

SHROPSHIRE COUNCILS

R CONSULTATION

DECEMBER 2009

With the creation of Shropshire Council, following local government re-organisation in April 2009, there is a need for a new Charter between all councils in Shropshire.

The original “Charter for Shropshire Councils” was created in 2004 and was adopted by the County Council, the five District and Borough Councils and a number of the 154 parish and town councils in Shropshire.

The new Shropshire Charter will assist in building further on the existing strong, collaborative partnership-working between the different councils in the county that between them represent all levels of democratic local government in Shropshire.

Shropshire Council recognises that the town and parish councils (Local Councils) are the grass roots level of local government. By working together we will provide better services to local communities and a higher degree of satisfaction for the people of Shropshire.

By signing up to this document we agree to work together to promote the best interests of the communities we serve; to provide quality public services and; to promote opportunities for greater public participation and engagement in our work.

The Charter needs to have the full commitment of its signatories, and its partner organisations, including the Shropshire Partnership and the Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC). We will hold regular liaison meetings about issues of common interest and how to achieve the best outcomes for local people.

The Charter will be monitored and evaluated regularly, with further opportunities to raise issues of common interest or concern through the Local Joint Committee structure.

AIMS

In addition to the overall aim of strengthening relationships between Shropshire Council and the Local Councils, the Charter has the following aims:

1. To promote sustainable social, economic and environmental development in Shropshire without compromising the quality of life of future generations.
2. To establish a framework for effective local governance, striving to improve community involvement in local democracy.
3. To ensure effective communication and working relationships between the two tiers of local Government in Shropshire and their partner organisations, by improving consultation and communications about policies and decisions that affect communities.

Councils and local Members are the grass-roots of community leadership, possessing local knowledge and decision-making processes.

5. To inform, enable and assist Local Councils in fulfilling their responsibilities and to support those that wish to take on additional services or facilities.
6. To ensure all councils are aware of procedures for dealing with information, compliments, complaints and standards.
7. To work better together to deliver quality services to Shropshire people.

THE SHROPSHIRE CHARTER COMMITMENTS

The Councils in Shropshire commit to working together in respect of:

Information and communication
Consultation and engagement
Liaison
Community Led Planning
Regulatory functions
Standards and ethics
Training and development
Delivery of services
Elections
Compliments and complaints

**If you would like to make any comments on this consultation document please
respond to:**

Head of Community Working

Shropshire Council, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND

or email communityworking@shropshire.gov.uk

by March 31st 2010

COUNCIL S COMMITMENTS

SHROPSHIRE CHARTER

1. Information and Communication

- 1.1 Effective working between the Local Councils and Shropshire Council depends on clear information being available to all.

Shropshire Council will seek to

- use clear, concise, plain language in all communications. The use of acronyms will be limited and when used, should include an explanation of their meaning.
- ensure that staff have a clear understanding of the role of Local Councils and the importance of engagement on relevant matters.
- provide information in the most appropriate form wherever possible.
- encourage all Local Councils to equip themselves to receive electronic information.
- acknowledge all written communications from local councils (including letters, faxes and emails) and provide a substantive reply to all written
- communications that require a response in line with the Council's Service Standards.
- signpost to relevant procedures such as the Management Development Charter.
- distribute through SALC an up-to-date list of Members and Senior Officers, their duties and contact details.

2. Consultation and Engagement

- 2.1 Shropshire Council recognises the importance and value of communication and in particular keeping Local Councils informed of issues affecting their own parishes. Shropshire Council will provide to Local Councils and SALC, clear concise documentation and seek to avoid paperwork overload wherever appropriate.
- 2.2 Shropshire Council will consult with Local Councils on all matters where there is a **statutory requirement to do so**: e.g. amendments to Public Rights of Way and Planning Applications. In addition, Shropshire Council has provided a mechanism for Local Councils to refer planning applications to committee for consideration. Further details are shown in the Development Management Charter.

Key matters: i.e. matters for which there is no default, Shropshire Council will recognise where the partners, such as Local Councils, are important

- 2.4 Wherever possible concise meaningful consultation, on matters of significant local importance, will be undertaken **in advance** of any decision-making.
- 2.5 Wherever possible sufficient information to allow Local Councils to make an informed response and an acceptable amount of time to give consideration to the matter will be provided.
- 2.6 A named officer, to whom queries regarding such consultations can be addressed, will consider all the views offered by the Local Councils.
- 2.7 In the event of decisions being taken which are contrary to the expressed wishes of a Local Council, the clerk will be informed and reasons offered. In the case of planning decisions, Development Management produces a weekly list of decisions. Full copies of the officer report, which specifically states why consultees' views have or have not been agreed with, are available on the Shropshire Council website via the online planning register.
- 2.8 Local Councils will be offered the opportunity to have direct discussions where the community are likely to be significantly affected by the outcome of decisions on strategic policy. Strategic policy documents may also be included on an agenda for the Local Joint Committee Meetings and/or SALC policy group.
- 2.9 The Shropshire Partnership Consultation Portal will be promoted and include a database of planned consultation activity so that Local Councils can incorporate them into their own work plans.

Shropshire Council will:

- make available on request a copy of its public reports to Council, Cabinet, Panels, Committees, etc
- advise all Clerks of the dates of its public meetings.
- make copies of agendas and minutes available on the Council's website as soon as possible.
- consult on issues for which the first tier of local governance would benefit, including key corporate arrangements which affect the work of Local Councils or the delivery of local services; issues of strategic policy; other issues of relevance to all or a number of Local Councils.
- identify named officers to whom queries from Local Councils can be addressed.
- feedback on the outcomes following consultations.

on policy wherever possible, recognising that
the Local Development Framework) do not
time.

3. Liaison

3.1 Local Joint Committees will provide key liaison opportunities to the Local Councils.

In addition Shropshire Council will:

- host two liaison meetings with SALC Executive members, relevant Portfolio holders and senior Shropshire Council officers every year.
- host briefing sessions with local councils on major issues that are the subject of consultation and promote full engagement on all key issues.
- encourage local Members to attend Local Council meetings in their divisions.
- endeavour to make staff available by phone to Local Council Clerks and Councillors.
- respond to requests to attend meetings to discuss particular issues of common interest, subject to availability and appropriateness.

4. Community Led Planning

Shropshire Council will

- ensure that Local Councils are consulted and involved in community plans and strategies as they affect the local communities they represent, and ensure that they have the opportunity to take an early and active part in the formulation of policy and service delivery.
- encourage the production of, and take into account issues raised by, the community planning process as appropriate.
- recognise the collective role that is shared in delivering local community leadership.
- actively support all Local Councils in developing their own projects, in particular those that address the priorities of local community plans

5. Standards and Ethics

5.1 Shropshire Council and all Local Councils have adopted a Code Of Conduct based on the National Code of Local Government Conduct.

5.2 Local Council representatives sit on the local Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct at all times.

conduct for Councillors and maintain the Register

- work with SALC and Local Councils to achieve Quality Status and strengthen links with the Local Strategic Partnership in order to improve the delivery of local priorities.
- welcome dialogue regarding enhanced service and facility provision.

6. Training and Development

Shropshire Council will

- offer assistance in identifying and helping to meet the training needs of Local Councils and work with Shropshire Association of Local Councils, Local Joint Committees and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) through the Shropshire County Training Partnership to develop an annual training programme.

7. Delegation or Devolution of Services

- 7.1 Where a Local Council (or group of Local Councils) wish to take on delegated responsibility for the delivery, management or monitoring of services, Shropshire Council will discuss and support opportunities, where this is lawful, maintains accountability and represents best value (taking account of cost, quality, local preferences and practicability).
- 7.2 Services and functions, such as maintenance of amenity areas, play areas, public toilets, markets, open spaces, closed church yards, street furniture and street cleaning are suitable for delegation or devolution to Local Councils.
- 7.3 Local Councils wishing to apply for service delegation/devolution must submit a business case in respect of their proposals. This will be assessed to ensure that services continue to be efficiently and effectively delivered. Where the provision of a service is devolved or transferred to Local Council(s), the financial arrangements and partnership framework will be agreed by Shropshire Council with the relevant Local Council(s).

Further information is shown at Appendix 3.

8. Compliments, Comments and Complaints

- 8.1 Shropshire Council will aim to resolve any complaint by early and constructive dialogue. If this is not possible, a meeting between the Chairman and Clerk of the Local Council with the responsible Cabinet Member and/or Lead Officer of Shropshire Council will meet to discuss the issue and find a mutually acceptable resolution.

Shropshire Council will act quickly and effectively to
cannot be agreed, we will help local councils to
procedure.

9 Elections

- 9.1 Shropshire Council will organise the administration of Local Council elections.
- 9.2 Shropshire Council will provide Local Councils with a “Guide to Election Procedures for Town and Parish Council Elections”.

10. Practical Support

Shropshire Council will, where practical and affordable, offer parish and town councils access to their corporate services for the following support. Initial enquiries should be free, thereafter such support for some services may need to incur a charge, or may be offered through an agreed service contract.

Further information is included at Appendix 2

Human Resources

HR Advisory including employment legislation and statutory employment rights.
Occupational Health
Organisational Development
CRB disclosure service
Health and Safety training and advice

ICT

IT Helpdesk Support
PC equipment and consumables for Clerks
Strategic advice and planning of IT infrastructure
Website support through Shrop.net

Finance

Payroll
Pensions advice
Accounting and budgeting
VAT and Tax advice
Procurement advice
Pension fund membership for paid employees
Insurance and risk management advice
Office supplies and consumables through West Mercia Supplies

Emergency Planning Advice

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Property and Related Matters
Contracts
Elections advice

Research and Information

Local area information such as Census data
Signposting to published and accessible sources of information
Bespoke information requests

External Funding Advice and Support

Identification of external funding sources
Support with monitoring and evaluating externally funded projects

Community development support

Community project support
Festivals and events advice

Youth Services

Advice on youth provision and services
Local Democracy Week
Support for Work Placements
Support for inter-generational activities
Young people consultations

Burial Authority Responsibilities

Community Safety

Advice and support to seek partnership solutions

Local Benefits Surgeries

Play provision and local leisure development advice

Management of local greenspaces and rights of way
Leisure facilities, sports clubs, activities & events

Catering for large events

Shared Facilities

Use of meeting space at Area Headquarters free of charge subject to



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...n and Parish Councils

...s are available to Local Councils from

Shropshire Council:

- Environmental Maintenance Grant
- Street Lighting Improvement Grant
- Rural Bus Stops Grant
- Local Joint Committees
- Sports Grants
- Arts Grants
- Community Fund (grants for community buildings)

SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL COMMITMENTS

SHROPSHIRE CHARTER

1. Information and Communication

Local Councils will

- inform Shropshire Council through SALC of the current Clerk's contact details, Councillors names and addresses and other relevant information at the earliest opportunity
- use plain language in all communications and avoid acronyms whenever possible. When unavoidable, an explanation of the meaning should be included
- work to promote sustainable social, economic and environmental development
- commit to provide information electronically wherever possible
- have the right to initiate the Council's Complaints Procedure if they are dissatisfied with an action of Shropshire Council
- inform the local Shropshire Councillor(s) of the dates of meetings as soon as they are set and provide them with a copy of the Agenda for each formal meeting plus a copy of the last Council meeting's minutes, three clear days before the meeting
- provide a space on their meeting agenda for the local Shropshire Councillor(s) to provide a relevant report. It should be noted, however, that if the local council resolves to exclude the press and public for an item, this will include the Shropshire Councillor unless specifically invited to remain
- give at least one months notice for requests for an officer from Shropshire Council to attend a meeting, unless in a matter of an emergency
- respond to all communications within the requested timescales wherever possible

2. Consultation and Engagement

Local Councils will

- include correspondence for communication on the next available and appropriate agenda and respond within the agreed timescales.
- respond to consultations by Shropshire Council on any matter within the time limit specified. If, for any reason this is not possible, the Clerk will inform the relevant officer of the Council so that alternative arrangements can be made.
- be eyes and ears for the Principal Authority, and inform the relevant departments at Shropshire Council of any matter in need of attention (e.g. dangerous or fallen trees, potholes, kerbs, bollards and street lighting) at the earliest opportunity, using the Council's reporting systems – for example via

discussions, where invited, on planning matters and will assist Shropshire Council in monitoring compliance with planning decisions, including conditions, and support the Council where it undertakes enforcement of breaches of planning control.

- make use of the mechanism to refer planning applications to committee for consideration as set out in the Development Management Charter.
- nominate snow wardens and tree wardens as appropriate, to work closely with the Council to represent the communities with issues that they may or may not be aware of.
- take an active part in the Local Joint Committees and ensure that agenda items for meetings are notified in good time.

3. Community Led Planning

Local Councils will

- respond to community planning consultations and invitations to participate either individually or collectively.
- consider the production of a parish, neighbourhood or town plan and engage with Shropshire Council on the preparation of the Local Development Framework.
- work with Shropshire Council on any policy or service delivery consideration, recognising the collective role that is shared in delivering local community leadership.
- inform Shropshire Council of their local plans and projects for the future and discuss with relevant officers ways in which the two Councils can work together at an early stage of development.

4. Standards and Ethics

- 4.1 Local Councils and Shropshire Council have adopted the Code of Conduct based on the National Code of Local Government Conduct and will work with the Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct at all times.

5. Training and Development

- 5.1 Local Councils, clerks and councillors, will attend training and information-sharing events whenever possible.

Shropshire Council and consider any delegated g into consideration the cost, quality, local preferences and practicability at all times.

- 6.2 Where a request for delegation or devolution is made local councils will produce a costed business case in support of the request.

7. Compliments and Complaints

- 7.1 Any complaints or breach of the Parish Charter will be resolved by early dialogue and Local Councils agree to attend a meeting with the Cabinet Member and/or Lead Officer of Shropshire Council in order to find a mutually acceptable resolution.
- 7.2 If something goes wrong, Local Councils will act quickly and effectively in supporting Shropshire Council to put it right and have the right to use the formal complaints procedure if all else fails.

COMMITMENTS SHIRE CHARTER

Shropshire Council embraces equality and diversity in all its work. The issue of equality is not the responsibility of one section or service area solely, but is owned by all Members and staff at all levels of the Council.

In Shropshire we recognise the value difference can make and we are committed to serving the diverse needs of our communities. We are committed to treating everyone fairly, openly and honestly and the Council is striving to achieve equality for the diverse mix in our communities and our own workforce, recognising that people have different needs, cultures, experiences and expectations.

The Council recognises that valuing equality and diversity will lead to more sensitive services that are responsive to the needs of the communities, a workforce that is representative of the community, and a commitment to participation by all.

Local Councils in Shropshire are encouraged to make the same commitments and to eliminating discrimination in all its forms, providing equality of opportunity to all the communities we serve.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding responsibilities encapsulate our duty to reduce accidental harm and to protect vulnerable adults and children and young people from abuse. This includes harassment and discrimination, neglect, emotional abuse, violence, sexual abuse and exploitation, and financial abuse. Safeguarding should ensure that all reasonable actions and approaches are taken to minimise the risk of accidents and harm, and to enable individuals to make appropriate choices and have opportunities to take part in day to day life.

Shropshire Council responds to all concerns about the safety of a vulnerable adult, child, or young person. In doing so it takes appropriate actions to address the concerns and reduce risk by working to the agreed policies and procedures in full partnership with other local agencies. The Council considers safeguarding in a proactive manner to raise awareness of issues and take actions to minimise potential risks occurring.

Local Councils in Shropshire are encouraged to think about safeguarding and to help to protect vulnerable adults, children and young people as part of our shared responsibilities to the people of Shropshire.

Quality Council Provision

All Shropshire Councils recognise that quality status will equip Local Councils to take on a stronger role in their communities and should be achievable by any Local Council, regardless of its size, location or current activities.



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to modernise local government and ensure that
with the people whom they serve.

a quality service and achieve the operational
level of service as described in the National Quality Parish Council scheme.

Review and Operation of the Charter

The Charter will initially be reviewed after a twelve-month period and again after a further three years. However, changes in functions or legislation may dictate that it be updated as and when required. It will also be reviewed following any Local Government Elections.

The Charter will be reviewed and monitored regularly through the Local Joint Committees and SALC.

COMMITMENT

develop if it is to remain relevant to the changing needs of all Councils and to respect the role that each play in serving their communities. It commits all parties to work together, to ensure that we are able to serve our communities to the best of our abilities for the benefit of the people of Shropshire.

To be signed by the Leader of Shropshire Council

To be signed by the Chief Executive of Shropshire Council

Date

To be signed by the Chairman and Clerk of each Local Council

Date

SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL CONTACT DETAILS
Head of Community Working 01743 252591
communityworking@shropshire.gov.uk

refer to Parish and Town Councils for
it may be subject to change.

Statutory	Non-statutory (and other consultations in which Parish or Town Councils are stakeholders)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation on planning applications in accordance with the Development Management Charter • Bridge maintenance, closure and diversion • Pedestrian crossings • Public Rights of Way – proposals for permanent legal change • Regional Spatial Strategy issues that are likely to affect parishes • Roads new and improved, i.e. the need for them, their alignment and the standard of road under consideration (consultation from the earliest stages) • Closures of designated rural schools • Traffic regulations (e.g. speed limits, waiting orders, weight restrictions, one-way streets, parking restrictions) • Waste Management Strategy (to be updated) • Local Development Framework – subject to provision of specific regulations which would over ride the consultation provisions set out in this Charter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School organisation proposals including school catchment areas • Changes to on-street parking enforcement • Complaints procedure changes • Customer services standards • Derelict land reclamation and landscaping schemes • Design of Improvement Schemes (e.g. traffic calming, cycle routes, safety schemes) • Highway structural maintenance (e.g. surface dressings (tar and chippings), resurfacing, road closures) • Economic development schemes and support available such as grants for businesses • Landscape projects • Libraries – mobile routes, opening hours, buildings issues • Local Transport Plan (invitation to stakeholder forums) • Opening, change of use and closure of Shropshire Council facilities in the area • Registration service changes • Winter maintenance (changes to treatment routes) • Street Trading Policies • Changes to subsidised bus routes

al or technical advice from Shropshire Council, subject to capacity, an initial enquiry may be free of charge. Thereafter, any associated costs will be discussed and agreed in advance.

Functions	Who to contact
Human Resources	Head of Human Resources Tel: 01743 252804
IT	Head of IT Services Tel: 01743 252131
Legal Services	Head of Adults and Children Law (Contract Law) Tel: 01743 252756 Head of Public Law and Property Tel: 01743 252712
Salaries / payroll	Director of Resources Tel: 01743 252007
Burial Authority	Bereavement Services Manager Tel: 01743 256220
Management of information and records in paper and electronic formats, and preservation of archive records	County Archivist, Shropshire Archives, Castle Gates, Shrewsbury SY1 2AQ Tel: 01743 255356
Emergency Planning Officer	Emergency Planning Officer Tel: 01743 252841
Research and Information	Information and Research Manager Tel: 01743 252517
External Funding	Team Leader Funding and Programmes Tel: 01743 252279
Community Development	Head of Community Working (Community Project Development) Tel: 01743 252591 Head of Arts and Heritage (Festivals and Events) Tel: 01743 255908
Community Safety	Community Safety Manager Tel: 01743 252263
Youth Services	Assistant Director Shropshire Youth Tel: 01743 254201
Local Benefits	Head of Revenues and Benefits Tel: 01743 256127
Play Provision and Local Leisure Development	Parks and Countryside Manager Tel: 01743 255914
Catering for large events	Catering Manager Tel: 01743 252872
Shared Facilities	Customer Service Area HQ Manager Tel: 01743 256190

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agreed to Parish and Town Councils following agreement between Shropshire Council and Parish/Town Council are subject to the Local Council providing a business case with benefits to enable either a cost saving or a better service provision. Where such arrangements are agreed, they will be based on:

- Close liaison founded upon trust;
- Explicit formal agreement as to their purpose;
- Visible tangible contributions from both parties;
- Clear lines of communication and responsibility
- Recognition that financial support, in either direction, should not be the sole reason for such initiatives.
- Formal monitoring and notification of progress and effectiveness.
- Local Councils accepting responsibility for the consequences, financial or otherwise, which might arise from any actions being challenged.
- Making every effort to avoid double taxation

Suggestions include:

- Community Recycling
- Some road safety measures for example community speed watch
- Minor highways works for example sign cleaning, grass cutting, drain clearing
- Street Cleansing for example litter picking, sweeping, graffiti removal, removal of fly posting
- Maintenance of amenity areas, play areas, public toilets, closed churchyards, open spaces, street furniture
- Local markets
- Information access point provision
- Street trading
- Cemetery maintenance
- Markets and Street Trading
- House to House and Street Collections
- Management of local rights of way (Parish Warden and Parish Paths Partnerships)
- Play provision, local amenity green space, public park provision