



The Town and Parish Charter

South Gloucestershire 2023

Introduction

1. The Parish Charter is a framework which defines the relationship between South Gloucestershire's tiers of local government. It is part of a suite of agreements which sit under the framework of the 'Keep it Local' pledge.
2. Town and Parish Councils are locally elected authorities. They have statutory powers and duties which are complementary to those of District and County Councils. They have in-depth local knowledge and experience and play an important role in the lives of the communities they serve.
3. South Gloucestershire Council is a Unitary Authority, a second tier or principal council which fulfils the duties of both District and County councils.
4. Both share the belief that more can be achieved by working in partnership. In addition, the elected councils will work closely with voluntary and community groups and other organisations to strengthen community resilience.

The aim

5. The Charter aims to support the relationship between town and parish councils and the principal authority, built on trust, understanding and mutual respect as separate democratic bodies.

The charter

6. The Charter is a framework to guide the respective councils to work together. Its rationale is one of mutual support and constructive relationship between democratically elected bodies.
7. The Charter recognises and respects the various roles, accountabilities, diversity and knowledge that each brings into the service of their communities. It strengthens the understanding of the levels of resource, expertise and legal frameworks within which each operate.

The Town and Parish Councils Forum

8. The Forum is a voice for its members of the parish tier of local government, recognised and respected by South Gloucestershire Council.
9. The Forum's role is to facilitate interaction on the collective needs of the local parish councils each of whom is represented at its meetings. Providing opportunity for all to interrelate with South Gloucestershire Council.

Key principles

10. The charter is a set of agreed principles; trust, understanding and partnership.

Trust

- Ensure that when concerns are raised, they are both given and received with respect and good intent. The aim is to understand from both perspectives, and work together to ensure resolution, hopefully preventing future concerns.
- Advance communication with Town and Parish Councils enables co-production and development of proposals prior to public consultation, acknowledging that there may be exceptional circumstances which means this will not be possible.
- Respect the principles of well-planned and effective consultation, by ensuring methods and timetables of engagement are respectful of Town and Parish Council capacity and sufficient to give relevant stakeholders voice and influence.

Understanding

- Seek to develop and improve two-way communication between the tiers, which will be open and honest. At times there may be disagreement, but this will always be given with respect and explanation.
- Ensure that how we will work together is clear, including the engagement of communities.
- Recognise that each tier has a legitimate role within the communities and respect is given to the knowledge and expertise of each tier.
- Support the value of diverse perspectives.
- Recognise that one size does not always fit all, needing an approach which reflects local difference and the range in size, capacity and experience of Town and Parish Councils.
- Seek a balance between local delivery and economies of scale, ensuring responsible use of public monies where appropriate.
- Ensure that contractual terms and conditions are proportionate to the project or commission.
- Ensure that the outcomes of service, project or programme delivery are shared so that future service design can benefit from lessons learned and used to make continuous improvement.

Partnership

- Work together to seek and share the views of residents on issues of common interest; and discuss how jointly we can respond.
- Ensure that representation to attend strategic meetings is extended by and to both tiers, keeping each fully apprised of all strategic partnerships. The Town and Parish Council Forum is an appropriate representative.
- Ensure mutual co-operation and sharing make best use and give value where resources and funds are limited.

Our joint pledge

11. We strive to build strong and resilient communities together for the people we both serve.

