

A SHARED COMMUNITY CHARTER FOR NEWPORT



Newport
CITY COUNCIL
CYNGOR DINAS
Casnewydd



Partners to this Charter

(1) Newport City Council

(2) The Community Councils of

Bishton

Coedkernew

Goldcliff

Graig

Langstone

Llanvaches

Llanwern

Marshfield

Michaelston-y-Fedw

Nash

Penhow

Redwick

Rogerstone

Wentlooge

Introduction

The City Council of Newport and the Community Councils of Bishton, Coedkernew, Goldcliff, Graig, Langstone, Llanvaches, Llanwern, Marshfield, Michaelston-y-Fedw, Nash, Penhow, Redwick, Rogerstone and Wentlooge have agreed to publish a Charter which sets out how we aim to work together for the benefit of local communities whilst recognising our respective responsibilities as autonomous, democratically elected statutory bodies.

The Charter is designed to build on existing good practice and embrace the shared principles of openness, respect for each other's opinions, honesty and our common priority of putting citizens at the centre. This Charter is based on equality of partnership and is not a top-down arrangement.

Recognition

We accept the legitimacy and benefits of partnership working whilst at the same time recognising and respecting each other's roles. We aim to work together as a partnership of equals rather than tiers.

Newport City Council

Acknowledges and recognises that community councils are the grass roots level of local government. In their role as democratically accountable bodies, community councils offer a means of engaging with local people, of decentralising the provision of certain services, and of revitalising local communities.

Recognises and respects the diversity of community councils and that their needs and their degree of responsibility varies according to size.

Community Councils

Recognise the strategic importance of the Newport City Council and the economy of scale and equitable distribution of certain services they are able to achieve.

Recognise that community councils come within the common umbrella of the unitary authority.

Local Governance

We will be clear about the expectations that we have of each other in order to facilitate a smooth working relationship. In this regard, we will define the way in which we interact with each other. We will be clear about the role of councillors at all levels in their relationships with regard to community leadership.

The City Council's Liaison Meeting with members or clerks of Community Councils is held quarterly. Representatives are invited from each community council. It is for each Community Council to decide who represents it at the meeting. Newport is represented by the Monitoring Officer (who Chairs meetings) and a representative of Democratic Services (who services the Committee).

Elected members and other officers from the City Council will attend as and when necessary in order to offer advice on specific areas of discussion and / or to answer questions.

The overarching purpose of the meeting is to discuss strategic local government matters of mutual and general interest. The liaison meeting provides an opportunity to share information and, where appropriate, make recommendations to the relevant decision-making body. It is not an opportunity to raise individual complaints, which should be pursued through the proper complaints procedures.

Newport City Council

Community Council

Will hold liaison meetings with representatives of all community councils that wish to take part. Meetings are held quarterly in The Civic Centre, Newport. Additional meetings can also be arranged where appropriate, to discuss matters of common interest.

Will contribute towards the agenda of liaison meetings and contribute proactively to the attendance and discussion.

Will share agenda papers and minutes of Council meetings (including Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and other committees) by forwarding electronic links to the papers to Community Council Clerks

Will share Community agenda papers and minutes with interested councillors and officers; where appropriate, by electronic means or in hard copy if required

Will appoint a nominated member of staff to be the Lead Officer for liaison between the City Council and Community Councils. This officer is the City Council's Monitoring Officer who will ensure that relevant issues are dealt with to an agreed timescale.

Will contact the nominated officer on relevant issues and make them aware of any difficulties being encountered.

Newport City Council will ensure that arrangements are in place to share information with Community Councils on key strategic documents and on the work of key partnerships within the city.

Community Councils will provide feedback to the city council on key issues and respond to specific consultation in a timely and appropriate manner.

Councillors / officers will attend Community Council meetings if considered appropriate.

Will invite councillors / officers of Newport City Council to meetings if appropriate and at their discretion, provide opportunities for presentations.

Will administer the holding of Community Council elections.

Will notify the need for elections in a timely manner.

Consultation

We appreciate the importance of meaningful consultation and set out a genuine commitment among all parties to consult on matters of mutual concern. We will agree clear, specific and time limited procedures and processes for consultation.

Newport City Council

Will aim to give Community Councils the opportunity to comment before making a decision that significantly and specifically affects the local community.

Newport City Council will make available by electronic means, a copy of its public reports to Cabinet, panels and committees; will advise all clerks of the dates of its public meetings; and make copies of its agendas available on the Council's website as soon as possible.

Officers of the City Council will attend meetings with community councils if agreed mutually to be appropriate and at a mutually agreed time to discuss matters of common interest when requested to do so and given sufficient notice.

Will encourage Scrutiny Committees to liaise with community councils on relevant local issues, where appropriate.

Community Councils

Community councils will respond to consultation opportunities in a timely manner, addressing the key issues in the consultation document.

Will make full use of the papers available to them to inform local decision-making.

Newport Councillors and officers will be given an opportunity to speak at Community Council meetings if agreed mutually to be appropriate and on matters of mutually agreed interest.

Will respond to requests to input views to Scrutiny Committees.

Information and Communication

We appreciate the need for timely, clear and relevant information and communication in fostering good relationships and better joint working for the benefit of local people.

Newport City Council

Will promote the Council's City Contact Centre as the first point of contact when resolving local operational issues and ensure that responses are within agreed timescales.

Will appoint a nominated member of staff to be the Lead Officer for liaison between Newport and community councils for more strategic enquiries.

This will be the Monitoring Officer or his appointed representative.

Will promote contact arrangements for the Community Councils on the City Council's website.

Community Councils

Will use the City Council's Contact Centre to report operational issues. This will allow the Contact Centre to provide a unique reference for the call for the purpose of any follow-up.

Will use the Lead Officer for Liaison with Community Councils as the first point of contact for more strategic enquiries.

Will provide contact details for each Community Council.

Will communicate by providing access to all public documents to members and officials of community councils, normally by way of the website.

The Clerk will ensure that all community councillors have access to the appropriate documents.

Joint working and engagement

The Charter defines 'Partnership' as working together towards a common set of goals, based on equality in terms of ownership, decision-making and recognition of each party's distinctive contribution. It is recognised that an equal and effective partnership brings benefits and responsibilities to all those involved. Local government at both tiers must work together to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of our area. If doing things differently achieves a better service, we will seriously examine these methods.

Newport City Council

Will provide opportunities for clerks of Community Councils to meet to discuss common concerns and resolve issues.

Will be clear about how any request for devolved services may be discussed.

Will consider fully any request relating to devolving services that would provide better value for money and/or enhanced services, should such opportunities arise.

Will promote opportunities to work jointly with Community Councils to communicate and consult with local people and communities.

Community Councils

Will encourage participation by clerks in opportunities to network and share common concerns.

Will use the appropriate procedures if there is a request to progress devolved services.

Will make the case clearly as to how any devolvement of services will provide better value for money and/or enhanced services.

Will identify opportunities to work with the unitary council to communicate and consult with local people and communities.

Land Use Planning

Community Councils know and understand their local area and must be able to comment effectively on planning matters. The Unitary Council is able to take an overview of the needs of the whole local area and make decisions but they must take local views into account.

Newport City Council

Community Councils

Will uphold its statutory duty to consult Community Councils on all planning applications, including the need for any Section 106 contributions and their application, in their communities.

Make appropriate responses to the unitary authority recognising the parameters imposed by planning law and agreed planning policy.

Will provide opportunities for community councillors to receive appropriate training on planning procedures and Codes of Conduct issues.

Ensure that councillors receive training on planning issues and have a sound understanding of how planning law works.

Will ensure that Community Councils receive copies of decisions made on applications relevant to their area (in a timely manner), and make further clarification where requested.

Maintain an objective and professional approach to planning matters at all times.

Give Community councils information about relevant planning committee meetings, including site visits in their area, by electronic or other means so that they may attend as observers, where appropriate.

Councillors to take up the opportunity to attend planning committee meetings and, where appropriate, relevant site meetings.

Practical Support

In order to be effective, elected members and officers must be well-trained and have the support they need to carry out their roles.

Newport City Council

Community Councils

Newport City Council will, where practical, offer Community Councils access to support services, to enable them to take advantage of facilities such as printing, IT and purchasing at a mutually agreed price.

Will follow procedures set out to access Newport support services, but also have opportunity to make own arrangements.

This could include involvement by Community Councillors in training and development opportunities provided for City Councillors.

Expertise

We will encourage continuous development of officers and members in both unitary authority and community councils, either in their individual groupings or together. Improved expertise leads to professionalism and more effective joint working. To this end, each Council will undertake to make their Members and Officers fully aware of the implications of the Charter

Newport City Council

Will share member induction training and other development opportunities (where practical) with community councillors to enable them to understand the role and function of the unitary council.

Community Councils

Will provide an induction to newly elected councillors to enable them to undertake their role effectively. The Clerks to the Community Councils will ensure that Community Councillors are made aware of training and development opportunities offered by Newport City Council.

Ethics

We will provide an ethical service to local people, following the appropriate standards and Codes of Conduct. We will encourage links between community council clerks and unitary authority Standards Committee.

Newport City Council

Will, through the appointed Monitoring Officer, support community councils in the timely consideration and provision of advice in relation to the application of the Members Code of Conduct.

Community Councils

Community councillors shall not make inappropriate complaints under the Code and will provide all such information as required by the Monitoring Officer to enable him/her to carry out his/her function effectively.

Will ensure that a community council representative is appointed to serve on the Standards Committee.

Will provide nominations for Community Council representatives to serve on the Standards Committee when a vacancy arises.

Financial arrangements

Both the Unitary Council and Community Councils recognise the need for clarity and transparency in financial arrangements. In developing and implementing financial arrangements, relevant national and local priorities will be taken into account.

Newport City Council

Newport, in setting the level of council tax for the area, will take into account the services being delivered by Community Councils in its area, and the funding thereof. This will be with a view to avoiding double-taxation.

Community Councils

Community Councils, in setting the annual precept, shall take into account the plans for service delivery of the City Council for the coming year and shall comply with relevant timescales for returning information to Newport City Council.

Delegating responsibility for service provision

Services should be delivered in the most appropriate manner, with regard to value for money and added value for local people.

Newport City Council

Newport City Council will give due consideration to all reasonably argued cases for the delegation of service delivery to Community Councils, basing its consideration primarily on the improvement of service delivery for citizens whilst ensuring value for money is retained or enhanced.

Community Councils

Community Councils will recognise that there are certain instances where it is not appropriate or desirable for the unitary authority to delegate service delivery.

Where it is not appropriate or desirable to delegate service delivery, Newport City Council will seek ways in which local information from communities might be used to enhance service delivery to better meet citizen needs.

Community Councils will engage with the citizens in the communities they serve to understand better their needs and convey these needs in a coherent and constructive manner to the Unitary Authority, such that they can be taken account of in service design and delivery.

Sustainability and Wellbeing

We will work in ways that are sustainable, reconciling the long-term needs with those of the present and protecting and improving the quality of life of current generations without compromising the quality of life of future generations.

Newport City Council

Will provide any information required by Community Councils to help them in ensuring their decision making and activities are sustainable and take into account of the needs of future generations.

Will assist Community Councils to adopt electronic working and communication to achieve improved communication and to reduce the use of paper and waste.

Will provide any information required by Community Councils to help them to understand how the City Council is helping promote sustainable development and provide any information Community Councils may need to help them ensure local projects are undertaken in a sustainable manner.

Community Councils

Will ensure that decision making activities are sustainable and take into account of the needs of future generations.

Will work towards adopting electronic methods of working and communication wherever feasible to achieve improved communication and to reduce the use of paper and waste.

Will ensure local projects are undertaken in a sustainable manner.

Community Strategy

We recognise the strategic importance of the Community Strategy as the overarching strategic vision and priorities for the local area. Furthermore, we recognise that the Community Strategy will only be fully effective if it is informed by the grass roots experiences from within our communities.

Newport City Council

Will involve Community Councils in the creation and implementation of the Community Strategy.

Community Councils

Will respond actively and fully to consultation of the draft Community Strategy and participate in the partnership monitoring the implementation of the Community Strategy.

Local Elections

Fair and open elections are the bedrock of local democracy. We will ensure that elections are freely and fairly contested, and encourage local people to become involved in local democracy.

Newport City Council

Will involve Community Councils in the local election planning process.

Community Councils

Will encourage participation in the local election process by members of the local community.

Will involve Community Councils in any awareness raising / publicity to encourage nominations for candidacy at local elections.

Will ensure wide publicity of vacancies on community councils to maximise community representation.

Will help to publicise forthcoming local elections on behalf of Community Councils.

Will facilitate public participation at all relevant meetings of the council and its committees to encourage community involvement.

Will brief Community Council clerks on the nomination process so that they are equipped to assist any potential candidates who come forward for local elections.

Will provide help and assistance with the local election legal and administrative processes and procedures.

Monitoring and Review

The Charter will be fully reviewed after the first year and every two years or more often if there is a need to do so. The Local Councils Partnership Committee will measure progress annually in achieving the measures set out in the Charter.

Newport City Council

Will arrange for the Charter to be reviewed every two years, following the initial review, or as agreed.

Will contribute towards the delivery of the Charter and, where appropriate, will develop an Action Plan for its implementation.

Community Councils

Will actively contribute to the review of the Charter.

Will actively contribute towards the development and delivery of the Charter and the Action Plan.

Signed

The City Council and undersigned Community Councils are committed to the principles and statements with the charter, for the benefit of local people.

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