

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

COUNCIL – 25TH JUNE 2009

AN UPDATED PARISH CHARTER FOR TELFORD & WREKIN

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1. To adopt the updated Parish Charter for Telford & Wrekin.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the attached updated Parish Charter be formally adopted.

3.0 SUMMARY

3.1 Following extensive consultation and debate with Parish & Town Councils in Telford & Wrekin a refreshed and updated Parish Charter is in place. Telford & Wrekin Council, along with all Town and Parish Councils, is asked to formally adopt it.

4.0 INFORMATION

4.1 There has been a Parish Charter – a partnership agreement between Wrekin District Council/Telford & Wrekin Council - since 1993. Its purpose is to identify the commitments that each Council will make to ensure effective communication and co-ordination of activity for the benefit of the communities of Telford & Wrekin. It contains commitments, for example, from Telford & Wrekin Council to consult with Parish and Town Councils “on all issues on which the grass-roots tier of local governance would benefit”, and to “use plain language in all communications”. There are complementary commitments from Town & Parish Councils to “respond to consultations by Telford & Wrekin Council on any matter within the time-limit specified” and to “use plain language in all communications”. It is a two-way partnership agreement.

4.2 The Parish Charter has been reviewed 3 times. Firstly, in 1998, after Telford & Wrekin came into being as a unitary council, then in 2003 following publication by Government of the Quality Council Scheme. Finally it was reviewed after the 2007 election. Initial consultation began in the autumn of 2007. The two key issues raised during the initial round were that

- rural Parishes felt they received little focus from Telford & Wrekin Council, and

- some parts of Telford & Wrekin Council seemed unaware of the commitments in the Charter to communicate and co-operate effectively.

4.3 The first issue was met by the appointment of a Rural Locality Manager. The second issue will now be managed by a Charter joint-working group (with Parish and Telford & Wrekin representation) which will monitor performance against the commitments in the Charter and report in to quarterly meetings of the Parishes Forum.

4.4 The final review and refresh of the Charter has been led by representatives of Town and Parish Councils and the Wrekin Area Committee. Quarterly Parish Forum meetings will prove critical in driving and monitoring the effectiveness of partnership working between Parish and Town Councils and Telford & Wrekin Council into the future.

5.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

5.1 Telford & Wrekin Council has a duty to be equitable in the way it delivers its services. Local Councils are independent. Telford & Wrekin Council must be clear, however, that to be equitable an offer to one Council (subject to lessons learned from piloting) must also be open to all.

6.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

6.1 Many of the issues that are important to Local Councils relate to care for the natural and the built environment (e.g. rights of way, roads maintenance, public transport, development control). Any improvements to communications and joint-working in caring for the environment will have a beneficial impact. Further development of joint-working on recycling and on measures to combat and adapt to climate change will also bring benefits.

7.0 LEGAL COMMENT

7.1 There are no legal implications arising directly out of this report.

8.0 LINKS WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

8.1 Given the power “to promote wellbeing” that is to be awarded to eligible Local Councils, there is the potential to make an impact on all the corporate priorities at the local level.

9.0 OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

9.1 The opportunities and risks associated with this Charter review have been identified and assessed. Arrangements will be put in place to

manage the risks and maximise the opportunities that have been identified.

10.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.0 At present Telford & Wrekin Council's contribution to the Parish Charter is in the form of officer time.

11.0 WARD IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There is potential for changes in the way Telford & Wrekin communicates and works with Local Councils. In that respect there is the potential for there to be impact on all wards in the Borough.

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