



# Llanelly Community Council

## Local Community and Towns Charter

### A SHARED COMMUNITY

#### Introduction

The Community and Town Councils of Monmouthshire and Monmouthshire County Council have agreed to publish a charter which sets out our 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

### PARTNERS TO THE CHARTER

#### 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.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
Acknowledges and recognises that Community and Town Councils are the grass roots level of local government in their role as democratically accountable bodies.	Recognise the strategic importance of the County Council and the economy of scale and equitable distribution of certain services that they are able to achieve, as well as their statutory functions and responsibilities.
Community and Town Councils offer a means of engaging with local people, of decentralising the provision of certain services and revitalising local communities.	Recognise that community and town councils come within the common umbrella of the County Council.
Recognise and respect the diversity of Community and Town Councils and that their needs vary according to size, and the extent to which they participate varies.	Also recognise that the County Council will take a balanced view to the benefit of the whole county.

### 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 the relationship and in community leadership.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
<p>Will host regular joint liaison meetings with representatives of all community and town councils that wish to take part. The first meeting will set a protocol and programme for future meetings which may be held on an area basis on appropriate occasions.</p> <p>Will appoint a nominated member of staff to be a liaison officer between the County Council and community and town councils.</p> <p>The liaison officer will support and develop agreed communication channels between community and town councils and the County Council.</p> <p>Will support inclusion of Community and Town Council councillors / officers [as appropriate] on key local statutory partnerships and committee meetings.</p> <p>Will administer the holding of Community and town council elections.</p>	<p>Will contribute towards the agenda of liaison meetings and contribute proactively to the attendance and discussion.</p> <p>Will use the agreed communication channels with appropriate officers and local members on general service and policy issues, but will contact the nominated officer on other agreed issues and make them aware of any difficulties being encountered.</p> <p>Will invite councillors / officers [as appropriate] of the county council to meetings and will provide a space on its meeting agenda for presentations if requested.</p> <p>Will notify the need for elections in a timely manner</p>

## 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.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
<p>Will give community and town councils the opportunity to comment before making a decision that affects the local community [particularly on matters relating to planning and other environmental changes] In furtherance of this, the county council will make available a copy of its public reports to Cabinet, panels, committees etc, and will advise all clerks of the dates of its public meetings and make copies of its agendas available on the Councils website.</p> <p>Officers of unitary authorities will attend meetings with community and town councils when reasonable and within reasonable resources at a mutually agreed time and place to discuss matters of common interest when requested to do so.</p> <p>Community and town councils will be encouraged to attend select committees</p>	<p>Community and town 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.</p> <p>County councillors and officers will be given an opportunity to speak at community and town council meetings on matters of mutual interest.</p> <p>Further detail to be agreed at future liaison meetings.</p> <p>Will respond to requests to input views to scrutiny committees</p>

and all agendas will be published on the web	
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### 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. Where a written response is required, from either party, this should be provided within an agreed timescale except for consultations with a specifically stipulated response date.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
<p>Will provide to community and town councils a list of regularly updated named contacts, telephone numbers and where possible email addresses.</p> <p>Will communicate by email unless required to supply a hard copy if required. We will work towards a satisfactory way of operating effectively as appropriate for members of community councils.</p> <p>To be discussed later through the action plan as detailed below.</p>	<p>Will utilise the agreed contact points and respond in the most appropriate and timely method.</p> <p>Will ensure that all community and town councillors have access to the appropriate documents.</p>

### 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 those methods.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
<p>Will provide opportunities for clerks of community and town councils to meet to discuss common concerns and resolve issues at the specific requests of the clerks, when this cannot be dealt with through other channels.</p>	<p>Will encourage participation by clerks in opportunities to network and share common concerns.</p> <p>Will likewise meet if necessary at the specific request of the unitary authority.</p>

### 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, taking local views into account.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
<p>Will meet its statutory duty to consult community councils on all planning applications, and recognise the right of community and town councils to be heard in the determination of planning applications.</p> <p>Will seek the advice of the appropriate community or town council in the</p>	<p>Make appropriate responses to county council recognising the parameters imposed by planning law and agreed planning policy.</p> <p>Will recognise the need for a strategic County approach to planning gain.</p>

<p>deployment of section 106 agreements at an appropriate stage in a development.</p> <p>Inform representatives from a community or town council of site visits relating to planning applications in its area within the time constraints of the organisation of such site visits.</p> <p>Offer councillors training on planning issues to ensure that they have a sound understanding of how planning law works.</p> <p>Will maintain an objective and professional approach to planning matters at all times.</p> <p>Will maintain a web site and place all applications, plans relating to correspondence, decisions and officer reports on the web site within an agreed specified time.</p> <p>This will include a section to address representations from community or town councils where the recommendation differs from the recommendation put forward by the community / town council.</p> <p>Notice will also be given of appeals and variations of planning conditions.</p> <p>Special arrangements will be arranged with individual community councils where needed.</p>	<p>The community and town councils will maintain an objective and professional approach to planning matters at all times.</p> <p>Councillors to take up the opportunity to attend planning committee meetings of the county council.</p>
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### 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.

<p>Monmouthshire County Council</p> <p>Offer where practical community and town councils access to support services, to enable them to take advantage of facilities such as printing, IT, purchasing at a mutually agreed price.</p>	<p>Community and Town Councils</p> <p>Will follow procedures set out to access the county council support services, but also have opportunity to make own arrangements.</p>
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### Expertise

We will encourage continuous development of officers and members in both county council and community and town councils either in their individual groupings or together. Improved expertise leads to professionalism and more effective joint working.

<p>Monmouthshire County Council</p> <p>Will offer member induction training to community and town councillors at appropriate times, to enable them to understand the role and function of the unitary council.</p>	<p>Community and Town Councils</p> <p>Will provide an induction to newly elected councillors to enable them to undertake their role effectively.</p>
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## Ethics

We will provide an ethical service to local people, taking full cognisance of the appropriate standards and codes of conduct. We will encourage links between community and town council clerks and the county council standards committee.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
Support through the appointed monitoring officer, support community councils in the timely consideration and provision of advice in relation to the application of the member code of conduct.	Will not make vexatious 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.

## Financial Arrangements

Both the county council and community and town 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.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
Will have regard to services being delivered by community and town councils in the setting of council tax for the area.	Will have regard to the plans for service delivery of the county council for the coming year, in setting their annual precept.

## 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.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
Will give due consideration to all reasonably argued cases for the delegation of appropriate service delivery to community and town councils, basing its consideration primarily on the improvement of service delivery for citizens whilst ensuring value for money is retained or enhanced.  Where it is not appropriate or desirable to delegate service delivery the county council will seek ways in which local information from communities might be used to enhance service delivery to meet citizen needs.	Will recognise that there are certain instances where it is not appropriate or desirable for the county council to delegate service delivery.  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 county council, such that they can be taken account of in service design and delivery.

## Sustainability

We will work in ways that are sustainable and adaptable to climate change, 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.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
Will assist community and town councils with information on sustainable practices.  Will outline how the county council is actively pursuing sustainable development.	Will proactively assess the sustainability of current practices and processes.  Will investigate projects, with the assistance of a delegated county council officer, which contribute to sustainability where beneficial to the community, where resources allow.

## 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.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
<p>Will invite a representative of community and town councils to sit on any community strategy working group in recognitions of the local knowledge and experience that this will bring.</p> <p>Will involve community and town councils in the development of local community strategies and action plans.</p> <p>Will involve community and town councils in the implementation of the community strategy.</p>	<p>Shall together nominate a councillor to be their representative on the community strategy partnership.</p> <p>This representative shall proactively represent the sector, raising matters of general concern appropriate to the agenda of the board.</p> <p>Will contribute to the development of the community strategy in its development stage.</p> <p>Will respond actively and fully to consultation of the draft community strategy and participate in the partnership monitoring and the implementation of the community strategy</p>

## 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.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
<p>Will involve community and town councils in the local election planning process.</p> <p>Will involve community and town councils in any awareness raising/publicity to encourage nominations for candidacy at local elections.</p> <p>Will help to publicise forthcoming elections on behalf of community and town councils.</p> <p>Will brief community and town council clerks on the nomination process so that they are equipped to assist any potential candidates who come forward for local elections.</p> <p>Will provide help and assistance with the local election legal and administrative processes and procedures.</p>	<p>Will encourage participation in the local election process by members of the local community.</p> <p>Will ensure wide publicity of vacancies on community and town councils to maximise community representation.</p> <p>Will facilitate public participation at all relevant meetings of the council and its committees to encourage community involvement.</p>

## Action Plan

This charter will be supported by the development of an action plan addressing each of the individual topics contained herein. The action plan will be developed on a joint basis and

shall attribute responsibilities to each partner. Actions will be accompanied by a timescale and will reported on at least quarterly.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
<p>Will nominate a lead officer for the development and monitoring of the action plan.</p> <p>Responsible officers will have due regard to the action plan and include relevant actions in their work plan for the year.</p>	<p>Will collectively agree priorities for inclusion in the Action Plan.</p> <p>Will have due regard to the action plan and include all actions relevant to them during the course of the year.</p>

### **Monitoring and Review**

The charter will be fully reviewed after the first year, and every two years thereafter, or more often if there is a need to do so. The community liaison meetings will measure progress annually in achieving the measures set out in the charter through the setting and reviewing of actions contained in an action plan.

Monmouthshire County Council	Community and Town Councils
<p>Will arrange for the charter to be reviewed every two years, following the initial review, or as agreed.</p> <p>Will arrange for the development of an action plan linked to the charter and will actively contribute to achieving the action plan.</p>	<p>Will actively contribute to the review of the charter.</p> <p>Will actively contribute to the development and delivery of the charter action plan</p>

### **Conclusion**

The undersigned community councils and county council are committed to the principles and statements with the charter for the benefit of local people.