

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

17TH MARCH 2010

PARISH COUNCIL CHARTER

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Councillor M. J. A. Webb
Responsible Head of Service	Mrs. C. L. Felton
Non-Key Decision	

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 To maintain and enhance the working relationship between the District Council and the Parish Councils, a Parish Council Charter was published in July 2009 following meetings of the Parish Councils' Forum and a Working Group consisting of Members, Parish Councillors, Parish Clerks and officers. Since its publication, the document has been adopted by seventeen of the Parish Councils within the district.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Parish Council Charter, attached at Appendix 1, be approved and adopted.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The issue of the parish charter in Bromsgrove has acquired quite a lengthy history. The idea of parish charters was first proposed by the DEFRA paper on Quality Parish Councils approximately eight years ago. In Bromsgrove, because of the District Council's concerns about what might be included, a separate 2-tier (that is, District and Parish) version of a 'model Charter' was initially proposed, rather than joining in the County Council's proposal for a County-wide 3-tier (that is, County, District and Parish) Charter.
- 3.2 Both the County Council and the District Council had promoted different versions of a Charter. The latest version of the Charter has been drawn up in conjunction with the Parish Councils themselves during June / July 2009 and a majority of parishes have formally adopted it.
- 3.3 The County Council's Charter, published approximately seven years ago, was supported by the County Association of Local Councils who had exercised a large influence over its contents. The County-wide Charter achieved varying

degrees of acceptance in the Malvern Hills, Wyre Forest, Redditch and Worcester City Districts (although Redditch and Worcester only have one Parish Council each within their area). Wychavon, with over 60 Parish (or Town) Councils within its District area have, like Bromsgrove District Council, not adopted the County Charter.

- 3.4 All Parish Councils in the Bromsgrove District were asked at the end of 2004 if they wished to sign up to the first draft of the Bromsgrove version of the Charter. Three (Barnt Green, Cofton Hackett and Tutnall and Cobley agreed). Several more refused, saying that they only wanted the County-wide charter.
- 3.5 However, the present version of the District Council's Parish Charter was developed during 2009. The Parish Councils' Forum established a Working Group to discuss a draft Charter, which met on two occasions during July 2009. The Charter in its current form (Appendix 1) has now been published and adopted by a majority of Parish Councils. Only Catshill and North Marlbrook, Finstall and Lickey End Parish Councils have refused to adopt the Charter. However, there is an open invitation for these parish councils to adopt the Charter at any stage in the future.
- 3.6 The Charter document itself will be a 'living' document; that is, regularly reviewed to ensure that the two-way working relationship between the District Council and the Parish Councils is maintained. To this end, at the next meeting of the Parish Councils' Forum on 30th March 2010, it is anticipated that a new Working Group will be established, comprising Members, Parish Council representatives and officers, to review the content of the Charter and ensure that it is relevant and up-to-date.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are few, if any, financial implications in respect of the development of a Parish Council Charter due to the fact that the proposed document merely outlines, and formalises, what the District Council already does in respect of its relationship with the Parish Councils and existing obligations. The Parish Councils' Forum regularly meets on four occasions per year; however, it is not yet clear how often the proposed Working Group will meet to review and update the Charter, but this will only incur costs in respect of Members' and officers' time.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal obligations in respect of establishing a Parish Council Charter. As stated above, the suggestion was proposed within the Government's White Paper relating to Quality Parish Councils which seeks to ensure the compliance of Parish Councils with the relevant legislation. However, developing a Parish Charter could be seen to be a recommended method in terms of best practice and developing a formal working relationship with Parish Councils.

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

6.1 The creation of a Parish Council Charter links to the Council's objectives and priorities relating to **Improvement**, and the **Sense of Community and Well-being**.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT INCLUDING HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

7.1 There are no direct risks arising from the adoption of the Parish Council Charter.

8. CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Parish Councils are, essentially, customers of the Council and the development of a Parish Charter will help maintain and enhance the mutual working relationships between the Council and the Parish Councils.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct Equalities and Diversity Policy implications arising from the adoption of the Parish Council Charter.

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no direct Value For Money implications arising from the adoption of the Parish Council Charter.

11. CLIMATE CHANGE AND CARBON IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no direct Climate Change or Carbon implications arising from the adoption of the Parish Council Charter.

12. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues	None
Personnel	None
Governance / Performance Management	None
Community Safety, including Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act 1998	None
Policy	None
Biodiversity	None

13. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	Yes
Joint Chief Executive	Yes
Deputy Chief Executive	No
Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Services)	Yes
Director of Policy, Performance and Partnerships	Yes
Head of Legal, Equalities and Democratic Service	Yes
Head of Financial Services	No
Corporate Procurement Team	No

14. WARDS AFFECTED

14.1 All wards

15. APPENDICES

15.1 Appendix 1 Parish Council Charter

16. BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None

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