

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

2012



**Flintshire County Council and Town & Community Councils
Working in Partnership**



PARTNERS TO THE CHARTER

We the undersigned declare our commitment to this Charter and its principles and statements for the benefit of local people and in so doing, aim to encourage the improvement of our good working practices and embrace the spirit of this agreement.

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. Local government at both tiers must work together to promote the economic, social and environmental 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	Llanasa Community Council
Bagillt Community Council	Llanfynydd Community Council
Broughton & Bretton Community Council	Mold Town Council
Brynford Community Council	Mostyn Community Council
Buckley Town Council	Nannerch Community Council
Caerwys Town Council	Nercwys Community Council
Cilcain Community Council	Northop Community Council
Connah's Quay Town Council	Northop Hall Community Council
Flint Town Council	Penyffordd Community Council
Gwernaffield Community Council	Queensferry Community Council
Gwernymynydd Community council	Saltney Town Council
Halkyn Community Council	Sealand Community Council
Hawarden Community Council	Shotton Town Council
Higher Kinnerton Community Council	Trelawnyd & Gwaenysgor Community Council
Holywell Town Council	Treuddyn Community Council
Hope Community Council	Whitford Community Council
Leeswood 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 aim to work together for the benefit of local communities whilst recognising our respective responsibilities as autonomous, democratically elected statutory bodies.

The overall aim of the Charter is designed to improve relationships between the tiers 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 valuable role in the fabric of local life.

This Charter has the full approval and commitment of Flintshire County Council and of all of the Town and Community Councils in Flintshire.

This Charter will continue to be monitored and reviewed by Flintshire County Council and the Town and Community Councils of Flintshire in partnership with a view to making further amendments wherever necessary.

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 six monthly during the year concerned.

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.

Flintshire County Council	Town and Community Councils
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 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 Town and Community Councils come within the boundaries and community leadership of the County Council.

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 Councillors at all levels in the relationship and in community leadership.

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 at least 3 times a year.	Contribute towards the agenda of County Forum meetings and contribute proactively to the attendance and discussion.
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.

Discuss with Town and Community Councils how they can best contribute to the workings of key local Partnerships.	Invite Councillors/Officers (as appropriate) of Flintshire County Council to meetings and where necessary will provide a space on its meeting agenda for presentations.
Call meetings as and when required/deemed necessary 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.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

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.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Aim to give Town and Community Councils the opportunity to comment before making a decision that affects the local community. In furtherance of this, Flintshire County Council will advise Clerks of the dates of it's public meetings of the beginning of the municipal year and make Agendas and Reports of meetings available on the Council's website.	Respond to consultation opportunities in a timely manner, addressing the key issues in the consultation document.
	Make full use of the papers available to them to inform local decision-making.
Make Officers available 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).	Give Flintshire County Councillors and Officers an opportunity to speak at Town and Community Council meetings on matters of mutual interest.
Encourage Town and Community Councils to submit items for discussion to the relevant Scrutiny Committee of the County Council.	Respond to requests to input views/items to Scrutiny Committees.
Where a Town or Community Council has been formally consulted, seek to	Provide the County Council with the up to date contact details of the Clerk to the

inform them of the outcome of the decision having been issued and facilitate access to the reasons behind the decision; subject to confirmation within the Development Control Services Procedures Manual.	Council.
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.
When consulting allow Town and Community Councils sufficient time to discuss and respond, before Flintshire County Council makes a decision that affects its local community.	Respond to consultations by the County Council on planning and any other matters within the time limit specified in the consultation.
Invite Town and Community Councils to awareness-raising and stakeholder forums where these are used as an alternative way of engaging communities and will provide timely feedback on the outcomes of such awareness-raising and stakeholder forums.	Attend any awareness-raising and/or stakeholder forums where possible.
Accurately report Town and Community Council views to those Councillors making decisions.	Inform County Council of matters relevant to the local community.
Facilitate the use of our website by Town and Community Councils for the publicising of issues and information of local interest and concern.	Where appropriate, inform the County Council of issues and information of local interest which can be publicised on Flintshire County Council's website.
Promote the use of electronic media for consultation where appropriate, while making hard copies available when requested.	Will encourage Town and Community Councils to more fully utilise electronic media particularly with regards to consultation.
Look into the possibility of providing Town and Community Councils with an email to inform them when relevant areas of the County Council's website have been updated.	

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 where possible 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, faxes and emails). A substantive reply to all written communications that require a response 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 ten 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 documents.
Provide statistical 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.

ENQUIRIES & COMPLAINTS

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Upon receipt of reported issues, investigate such issues in accordance with the relevant Council policy and procedure.	Where appropriate follow/utilise Flintshire County Council's "Compliments, Comment and Complaints" Policy and procedure.
Commit to keeping Town & Community Councils updated on any enquiries or complaints lodged either against Flintshire County Council as a corporate body or against officers / members of Flintshire County Council.	

JOINT WORKING & 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. Local government at both tiers must work together to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of our area. If doing things differently achieves a better service, we will seriously examine these methods.

The points below should be read in conjunction with page 11 'Financial Arrangements'.

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
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.
Be clear about how devolved services can be discussed and agreed.	Use the agreed procedures if there is a wish to progress devolved services.
Give due consideration to devolving services that would provide better value for money and/or enhanced services.	Be clear about how any devolvement of services will provide better value for money and/or enhanced services.
Encourage accountability for all acquired or devolved activities.	Take responsibility for aspects of joint working that are signed up to.

Seek to work positively with Town and Community Councils on such issues as renewal areas, Town Centre planning, Communities First etc. and will 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.
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LAND USE & 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 a planning application 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.
Invite Town and Community Councils to a minimum of two Planning User Focus Group Meetings per year and use these meetings for training on relevant planning matters.	Encourage participation in the Planning User Focus Group Meetings.
Discuss with Town and Community Councils how they can best contribute to the development and effective delivery of	Seek to fully contribute to the development of and effective delivery of Flintshire County Council's Local

the Local Development Plan.	Development Plan.
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PRACTICAL SUPPORT & EXPERTISE

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 leads to professionalism and more effective joint working.

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

Flintshire County Council will:-	Town and Community Councils will:-
Where practical, offer Town and Community Councils access to support services, to enable them to take advantage of facilities such as printing, 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.
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.
Further discuss with Town and Community Councils how relevant on going member training might best be provided in the future.	Provide newly elected Councillors the relevant documentation to undertake their role e.g. the Good Councillors Guide (as issued by the Welsh Assembly Government), the Code of Conduct and Standing Orders. The necessary training in relation to the above will also be provided.
Where practicable support Town and Community Council's in the development of Community Plans.	Invite support from Flintshire County Council in the development of Community Plans if required.

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.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

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:-
In setting the level of council tax for the area, have regard to services being delivered by Town and Community Councils in its area, and the funding thereof. This will be with a view to avoiding double-taxation.	In setting the annual precept, have regard to the plans for service delivery of Flintshire County Council for the coming year.
Where the provision of a service is devolved or transferred to a Town or Community Council, ensure funding is also transferred with the amount involved being agreed by Flintshire County Council and the Town or Community Council.	In advance of any services being devolved to a Town or community Council will agree the level of funding to be transferred.

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.

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 the improvement of service delivery for citizens whilst ensuring value for money is retained or enhanced.	Consider whether there are elements of service provision which is currently provided by Flintshire County Council which might be more appropriately 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 the citizens in the communities they serve to understand better their needs and convey these needs in a coherent and constructive manner to Flintshire County Council, such that they can be taken account of in service design and 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.

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 implement 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 and environmental 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 and environmental development for the benefit of local communities, whilst seeking not to compromise the quality of life for future generations.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY

We recognise the strategic importance of the Community Strategy as the overarching vision of partnership bodies for the County. Furthermore, we recognise that the Community Strategy will only be fully effective if it is informed by the grass roots experiences from within our communities.

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 Community Strategy.	Contribute to the development of the Community Strategy.
Involve Town and Community Councils in the implementation of the Community Strategy.	Respond actively and fully to consultation on the draft Community Strategy and participate in the 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.

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 enable them 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.	
Provide help and assistance with the local election legal and administrative processes and procedures.	

EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

In partnership with Town and Community Councils we are determined to eliminate all forms of discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. Equality and Diversity 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:-
Survey areas where it is believed that a person has been discriminated by access / mobility	

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.
Arrange for the development of an annual action plan linked to the Charter.	Actively contribute to the development and delivery of the Charter action plan.