

**Cheltenham Borough Council
Cabinet – 10 November 2020**

Refresh of the Cheltenham Charter with the 5 Parish Councils

Accountable member	Cabinet Member Climate and Communities, Councillor Max Wilkinson
Accountable officer	Executive Director for People and Change, Darren Knight
Ward(s) affected	Up Hatherley, Warden Hill, Leckhampton, Charlton Park, Charlton Kings, Battledown, Prestbury, Swindon Village
Key Decision	No
Executive summary	<p>Cheltenham Borough Council endorsed the first version of the Cheltenham Charter in 2008 and it was last refreshed in 2013. The charter formalises the long standing working relationship between the borough council and Cheltenham's five parish councils through a series of commitments from the borough council to the parish councils and vice versa.</p> <p>The Gloucestershire Charter between the County Council and Gloucestershire's parish councils was last refreshed in 2016.</p> <p>The refreshed draft charter, attached as appendix 2, has been developed and endorsed by the C5 Parish Councils Group, which consists of members from each parish council, the Cabinet Member for Climate and Communities and officers from the Strategy and Engagement team. The wording of the commitments has been agreed in consultation with other relevant officers.</p>
Recommendations	That Cabinet endorses the charter (attached as appendix 2) and the commitments made within it.
Financial implications	<p>No financial implications are identified as a result of this report. The financial implications of any requests from parish councils under this charter will be considered as and when they arise.</p> <p>Contact officer: Martin Yates, Finance Business Partner. E-mail: martin.yates@publicagroup.uk.</p> <p>Tel: 01242 264115</p>
Legal implications	<p>The charter is not intended to give rise to formal legal obligations. There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation in this report. Any requests from parish councils resulting from the charter will be considered in the context of legal and other implications.</p> <p>Contact officer: One Legal – legal.services@tewkesbury.gov.uk</p>

HR implications (including learning and organisational development)	<p>The charter does not commit to new responsibilities, as the work identified is already in place.</p> <p>There is a commitment to provide advice and information and work with parish councils – these requests from parish councils involving officer time would need to be considered in light of the implications on staff resources.</p> <p>Contact officer: Clare Jones, HRBP, clare.jones@publicagroup.uk</p>
Key risks	None
Corporate and community plan Implications	Investing to build resilience communities.
Environmental and climate change implications	A strong working relationship with the parish councils is beneficial for residents when emergencies arise, for example where parish councillors act as flood wardens and keep the council informed of flooding and risk of flooding or in response to the recent Covid-19 pandemic.

1. Background

- 1.1 The draft charter (attached as appendix 2) sets out the commitments that Cheltenham Borough Council will make to the five parish councils and vice versa. On the whole, it details the relationship we already have with the parish councils.
- 1.2 The updates made since the previous version of the charter, which was agreed in 2013, are mostly minor, including updates to contact details and references to other bodies and slight tweaks in wording. The parish councils asked to remove the commitment around appointing flood wardens. CBC officers are however reviewing the flood warden scheme to investigate how we can better support parishes in supporting it. All parishes have also expressed an interest in supporting CBC to address climate change and work towards becoming carbon neutral.
- 1.3 The charter includes the terms of reference for the C5 Parish Councils Group (page 2, appendix 2) and the council's commitment to continue to facilitate the quarterly meetings. These meetings have been maintained virtually throughout the Covid-19 crisis along with additional support for parishes from CBC officers. The aims of the C5 Parish Councils Group now state that it will seek to align all councils' strategic priorities, and make the most effective use of financial and human resources.
- 1.4 Planning officers have advised that on the 6/08/2020 the government released a 'Planning White Paper – Planning for the Future'. If the changes consulted on through that White Paper materialise, they would represent a new planning system in England. The Local Plan (as we know it) would be replaced by a land zoning plan, which would allow for a wider range of activities and developments to take place without planning permission. Should these proposals become legislation, the role of parish (and borough) councils in planning matters would change and this charter would need to be revisited.
- 1.5 Through the charter, borough councillors will endeavour to attend parish council annual meetings in their ward and to try and attend regular meetings as far as possible or to make contact if they are unable to.
- 1.6 The parish councils in return make commitments to the borough council, working with the borough council on community or neighbourhood plans and maintaining professional working relationships with other parish councils.
- 1.7 Once endorsed by Cabinet, the Cheltenham Charter document (appendix 2) will be designed and circulated.

2. Reasons for recommendations

- 2.1 The draft has been approved by the C5 Parish Councils Group and relevant officers have agreed to the wording of the commitments made. The charter supports a good working relationship with the parish councils and the spirit of good will between the tiers of local government. The document is valued by the parish councils and all five are prepared to sign up to it. They have already signed the countywide version, the Gloucestershire Charter, which was last refreshed in 2016.

3. Alternative options considered

- 3.1 In the past it has been suggested that a joint charter between the three tiers of local government could be produced (given the existence of the separate Gloucestershire Charter between the county council and parish councils countywide), but at the time it wasn't possible to get all of the districts to sign up to a joint charter, and the Cheltenham parish councils also felt that the countywide charter wouldn't allow enough detail about the relationship between the borough and parish councils and were keen to continue with a separate charter.

4. Consultation and feedback

- 4.1** The C5 Group discussed a first draft of this revised charter in October 2019 and members discussed it with their individual parish councils. Their responses were used to update the draft in consultation with officers and the C5 Group endorsed the final draft in January 2020.
- 4.2** The draft has been circulated to relevant officers for their input into the commitments to be made by the borough council.
- 4.3** We will also be consulting with relevant ward members and wider staff members to ensure that they are aware of the charter.

5. Performance management –monitoring and review

- 5.1** The charter will be reviewed annually by the C5 Parish Councils Group and refreshed every 5 years. Any feedback about whether the commitments are working can be brought to the C5 Parish Councils Group.

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Appendices	1. Risk Assessment 2. Draft Cheltenham Charter 2020
Background information	1. Cheltenham Charter 2013