

Charter between the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Community & Town Councils

2019

Town and Community Councils Charter

Introduction

The community and town councils of the Vale of Glamorgan and the Vale of Glamorgan Council have agreed to publish an updated version of the 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 Charter is designed to build on the previous version and existing good relationships. The work of all partner organisations is built on the shared principles of openness, respect for each other's opinions, honesty and our common priority of putting citizens at the centre of what we deliver. The Charter is based on equality of partnership and aspires not to be a top-down arrangement. It is a set of guiding principles by which we will work together. It will not compromise the autonomy of any of the councils which are signed up to it.

Partners to the Charter

The undersigned community and town councils and Vale of Glamorgan Council are committed to the principles and statements with the Charter, for the benefit of local people:

To be added upon adoption

The following sets out the Principles and Commitments that provide the structure to the Charter and clearly express the commitments of community and town councils and the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The principles upon which this Charter is based are:

1. Recognition
2. Governance
3. Involvement, Engagement & Consultation
4. Information & Communication
5. Joint Working & Engagement
6. Land Use Planning
7. Well-being of Future Generations Act
8. Local Elections

Principle 1: 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.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council	Town and Community Councils
Acknowledges and recognises that Town and Community Councils (TCCs) are the grass roots level of local government. In their role as democratically accountable bodies, TCCs 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 Vale of Glamorgan Council as a democratically accountable body and the economy of scale and equitable distribution of certain services they are able to achieve.
Recognises and respects the diversity of community and town councils and that their needs vary according to size, and the extent to which they participate also varies.	Recognises and respects the diversity of community and town councils and that their needs vary according to size, and the extent to which they participate also varies.
Recognises the principle of subsidiarity (whereby activities are undertaken at as local a level as makes sense to do so from an economic as well as service delivery perspective) as a desirable goal.	Recognises the principle of subsidiarity as a desirable goal.

Principle 2: Governance

We will be clear about the expectations that we have of each other in order to facilitate an effective 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.

The Community Liaison Committee meets quarterly. One representative, or nominated substitute, attends from each TCC and from any other organisation considered appropriate, along with thirteen unitary Councillors, to discuss local government matters of mutual concern. The Committee provides comments and makes recommendations to the appropriate decision-making body. We will provide an ethical service to local people, following the appropriate standards and Codes of Conduct. We will encourage links between TCC Clerks and the Vale of Glamorgan Council Standards Committee.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council	Town and Community Council
Will hold quarterly Community Liaison meetings with representatives of all TCCs that wish to take part. The Community Liaison Committee will be the mechanism for discussion and for TCC's to raise issues in relation to the Charter.	Will contribute towards the agenda of Community Liaison meetings and contribute proactively to attendance and discussion.
Will share agenda papers and minutes of Council meetings (including Cabinet, Scrutiny and other Committees) electronically.	Will share agenda papers and minutes with interested officers and Councillors when appropriate by electronic means.
Will appoint a nominated member of staff to be a liaison officer between the Vale of Glamorgan Council and TCCs.	Will contact the nominated officer on the agreed issues and make them aware of any difficulties being encountered.
TCC Councillors / officers (as appropriate) will be formally represented on key local partnerships and committee meetings. The Vale of Glamorgan Council will seek to ensure that these arrangements are regarded as suitable and sufficient.	TCCs Councillors/officers (as appropriate) who take part on key partnerships will ensure that they represent the views of all TCCs and will provide feedback to them on key issues.
Councillors/officers will strive to attend TCCs Council meetings as appropriate.	Will invite Councillors/officers of the Vale of Glamorgan Council to meetings as appropriate and will provide a space on its meeting agenda for presentations.
Will administer the holding of TCC elections.	Will notify the need for elections in a timely manner.

Town & Community Councils Charter: Principles & Commitments

Will provide opportunities for nominee(s) to join key groups or boards, for example the Public Services Board.	Will identify and appoint nominee(s) for key groups or boards, for example the Public Services Board.
Will, through the appointed Monitoring Officer, support TCCs in the timely consideration and provision of advice in relation to the application of the Members' Code of Conduct.	Will act in an appropriate manner under the Code and will provide all such information as required by the Monitoring Officer to enable him/her to carry out his/her function effectively.

None of the principles in this Charter would prevent other meetings being held when appropriate on any matters of mutual interest.

Principle 3: Involvement, Engagement and Consultation

The Vale of Glamorgan Council	Town and Community Councils
<p>We will work together to involve our respective organisations and our communities in decision making at appropriate stages, through the processes of involvement, engagement and consultation. We appreciate the importance of meaningful involvement, engagement and 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 to support these activities.</p>	<p>We will work together to involve our respective organisations and our communities in decision making at appropriate stages, through the processes of involvement, engagement and consultation. We appreciate the importance of meaningful involvement, engagement and 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 to support these activities.</p>
<p>To actively promote involvement, engagement and consultation activities being undertaken to maximise their reach and impact.</p>	<p>To actively promote involvement, engagement and consultation activities being undertaken to maximise their reach and impact.</p>
<p>Will give TCCs the opportunity to comment before making a decision that affects the local community unless its impractical to do so and will endeavour to give feedback whenever it is practical to do so.</p>	<p>TCCs will respond to consultation opportunities in a timely manner, addressing the key issues in the consultation document.</p>
<p>Will make available copies of its public reports (Cabinet, Scrutiny and other committees, Council, etc.); will advise Clerks of the dates of its public meetings; and will make copies of its agendas available on the Council’s website as soon as possible.</p>	<p>Will make full use of the papers available to them to inform local decision-making.</p>
<p>Only in exceptional circumstances will appropriate consultation not take place, in which case a written explanation will be given on request.</p>	<p>Acknowledge that in some circumstances the time scales set for receipt of comments on consultation documents are imposed externally and are occasionally very short. It may be that to meet deadlines, especially on major issues, it will be necessary for TCCs to hold a special meeting.</p>

Principle 4: 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.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council	Town and Community Councils
Will provide to TCCs a list of named contacts, telephone numbers and where possible e-mail addresses.	Will utilise the agreed contact points and respond in the most appropriate and timely method.
Will communicate by providing sufficient numbers of documents for Members of TCCs.	Will ensure that all TCC Councillors have access to the appropriate documents.
Will communicate the Charter to relevant Council staff and Elected Members.	Will communicate the Charter to relevant Council staff and Elected Members.

Principle 5: 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. 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, cultural social and environmental well-being of our area. If doing things differently achieves a better and more sustainable service, we will seriously examine these methods. 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 Vale of Glamorgan Council and TCCs, either in their individual groupings or together. Capacity building leads to professionalism and more effective joint working. Both the Vale of Glamorgan Council and TCCs 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.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council	Town and Community Councils
Will provide opportunities for Clerks of TCCs to meet to discuss common concerns and resolve issues.	Will encourage participation by Clerks in opportunities to network and share common concerns.
Will give due consideration to devolving services/assets that would provide better value for money and/or enhanced services.	Will be clear about how any devolvement of services/assets will provide better value for money and/or enhanced services.
Will promote opportunities to work jointly with TCCs to communicate and consult with local people and communities.	Will identify opportunities to work with the unitary Council to communicate and consult with local people and communities.
Will be clear about how devolved services and assets can be discussed.	Will use the processes discussed regarding the operation of services and assets by TCCs if there is a wish to progress devolved services.
To provide information to inform business case development and assist in the preparation of proposals for joint working initiatives.	To use information and engage with the Council in the development of business cases and proposals for joint working initiatives.
Will give due consideration to all reasonably argued cases for the delegation of service delivery to TCCs, basing its consideration primarily on the improvement of service delivery for citizens whilst ensuring value for money.	Will recognise that there are certain instances where it is not appropriate or desirable for the Vale of Glamorgan Council to delegate service delivery.

Town & Community Councils Charter: Principles & Commitments

Where it is not appropriate or desirable to delegate service delivery, the Vale of Glamorgan Council will seek ways in which local information from communities might be used to enhance service delivery to better meet citizen needs.	Will 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 the Vale of Glamorgan Council, such that they can be taken account of in the design and delivery of services.
Will, where practical, offer TCCs access to support services, to enable them to take advantage of facilities such as printing, IT, legal services, personnel services, purchasing at a mutually agreed price.	Will follow procedures set out to access the Vale of Glamorgan Council's support services should they be appropriate.
Assistance will be offered in identifying and helping to meet the training needs of TCCs.	Will ensure that Councillors and Clerks are trained to undertake their role effectively.
Will offer Member Induction Training to TCC's Councillors to enable them to understand the role and function of the Vale of Glamorgan Council.	Will provide an induction to newly elected Councillors to enable them to undertake their role effectively.
Will provide service-specific support materials and training as appropriate, subject to resources being available.	Will provide an induction to new Clerks to enable them to undertake their role effectively.
In setting the level of Council Tax for the area, will have regard to services being delivered by TCCs in its area, and the funding thereof. This will be with a view to avoiding double-taxation.	In setting the annual precept, shall have regard to the plans for service delivery of the Vale of Glamorgan Council for the coming year assuming information is received in a timely manner.

Principle 6: Land Use Planning

TCCs know and understand their local area and must be able to comment effectively on planning matters. The Vale of Glamorgan Council must take an overview of the needs of the whole local area and make decisions, taking local views into account.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council	Town and Community Councils
Will uphold its statutory duty to consult TCCs on all planning applications in their communities.	Will make appropriate responses to the Vale of Glamorgan Council recognising the parameters imposed by planning law and agreed planning policy.
Will invite representatives from a TCC to attend and observe at Planning Committee site visits relating to planning applications in its area.	Will ensure that Councillors receive training on planning issues and have a sound understanding of how planning law works.
Make it clear in the guidance on Speaking at Planning Committee that the TCC representative will have their own individual slot to speak on matters relating to their area. Where there are cross boundary applications, representatives from each area will have speaking time at the Committee.	Will progress any further clarification with the Council officers concerned.
Will ensure that TCCs are notified of decisions made on applications relevant to their area, and will respond to requests for further clarification where requested to do so.	Will use the Council’s online Planning portal.
Will continue to consult TCCs on policy matters, including the community engagement strategy associated with the Local Development Plan, including new Supplementary Planning Guidance Documents.	Will maintain an objective and professional approach to planning matters at all times.
Will engage with those TCCs wishing to adopt Place Plans and adopt them as Supplementary Planning Guidance where they accord with the relevant legislation and policy, including the Local Development Plan.	If there is local desire to do so, will prepare Place Plans that accord with the relevant legislation and policy as appropriate.
Will have regard to comments received in relation to Section 106 matters when assessing planning applications and implementing Section 106 spend in local communities.	Will include comments on planning obligation (Section 106) requirements when commenting on major planning applications having regard to the policy / legislation governing these.

Town & Community Councils Charter: Principles & Commitments

Will publish annual Section 106 reports setting out receipts and spend for local transparency.	Will liaise with the Council's Section 106 Officer and Local Ward Members about Section 106 implementation.
Will arrange for TCCs to receive an annual briefing opportunity regarding planning applications and material considerations.	Will attend the annual briefing on planning to ensure understanding and communication between the organisations.

Principle 7: Well-being of Future Generations Act

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 the current generation without compromising the quality of life of future generations. In our work we will reflect the Well-being of Future Generations Act by considering the way our work contributes to the national well-being goals and that we can demonstrate the sustainable development principle through the five ways of working. We recognise the strategic importance of the Vale of Glamorgan Well-being Plan as published by the Public Services Board as the overarching strategic vision and priorities for the local area. Furthermore, we recognise that the Well-being Plan will only be fully effective if it is informed by the grass roots experiences from within our communities.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council	Town and Community Councils
Will engage with TCCs regarding how the Council and the Public Services Board can maximise contributions to the national well-being goals.	Will engage with the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Public Services Board to support activities which will contribute to the delivery of the national well-being goals.
Recognises that the Well-being of Future Generations Act places a number of duties on some TCCs and will work with Councils to assist them in delivering their duties under the Act.	Will work with the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the Public Services Board to contribute where appropriate to the delivery of their well-being objectives.
Will assist TCCs with information on sustainable practices.	Will proactively assess the sustainability of current practices and processes.
Will assist TCCs to adopt electronic working to achieve improved communication and to reduce waste.	Will work towards adopting electronic methods of working wherever feasible to achieve improved communication and to reduce waste.
Will outline how the Vale of Glamorgan Council is actively pursuing sustainable development.	Will outline how the TCCs are actively pursuing sustainable development.
Will (via the Public Services Board) involve TCCs in the development of the Well-being Plan.	Will contribute to the development of the Well-being Plan in its development stage.
Will (via the Public Services Board) involve TCCs in the implementation of the Well-being Plan.	Will participate in the partnership monitoring the implementation of the Well-being Plan.

Principle 8: 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.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council	Town and Community Councils
Will involve TCCs in the local election planning process.	Will encourage participation in the local election process by members of the local community.
Will involve TCCs in any awareness raising/ publicity to encourage nominations for candidacy at local elections.	Will ensure wide publicity of vacancies on TCCs to maximise community representation.
Will help to publicise forthcoming local elections on behalf of TCCs.	Will facilitate public participation at all relevant meetings of the Council and its Committees to encourage community involvement.
Will brief TCC Clerks on the nomination process so that they are equipped to assist any potential candidates who come forward for local elections.	
Will provide help and assistance with the local election legal and administrative processes and procedures.	

Action Plan

This Charter will be supported by the development of an 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 six-monthly during the year concerned.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council	Town and Community Councils
Will nominate a lead officer for the development and monitoring of the action plan.	Will collectively agree priorities for inclusion in the action plan.
Responsible officers of the Vale of Glamorgan Council will have due regard to the action plan and include relevant actions in their service plans for the year.	Will undertake to implement all actions relevant to them coming from the action plan.

Monitoring and Review

The Charter will be fully reviewed following local elections, or more often if there is a need to do so. The Community Liaison Committee will measure progress annually in achieving the measures set out in the Charter through the setting and reviewing of actions contained in an action plan. The Community Liaison Committee can recommend the need for a mid-term review of the Charter if appropriate.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council	Town and Community Councils
Will arrange for the Charter to be reviewed when appropriate.	Will actively contribute to the review of the Charter.
Will arrange for the development of an action plan linked to the Charter.	Will actively contribute to the development and delivery of the Charter action plan.
Will actively contribute to achieving the action plan.	Will actively contribute to achieving the action plan.