



Committee and date

Council
22nd July 2010

Item

14

Public

A Parish Charter for Shropshire

Portfolio Holder Cllr Gwilym Butler

Responsible Officer Sam Hine

Email: Sam.hine@shropshire.gov.uk

Telephone: 01743 252591

Summary

A Shropshire Parish Charter was adopted in 2004 by the County, District and Borough Councils with town and parish councils in the county. With the recent local government reorganisation there is a clear need for a new Charter between Shropshire Council and the first tier of local government.

A draft Charter was issued for consultation in December 2009 following its launch at the Association of Local Councils (ALC) AGM. Approximately 85% of local councils are members of ALC. The Charter is between Shropshire Council and all local councils, irrespective of ALC membership. It is based on principles and proposes a framework and way of working together, to best serve the people of Shropshire.

All local councils in Shropshire were invited to comment on the draft document. The consultation was promoted directly with town and parish councils, through ALC, through the Consultation Portal, local press releases and Local Joint Committees. The deadline for responses was extended to the end of April to enable as many councils as possible the opportunity to consider the document.

Forty responses were received. The majority are positive and supportive of the Charter with constructive suggestions for improvement offered. A summary of the comments received through the consultation is shown at Appendix B.

Shropshire Council is now asked to sign up to the Shropshire Charter. A programme of awareness raising on the Charter commitments will be implemented across the Council, targeted initially at service areas that work regularly with local councils.

Local councils will be encouraged to sign up to the final document through a variety of means over the next twelve months, including direct communications and the ALC AGM 2010. The Local Joint Committee structure will also be used to promote and raise awareness of the new Charter.

Recommendation

A That Council approve the new Shropshire Charter as attached at Appendix A.

Report

Background

- 1 There are more than 150 parish councils in Shropshire, with a further number of parishes served by Parish Meetings.
- 2 With the loss of the district tier of local government the role of and relationship with the town and parish councils (TPCs) becomes increasingly important.
- 3 A strong relationship between Shropshire Council and the TPCs is vital for good community governance and Shropshire's citizens.
- 4 The last Parish Charter was produced in 2004. There was a commitment at that time to review in four years and with the change in local government in Shropshire a clear need for a new Parish Charter was identified.
- 5 The Local Joint Committees provide an excellent mechanism for the Council to work together with TPCs and strengthen our working relationships. However, it is important that the Council continues to have a direct working relationship with the local councils in Shropshire.
- 6 The Charter defines a way of working and identifies key principles and commitments around the themes of:

Information and communication
Consultation and Engagement
Liaison
Community Led Planning
Standards and Ethics and Quality Status
Training and Development
Delivery of Services
Elections
Compliments and Complaints

- 7 The Charter is a two way agreement that should be built on shared respect and understanding of the issues faced by both tiers of local government in Shropshire. A strong working relationship will become increasingly important as the impact of the public sector funding reductions take effect.
- 8 Many of our services work directly with town and parish councils on a regular basis. A shared understanding and agreed expectations should lead to a more effective and efficient working relationship.
- 9 The Charter will be monitored on a regular basis and will be kept under ongoing review.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Shropshire Parish Charter 2004

Human Rights Act Appraisal

There are non arising directly from this report

Environmental Appraisal

There are non arising directly from this report

Risk Management Appraisal

There are non arising directly from this report

Community / Consultations Appraisal

A full consultation with all town and parish councils in Shropshire was undertaken between December 2009 and April 2010.

Cabinet Member

Gwilym Butler

Local Member

All

Appendices

Appendix A – The Shropshire Charter 2010

Appendix B – Consultation Responses Summary