

# Cabinet

5 September 2024

## Refreshed Local Councils' Charter

### Recommendations

That Cabinet

- 1) approves the refreshed Local Councils' Charter attached as Appendix 1; and
- 2) approves the appointment of the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate, and Culture as the Warwickshire County Council Parish Champion.

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 16 April 2015 the existing Local Councils' Charter was approved by Cabinet. The Charter set out expectations of how the County Council and Borough and District Councils in Warwickshire (the Principal Councils) would work with Local Councils, i.e. Town and Parish Councils.
- 1.2 Earlier this year and following dialogue between the County Council and Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils (WALC) it was agreed that after nearly a decade of its operation the Charter should be refreshed and relaunched.
- 1.3 A working group of officers from every relevant Principal Council drove the refresh of the Charter. There are no Local Councils in the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough area and, although invited for reasons of inclusivity, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council elected not to participate. The working group also included representatives from Local Councils and officers from WALC.
- 1.4 The Charter is a framework to support a mutually beneficial working relationship between the different tiers of Local Government in Warwickshire. The focus of the Charter is about how Principal Councils can develop better partnership working with Local Councils that will benefit local people.
- 1.5 The main changes to the Charter are outlined below in the Supporting Information section. The overall purpose of the refreshed Charter is to outline how Councils can work together to provide better services by:

- improving communication;
- consulting each other;
- giving support and help to each other; and
- measuring how well we are doing.

1.6 The Charter is key to meeting the Council’s commitments relating to the Creating Opportunities programme, and to tackling climate change and biodiversity. In respect of the former, strong relationships between the Principal Councils and Local Councils are essential in tackling deprivation and inequality, and increasing social mobility, especially but not exclusively in priority areas, and aligning to the priority themes of the Countywide Approach to Levelling Up approved by Cabinet in June 2022. Local Councils will play a crucial role in delivering activity against the Sustainable Futures Strategy, and commitments towards Net Zero 50.

1.7 The Charter is an important element of the Council’s commitment to embedding community-powered approaches across its services and relationships and builds on the progress the Council has made to embed a community powered way of working across the Council. The Charter embodies the principles of:

- involving communities in decision making;
- working alongside communities to take practical action; and
- enabling communities to lead.

1.8 The draft, refreshed Charter is also being considered for approval by all relevant Borough and District Councils in Warwickshire as well as WALC. There is dialogue taking place with those small number of Local Councils that are not members of WALC to ensure they are aware of the refreshed Charter. If any further significant changes are proposed to the draft Charter as set out at Appendix 1, then these would need to be agreed with all parties including the relevant Borough and District Councils before being adopted.

## **2. Financial Implications**

2.1 The Council can provide support within existing resources and budgets to assist with the delivery of the Charter. There is no impact on existing budgets.

## **3. Environmental Implications**

3.1 There are no specific environmental implications arising from the refreshed Charter. However, strong relationships between the Principal Councils and Local Councils are seen as essential in delivering significant parts of the Sustainable Futures Strategy and Net Zero commitments. The Charter is an essential part of developing and sustaining these relationships.

## **4. Supporting Information**

- 4.1 The refreshed Charter replaces the existing Charter that was approved by Cabinet on 16 April 2015.
- 4.2 The refreshed Charter has been developed to ensure that the different tiers of Local Government within the county work together effectively.
- 4.3 The main changes to the Charter include:
- an expanded background and introduction section to provide greater clarity on the purpose of the Charter and to provide more information on the role of WALC;
  - the commitments being made have been updated to ensure they reflect current practice and provide sufficient clarity to all the parties in terms of what can be expected;
  - inclusion of a role profile for the Parish Champions for each of the relevant Principal Councils, aiming to provide more clarity around the role and expectations of the role from all parties;
  - further clarity around how the signatories will measure what is working well and what needs to be improved; and
  - a specific commitment for an annual review report to be included within the agendas for the annual Area Meetings arranged by WALC.
- 4.4 As is currently the case, the refreshed Charter envisages that each relevant Principal Council will designate a named councillor to be its Parish Champion. For the County Council it is recommended that the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate, and Culture takes on this responsibility.

## **5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps**

- 5.1 When the Charter has been agreed by all parties, a marketing and communications' schedule will promote and support its implementation. It is expected that all parties will take it for sign-off between July and October 2024.
- 5.2 Progress of the Charter will be reviewed every 12 months by officers from the relevant Principal Councils, representatives from WALC, and representatives from the Town and Parish Council Area Meetings arranged by WALC. The annual review will be fed back to the wider network of Town and Parish Councils via the Area Meetings.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Warwickshire Local Councils' Charter.

## Background Papers

None.

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Charles Barlow – Head of Community Partnerships	<a href="mailto:charlesbarlow@warwickshire.gov.uk">charlesbarlow@warwickshire.gov.uk</a>
Director	Sarah Duxbury – Director of Strategy, Planning and Governance	<a href="mailto:sarahduxbury@warwickshire.gov.uk">sarahduxbury@warwickshire.gov.uk</a>
Executive Director	Rob Powell - Executive Director for Resources	<a href="mailto:robpowell@warwickshire.gov.uk">robpowell@warwickshire.gov.uk</a>
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Heather Timms Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate and Culture	<a href="mailto:heathertimms@warwickshire.gov.uk">heathertimms@warwickshire.gov.uk</a>

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): N/A - county wide matter

Other members: Chair and Party Spokes of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee