBC.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to running these events during the day/evening to facilitate choice and access to such training.</p>	<p>Will provide an induction to newly elected councillors to enable them to undertake their role effectively.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to jointly developing a general information pack that will be of benefit to Members.</p>

Financial arrangements

Both the County Borough Council and Town and Community councils recognise the need for clarity and transparency in financial arrangements. All parties also recognise the benefit of being able to explore opportunities for delivering services in partnership in the future and that a number of Councils already have such arrangements. In developing and implementing financial arrangements, relevant national and local priorities will be taken into account.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
<p>BCBC in setting the level of council tax for the area, will have regard to services being delivered by community and town councils in its area, and the funding thereof.</p>	<p>Community and town councils, in setting the annual precept, shall have regard to what they perceive as being important to their community and any services provided jointly and shall notify BCBC of any proposed changes to their budgets which will impact on service delivery/ changes.</p>
<p>From time to time, BCBC will endeavour to make resources available via the Town and Community Council Fund to promote joint working arrangements.</p>	<p>Community and town councils recognise that certain community facilities have deteriorated and are in need of repair. They will endeavour to work in partnership with BCBC to address these within their own priorities.</p>

Delegating responsibility for service provision

Services should be delivered in the most appropriate manner, with regard to value for money and added value for local people. Examples of areas where arrangements for delegation of service delivery have been made include Rights of Way and street cleaning.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
BCBC will give due consideration to all cases for the delegation of service delivery to community and town councils, basing its consideration primarily on the improvement of service delivery for citizens whilst ensuring value for money is retained or enhanced.	Community and town councils should recognise that there are certain instances where it is not appropriate or desirable for BCBC to delegate service delivery.

Sustainability

We will work in ways that are sustainable, reconciling the long-term needs with those of the present; and protecting and improving the quality of life of current generations without compromising the quality of life of future generations. We will encourage our communities to live within environmental limits whilst promoting community wellbeing.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
Will assist town and community councils with information on sustainable practices in areas such as energy, waste, local food and transport.	Will communicate to local people within our communities to encourage sustainable behaviour.
Will look for opportunities for Town and Community Councils to get involved with existing or proposed projects that support sustainable development.	Will look for opportunities to start projects that encourage local people to get involved in sustainable activities.

Community Strategy

The Community Strategy is developed by the Bridgend Local Service Board and is the overarching strategy for the local area. It sets out the key priorities for this area and how partners will work together to address them. The LSB is made up of the most senior representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors and its aim is to deliver improved outcomes for local people by ensuring that partners work effectively together in pursuit of agreed priorities in the Community Strategy.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
Will ensure that town and community councils are consulted in the development of the local community strategy.	Will contribute to the development of the community strategy.
Will ensure that town and community councils are involved in the implementation of the community strategy.	Will respond actively and fully to consultation of the draft community strategy.
Will make arrangements to engage with town and community councils in the scrutiny of the Local Service Board.	Will participate in the partnership monitoring and the implementation of the community strategy.

Local Elections

Fair and open elections are the bedrock of local democracy. We will ensure that elections are freely and fairly contested, and encourage local people to become involved in local democracy.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
Will keep community and town councils informed regarding the local election planning process.	Will ensure wide publicity of vacancies on community and town councils to maximise community representation.
Will help to publicise forthcoming local elections on behalf of community and town councils.	Will facilitate public participation at all relevant meetings of the council and its committees to encourage community involvement.
Will brief community and town council clerks on the nomination process so that they are equipped to assist any potential candidates who come	Will inform the Electoral Registration Officer of vacancies as soon as practicable and ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
forward for local elections.	
Will run the local election legal and administrative processes and procedures, and promptly invoice Town and Community Councils for this service.	Will pay any charges incurred promptly upon receipt of invoice.

Action Plan

This Charter will be supported by the development of an annual action plan addressing each of the individual topics contained herein. The action plan will be developed on a joint basis and shall attribute responsibilities to each partner. Actions will be accompanied by a timescale and will be reported on at least quarterly during the year.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
The unitary authority will nominate a lead officer for the development and monitoring of the action plan.	Community and town councils will collectively agree priorities for inclusion in the action plan.
Responsible officers of the unitary authority will have due regard to the action plan and include relevant actions in their workplan for the year.	Community and town councils will have due regard to the action plan and the actions relevant to them during the course of the year.

Joint Monitoring and Review

We recognize the need to foster and maintain good working relationships and undertaking periodic reviews of this charter will assist us achieve this objective.

Bridgend CBC	Community and Town Councils
Will arrange for the Charter to be reviewed annually or as agreed.	Will actively contribute to the review of the Charter.
Will arrange for the development of an action plan linked to the Charter and will actively contribute to achieving the action plan.	Will actively contribute to the development and delivery of the Charter action plan.

Conclusion

The undersigned community and town councils and Bridgend CBC are committed to the principles and statements set out within the charter, for the benefit of local people.

Brackla Community Council
Bridgend Town Council
Cefn Cribwr Community Council
Coity Higher Community Council
Cornelly Community Council
Coychurch Higher Community Council
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