

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 5 May 2022

Report of the Head of Service - Health Equity, Welfare and Partnerships

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
(All Divisions);

Corporate Priorities:
Delivering better services;

Better Working Between Lancashire County Council and Parish and Town Councils: Parish & Town Council Charter 2022-2024

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

Alison Wilkins, Tel: (01772) 530574, Senior Public Health Practitioner,
alison.wilkins@lancashire.gov.uk

Brief Summary

The Better Working Between Lancashire County Council and Parish and Town Councils: Parish & Town Council Charter 2022-2024 sets out the relationship between Lancashire County Council and Parish and Town Councils in Lancashire. The Charter has been revised, in conjunction with the Parish and Town Councils, and sets out the aim to work effectively together for the benefit of local people, whilst recognising respective responsibilities as autonomous democratically elected, statutory bodies.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to approve the Better Working Between Lancashire County Council and Parish and Town Councils: Parish and Town Councils Charter 2022 – 2024, as set out at Appendix 'A'.

Background

In 2008 Lancashire County Council published the first Town and Parish Council Charter, which was the result of joint working and discussions, and was aimed at developing more effective working relationships between these two levels of government. The charter was last updated in 2013. In 2021, work began on a thorough refresh of the charter, reflecting changes that had taken place in local government and wider society in the intervening period, and acknowledging the

developing relationship between Lancashire County Council and the Parish and Town Councils.

There are just over 200 Parish and Town Councils in Lancashire, representing both rural and urban areas of the County, with at least one Parish or Town Council in each of the 12 Districts. Lancashire County Council appoints a Parish Champion, currently County Councillor Paul Rigby, and Cabinet responsibility for Parish and Town Councils is included within the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Community and Cultural Services, County Councillor Peter Buckley. Day to day communication with Parish and Town Councils is co-ordinated by the Partnership Development Team within Health Equity, Welfare & Partnerships and there is a dedicated email inbox parishcouncils@lancashire.gov.uk for receipt of general enquiries. The team produces twice yearly newsletters and organises the annual Lancashire Parish and Town Council Conference.

Parish and Town Councils in Lancashire are diverse in their geographical locations, size, budget, aspirations and socio-demographic factors. In their role as democratically accountable bodies, Parish and Town Councils offer a means of directly shaping the important decisions which affect their locality. They also offer a means of decentralising the provision of certain services and of revitalising local communities. Parish and Town Councils offer local knowledge and intelligence, links to community groups and other grass-roots organisations.

The Better Working Between Lancashire County Council and Parish and Town Councils: Parish & Town Council Charter 2022-2024 set out at Appendix 'A' is the result of experience and consultation with Parish and Town Councils in establishing better ways of working, and to confirm existing good practice. The document is not intended to be a service level agreement, and does not specify key performance indicators or list target response times as these will vary from service to service, and the urgency/importance of the issue raised. However, the Charter is intended as a high-level framework to promote better working between Lancashire County Council and the Parish and Town Councils across Lancashire.

The Charter sets out how Lancashire County Council and the Parish and Town Councils will work together under the headings of Improving Communication, Consulting with Others and Providing Access to Services. It also operates as a directory, providing details of key contacts within and outside Lancashire County Council, reflecting the request from Parish and Town Councils for such information.

The Charter covers the period 2022-2024 and is intended to be a live document, to be refreshed on a regular basis. Subject to the Charter being approved by Cabinet, Parish and Town Councils will also take it through their local decision making processes.

Consultations

In October 2021, an online survey was sent to all Parish and Town Councils, seeking their views under the broad headings of communication, consultation and collaboration. 91 responses were received, and these were analysed and summarised and helped to inform the developing Charter and the programme for the

November 2021 Parish and Town Council Conference. Time was allocated at the Conference, which was attended by over 50 delegates in person and a further 20 via Microsoft Teams, for workshop style discussions on the new Charter.

Representatives from the Parish and Town Councils were sought to form a Charter Working Group. The Working Group, comprising 15 representatives from the Parish and Town Councils, Lancashire Association of Local Councils, the Cabinet Member, Parish Champion, and county council officers met three times between December 2021 and February 2022 to work together on the content of the Charter.

An additional Parish and Town Council Conference, the 'Highways Special' was held on 19 March 2022 at which the draft Charter was endorsed. The Conference was attended by over 60 delegates in person, with a further 22 people attending via Zoom webinar.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

Finance

There are no financial implications.

Legal

There are no legal implications.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None		
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A