

A SHARED COMMUNITY – A CHARTER BETWEEN FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AND THE TOWN AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS OF THE COUNTY

2018

FINAL (Version 7 – May 2018)



Flintshire County Council and Town and Community Councils Working in Partnership



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PARTNERS TO THE CHARTER

We the undersigned declare our commitment to this Charter and the principles and statements within it.

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

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.

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. All local government in the county must work together to promote the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of our area. If doing things differently achieves a better service, we will seriously examine these methods.



Chief Executive, Flintshire County Council

Argoed Community Council
Bagillt Community Council
Broughton & Bretton Community Council
Brynford Community Council
Cilcain Community Council
Connah's Quay Town Council
Flint Town Council
Gwernaffield & Pantymwyn Community Council
Gwernymynydd Community Council
Halkyn Community Council
Hawarden Community Council
Higher Kinnerton Community Council
Holywell Town Council
Hope Community Council
Leeswood Community Council
Llanasa Community Council

Llanfynydd Community Council
Mold Town Council
Nannerch Community Council
Nercwys Community Council
Northop Community Council
Northop Hall Community Council
Penyffordd Community Council
Queensferry Community Council
Saltney Town Council
Sealand Community Council
Shotton Town Council
Trelawnyd & Gwaenysgor Community Council
Treuddyn Community Council
Whitford Community Council
Ysceifog Community Council

INTRODUCTION

The Town and Community Councils of Flintshire and Flintshire County Council have agreed to publish a Charter which sets out how we will work together for the benefit of local communities whilst recognising our respective responsibilities as autonomous, democratically elected statutory bodies.

The overall purpose of the Charter is designed to improve relationships between all aspects of local government in Flintshire and build on existing good practice and embrace the shared principles of openness, respect for each other's opinions, honesty and our common priority of local democracy and respecting local views and choice. This Charter is based on equality of partnership and is not a top-down arrangement.

There are 34 Town and Community Councils within Flintshire, all playing a vital role in the fabric of local communities.

This Charter has the full approval and commitment of Flintshire County Council and of the Town and Community Councils signed up to this Charter.

This Charter will continue to be monitored and reviewed in partnership by Flintshire County Council and the Town and Community Councils.

This is a time of significant change in local government.

All County Councils are seeing an increase in demand for services. Coupled with the reduction in Welsh Government grant and the development of new methods of joint working such as community asset transfers, the time is right for a fresh look at how all aspects of local government in the county can work together.

ACTION PLAN

This Charter will be supported by an annual Action Plan addressing each of the individual Charter sections. The Action Plan will be developed on a joint basis and shall attribute responsibilities to each partner. Actions will be attributed to partners with a timescale and will be reported on at least six monthly during the year concerned.

SECTION 1: GOVERNANCE

Local Governance

We will be clear about the expectations that we have of each other in order to facilitate good working relationships. In this regard, we will define the way in which we interact with each other. We will be clear about the role of all Councillors in the relationship and in community leadership.

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

We will encourage continuous development of officers and members in both Flintshire County Council and Town and Community Councils, either in their individual groupings or together. Improved expertise will support more effective joint working.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Appoint a nominated member of staff to be a liaison officer between Flintshire County Council and Town and Community Councils.	Contact the nominated officer on the agreed issues and make them aware of any difficulties being encountered.
Call meetings as and when required that require the involvement of Town and Community Councils, and where practicable will be held in the evening.	Provide the County Council with dates and frequency of Town and Community Council meetings and avoid clashes of meetings where possible.
	Invite Councillors / Officers (as appropriate) of Flintshire County Council to meetings and where necessary will provide a space on its meeting agenda for presentations.

Partnership Working

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. All aspects of Local government must work together to promote the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of our area. If doing things differently achieves a better service, we will seriously examine these methods.

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.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Acknowledges and recognises that Town and Community Councils are the most localised level of local government. In their role as democratically accountable bodies, Town and Community Councils offer a means of engaging with local people, of decentralising and sustaining the provision of certain services, and of revitalising local communities.	Recognise the strategic importance of the County Council and the economy of scale and equitable distribution of many services they are able to achieve.
Recognises and respects the diversity of Town and Community Councils and that their needs vary according to size, and the extent to which they participate varies.	Recognise that they have an important role in community leadership in the County.
Discuss with Town and Community Councils how they can best contribute to taking ownership of and/or the workings of key local partnerships.	Develop local partnerships to sustain or improve services where appropriate.
	Contribute positively to local partnerships.
As the lead and co-ordinator of the Flintshire Public Services Board, invite a representative to be a member of the Board to represent the Town and Community Council sector.	Nominate a representative to be a member of the Public Services Board. The representative to follow and support the accompanying roles and responsibilities.
Seek to work positively with Town and Community Councils on such issues as renewal areas, Town Centre planning, Communities First etc. and discuss with Town and Community Councils other areas in which it might be mutually beneficial to further develop joint working arrangements.	Positively work with the County Council to maximise future opportunities for joint working.

County Forum

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Hold County Forum meetings with representatives of all Town and Community Councils that wish to take part. These meetings will be held 3 times a year.	Contribute towards the agenda of County Forum meetings with common/shared issues and contribute proactively to the attendance and discussion.
Ensure Town and Community Councils are informed of the County Forum meetings in a timely way, giving them time to put any agenda items forward.	Ensure Town and Community Councils are represented at County Forum meetings. Town and Community Councils should aim to attend at least two meetings per year.
Provide opportunities for Clerks of Town and Community Councils to meet to discuss common concerns and resolve issues that directly involve Flintshire County Council.	Encourage participation by Clerks in opportunities to network and share common concerns.

Ethics

We will provide an ethical service to local people, following the appropriate Standards and Codes of Conduct. We will encourage links between Town and Community Council Clerks and Flintshire County Council Standards Committee.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils 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.	Ensure that Town and Community Councillors are advised not to make vexatious complaints under the Code of Conduct and will provide all such information as required by the Monitoring Officer.
Ensure that County Council members are aware of the need to adhere to the Code of Conduct.	Ensure that members are aware of the need to adhere to Standing Orders and the Code of Conduct.
Provide two training sessions per year on the Code of Conduct.	Support planned Code of Conduct training by providing a venue for sessions, promote such events to their members and encourage Councillors to attend training.

Training and Support

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Offer member induction training to Town and Community Councillors to enable them to understand the role and function of the County Council.	Provide an induction to newly elected Councillors to enable them to undertake their role effectively.
Provide Town and Community Councils with relevant member training.	Provide newly elected Councillors with the relevant documentation and training to undertake their role e.g. the Good Councillors Guide (as issued by the Welsh Assembly Government), the Code of Conduct and Standing Orders.

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.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Administer the holding of Town and Community Council elections.	Notify the need for elections in a timely manner.
Involve Town and Community Councils in the local election planning process.	Encourage participation in the local election process by members of the local community.
Involve Town and Community Councils in any awareness raising/ publicity to encourage nominations for candidacy at local elections.	Ensure wide publicity of vacancies on Town and Community Councils to maximise community representation.
Help to publicise forthcoming local elections on behalf of Town and Community Councils.	Provide Flintshire County Council with the necessary information to publicise any forthcoming elections on their behalf.
Brief Town and Community Council Clerks on the nomination process so that they are equipped to assist any potential candidates who come forward for local elections.	Assist potential candidates who come forward for local elections with the relevant information.
Provide help and assistance with the local election legal and administrative processes and procedures.	

Monitoring and Review

The Charter will be a live document and will be reviewed annually or more often if there is a need to do so.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Arrange for the Charter to be reviewed on an annual basis.	Actively contribute to the review of the Charter.
In partnership with the Town and Community Councils develop an annual action plan for joint delivery.	Actively contribute to the development and delivery of the Charter action plan.

SECTION 2: COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Information

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.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Provide Town and Community Councils with a list of named contacts, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses for key services within Flintshire County Council.	Utilise the agreed contact points and respond in the most appropriate and timely method.
Acknowledge all written communications from Town and Community Councils (including letters and emails) within 5 working days. A substantive response to all written communications will be provided within ten working days unless circumstances dictate that this timescale cannot be met. If this is the case Flintshire County Council will provide an acknowledgement of the written communication within five working days, the acknowledgement to include a proposed timescale for the substantive response.	Ensure that all Town and Community Councillors have access to the appropriate channels of communication.
Provide statistical and other data to Town and Community Councils as required.	Inform the County Council when undertaking community led planning processes such as Town/Community Plans and seek County Council involvement where required.
Notify Town and Community Councils of actions taken within their areas such as road closures, maintenance etc.	Share this information within their community areas.

Enquiries, Concerns and Complaints

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Upon receipt of reported issues, acknowledge receipt of enquiry/complaint, investigate issues in accordance with the Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy / Procedure and provide feedback to Town and Community Councils – 10 workings days for Step 1 complaints and for those issues escalated its 20 working days for Step 2 complaints.	Where appropriate follow/utilise Flintshire County Council's "Compliments, Comment and Complaints" Policy and procedure.
	Contact the nominated Officer for further support when the Policy is not being adhered too.
Respond to reports where remedial actions in service delivery are required.	Endeavour to inform the County Council when emergency action is needed e.g. dangerous or fallen trees, non-functioning and displacement of traffic signals, road flooding, potholes, loose or uneven flagstones and kerbs, bollard knock-downs and fallen or unsafe lighting columns.

Consultation and Engagement

We appreciate the importance of meaningful consultation and set out a genuine commitment among all parties to consult on matters of mutual concern.

We recognise the need to engage local people in the things that matter to them, to gather their views and opinions, and to ensure their feedback is accurately reported and considered at the appropriate time during decision making processes.

We will agree clear, specific and time limited procedures and processes for consultation.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
<p>Give Town and Community Councils the opportunity to comment on consultations before making a decision that affects the local community.</p>	<p>Respond to consultation opportunities in a timely manner, addressing the key issues in the consultation document.</p> <p>Act as intermediaries, taking steps wherever possible to engage and consult local people on the matters that are important to them, and incorporate the views and opinions collected into final consultation responses.</p> <p>Help to promote open consultations to local people, providing context for how the issue may impact their community, and actively encourage people to get involved by signposting them to where they can have their say.</p>
<p>Flintshire County Council, at the beginning of each municipal year, will provide Clerks with a link to its website containing the dates of all its public meetings. Agendas and Reports for past and present meetings will also be available via the link.</p>	<p>Make full use of past and present papers when considering how to respond to consultations on issues affecting their local community and to inform their own local decision-making.</p>
<p>Ensure availability of Officers to attend meetings with Town and Community Councils (or groups of Councils) at a mutually agreed time to discuss matters of common interest when requested to do so and given sufficient notice (minimum of 3 weeks unless deemed urgent).</p>	<p>Give Flintshire County Councillors and Officers an opportunity to speak at Town and Community Council meetings on matters of mutual interest.</p> <p>Where appropriate, openly promote these meetings to community residents and facilitate their contribution to the debate.</p>
<p>Allow Town and Community Councils sufficient time to discuss and respond to consultations, before making decisions that affect local communities.</p>	<p>Publish on their websites the dates of their meetings for the municipal year, to assist the County Council, where possible, in the better planning its invitations for responses to consultations.</p> <p>Respond to County Council consultations on planning and other matters within the time limit specified in the consultation.</p>

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Invite Town and Community Councils to attend community engagement events and stakeholder forums.	Attend community engagement events and/or stakeholder forums where possible. Assist the County Council in the promotion of community engagement opportunities to encourage and extend local participation.
Accurately report Town and Community Council views to those Councillors making decisions.	Inform County Council of matters relevant to the local community.
Publish the outcomes of its consultation and/or engagement activities on its website in line with the timescales set out in the consultation documentation.	Will access consultation outcomes and assist in promoting their availability to the local community.
Electronic media will be used for consultation while making hard copies available upon request.	Will encourage Town and Community Councils to more fully utilise electronic media particularly with regards to consultation.
Where appropriate, help Town and Community Councils promote matters of local interest on its website and other social media channels.	Where appropriate, inform the County Council of matters of local interest which can be publicised on Flintshire County Council's website or other social media channels.
Encourage Town and Community Councils to submit appropriate items for discussion to the relevant Scrutiny Committee of the County Council.	Respond to requests to input views/items to Scrutiny Committees.

SECTION 3: SERVICES

Devolved Services

Services should be delivered in the most appropriate manner, with regard to value for money and added value for local people.

We recognise that for some services different tiers of government are more appropriate and devolution to Town and Community Councils where appropriate will be encouraged and supported.

To support the devolution of services Flintshire County Council and Town and Community Councils recognise the need for clarity and transparency in financial arrangements. In developing and implementing financial arrangements, relevant national and local priorities will be taken into account.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Give due consideration to all reasonably argued cases for the delegation of service delivery to Town and Community Councils, basing its consideration primarily on sustaining or the improvement of service delivery for citizens whilst ensuring value for money is retained or enhanced.	Consider if any local services currently provided by Flintshire County Council or partners might be more appropriately/effectively delivered by Town and Community Councils.
Where it is not appropriate or desirable to delegate service delivery, seek ways in which local information from communities might be used to enhance service delivery to better meet citizen needs.	Engage with relevant communities to better understand their needs and convey these in a coherent and constructive manner to the Council to inform service design and delivery.
Be clear about how devolved services can be discussed and agreed.	Use the agreed procedures if there is a wish to progress devolved services.
Consult and discuss with Town and Community Councils when considering devolving services to; sustain services, to provide better value for money and/or enhanced services. These may include Community Asset Transfers or alternative delivery models.	Be clear about how any devolvement of services might sustain services for the future, providing better value for money and/or enhanced services.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Ensure accountability for all acquired or devolved activities.	Take responsibility for aspects of joint working that they are signed up to.
Support the transition of devolved services.	In partnership with the County Council identify areas of support needed.
In setting the level of council tax for the area, have regard to services being delivered by Town and Community Councils in this area, and the funding thereof. This will be with a view to avoiding 'double-taxation' where possible.	In setting the annual precept, have regard to the plans for service delivery of both Flintshire County Council and the Town and Community Council for the coming year.
Where the provision of a service is devolved or transferred to a Town or Community Council, ensure agreement of any funding level between Flintshire County Council and the relevant Town or Community Council as part of an appropriate Service Level Agreement (SLA).	In advance of any services being devolved to a Town or Community Council will agree the level of funding to be transferred.
Where capacity allows, offer Town and Community Councils access to support services, to enable them to take advantage of facilities such as photocopying, IT and purchasing at a mutually agreed price.	Follow procedures set out to access Flintshire County Council support services, but also have opportunity to make own arrangements.

SECTION 4: LAND USE AND PLANNING

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

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Conform to the agreed planning procedures laid out.	Conform to the agreed planning procedures laid out.
Uphold its statutory duty to consult Town and Community Councils on all planning applications in their communities.	Make appropriate responses to Flintshire County Council recognising the parameters imposed by planning law and agreed planning policy.
Inform Town and Community Councils in writing of a decision issued with respect to any planning applications in its area and facilitate access to the reasons behind the decision.	Ensure that Councillors receive training on planning issues from relevant Officers/bodies and have a sound understanding of how planning law works.
Give Town and Community Councils information about relevant Planning Committee meetings so that they may attend as observers or participants in line with the Third Party Representation at Planning Committee Protocol.	Take up the opportunity to attend Planning Committee meetings to make representations on Applications in which they have an interest.
Where a Town or Community Council has been formally consulted on a planning issue, seek to inform them of the outcome of the decision issued and facilitate access to the reasons behind the decision; subject to confirmation within the Development Control Services Procedures Manual.	Provide the County Council with the up to date contact details of the Clerk to the Council.
Invite Town and Community Councils to any relevant Planning User Focus Group Meetings and use these meetings for training on relevant planning matters.	Encourage participation in the Planning User Focus Group Meetings.
Maintain the level of discussions with Town and Community Councils on how they can best contribute to the development and effective delivery of the Local Development Plan.	Seek to fully contribute to the development of and effective delivery of Flintshire County Council's Local Development Plan.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Where practicable support Town and Community Councils in the development of Community Plans.	Invite support from Flintshire County Council in the development of Community Plans if required.
Continue to provide Town and Community Councils with hard copies of planning applications upon request.	Make copies of planning applications available to Community Councilors upon request.

SECTION 5: WELL-BEING AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

The [Well-being of Future Generations Act \(Wales\) 2015](#) is a new piece of challenging legislation promoted by the Welsh Government. It aims to improve further the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales now and for the longer-term.

The Act is underpinned by seven 'well-being' goals and five ways of working known as the sustainable development principles.

Town and Community Councils which have a gross income or expenditure of at least £200,000, for each of the three financial years preceding the year in which the Well-being Plan is published, are subject to their own specific parts of this legislation.

Well-being Plan for Flintshire

We recognise the strategic importance of the Well-being Plan as the overarching vision of partnership bodies for the County. The Well-being Plan and its effectiveness is informed by the grass roots experiences from within our communities in addition to the shared intelligence of our partners. To support the evidence in the Well-being Plan a [Well-being Assessment](#) has been compiled which will be subject to periodic review.

The Well-being Plan supports both the well-being goals and the sustainable development principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 and will demonstrate how Flintshire as a County of partners will contribute towards these.

The Council's own **Council Plan** aligns and integrates with the Well-being Plan. It includes the themes and priorities that the Council will deliver upon in-year to support the priorities of the Well-being Plan.

The production of the Well-being Plan and its delivery is one of the core roles of the Public Services Board (PSB). Town and Community Councils are represented on the board (Partnership Working Section, page 6).

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Discuss with Town and Community Councils how they can best contribute to the development and effective delivery of the Well-being Plan for Flintshire.	Contribute towards the development and effective delivery of the Well-being Plan for Flintshire.
Discuss with Town and Community Councils how they can best contribute to the development and effective delivery of the Council Plan.	Contribute towards the development and effective delivery of the Council Plan.
Involve Town and Community Councils in any consultation to inform both the Well-being Assessment and Plan.	Respond actively and fully to any consultation undertaken around both the Well-being Assessment and Plan.

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.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Assist Town and Community Councils with information on sustainable practices.	Proactively assess the sustainability of current practices and processes.
Outline how the Council is actively implementing sustainable development.	Encourage projects which contribute to sustainability where beneficial to the community.
Work in partnership with Town and Community Councils to promote sustainable social, economic, environmental and cultural development for the benefit of local communities, whilst seeking not to compromise the quality of life for future generations.	Work in partnership with Flintshire County Council to promote sustainable social, economic, environmental and cultural development for the benefit of local communities, whilst seeking not to compromise the quality of life for future generations.

Diversity and Equality

Flintshire County Council and the Town and Community Councils of the county are determined to eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. Diversity and Equality are at the heart of everything we do and we have a joint responsibility to ensure that everyone has equal access to our services.

We recognise that we have an important role to play in ensuring that all members of our communities have a say in our shared future.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Meet the specific needs of individual members of the County Forum in relation to meeting arrangements to ensure all attendees can fully participate.	Identify any specific needs of members and inform Flintshire County Council of any specific requirements, such as providing documents in large print, Braille etc.
	Provide accessible venues for meetings.
Be clear about the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 when working in partnership with Town and Community Councils to deliver services.	Comply with the Equality Act 2010, where the Council and Town and Community Councils jointly provide services or work in partnership.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Assist Town and Community Councils with information on inclusive services.	Assess the extent to which their current practices promote equality.
Work in partnership with Town and Community Councils to celebrate diversity and promote Flintshire as a county where discrimination and harassment is not tolerated.	Wherever practicable encourage projects and initiatives that celebrate diversity and inclusion.

Welsh Language Standards

We will work in ways that promote the Welsh language and facilitate its use, and ensure that we do not treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Discuss with Town and Community Councils how we can identify and meet the preferred languages of individual members of the County Forum in relation to meeting arrangements.	Identify the preferred languages of individuals who attend meetings of the County Forum, and inform Flintshire County Council of such preferences.
Assist Town and Community Councils with information on bilingual practices.	Assess the extent to which their current practices promote the Welsh language and its sustainability.
Work in partnership with Town and Community Councils to promote the Welsh language and facilitate its use for the benefit of local communities and future generations.	Wherever practicable encourage projects/ initiatives which contribute to raising the visibility and audibility of the Welsh language in the county.
Work in partnership with Town and Community Councils to celebrate Welsh culture.	Wherever practical participate in initiatives to celebrate Welsh culture e.g. St David's Day.
Be clear about the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards with which Flintshire County Council will need to comply when jointly providing services with Town and Community Councils.	Comply with the Welsh language Standards where the Council and Town and Community Councils jointly provide services, and the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than the English language.