

Warwickshire Local Councils' Charter



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Background

There are three levels of local government for Warwickshire - Warwickshire – Warwickshire County Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council, Stratford on Avon District Council and Warwick District Council., are referred to as Principal Councils, and Parish and Town Councils are referred to as Local Councils. This document is a framework to support a mutually beneficially working relationship between the tiers of authority in Warwickshire. Working better in partnership will benefit local people.

Principal Councils deliver a wide range of services across the county. Services are either for everyone (universal), targeted or specialist but all are there to meet people's needs.

Local Councils are the level of government where decisions are made or influenced at the most local level.

All Councils' values and behaviour will adhere to the Nolan Principles in public life - Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership.

All Councils can work together to provide better services. This can be done by:

1. Improving communication
2. Consulting each other
3. Giving support and help
4. Measuring how well we are doing

1. IMPROVING COMMUNICATION: We will endeavour to:

Principal Councils

1. Encourage and support their Councillors and Officers to work with Local Councils in the area they are elected to serve.
2. Respond to letters, emails and phone calls in line with locally determined standards.
3. Provide appropriate links on websites to let Local Councils know important information.
4. Continue to develop additional information via websites that is useful to Local Councils where practicable.
5. Allow for Local Council representation on relevant Forums and Standards Committees
6. Respond to invitations from Local Councils to attend meetings of mutual interest
7. Respond to invitations to attend Warwickshire and West Midlands Association of Local Councils (WALC) Area Committees and other Local Council liaison meetings as appropriate.
8. Include awareness of the Charter in Councillor and staff induction programmes.
9. Provide names of officers in relevant departments to liaise with Local Councils

Local Councils

1. Use email and the internet, where possible, to contact the other Councils.
2. Let Principal Councillors know about the decisions and changes they make.
3. Provide Principal Councillors with agendas and minutes of meetings, and allow Principal Councillors to attend meetings and speak on matters of mutual interest.
4. Help share information from the Principal Councils with local residents.
5. Let the Principal Councils know about any issue they would like discussed at the annual meeting for their area
6. Include awareness of the Charter in councillor and staff induction programmes.

2. CONSULTING EACH OTHER: We will endeavour to:

Principal Councils

1. Ask Local Councils to comment on issues affecting their community.
2. Ask WALC to comment on issues of collective interest to Local Councils.
3. Whenever possible give at least six weeks to respond to consultations.
4. Whenever possible set deadlines that consider Local Council meeting cycles.
5. Where possible inform Local Councils in advance when a consultation is going to be issued.
6. Give feedback on responses to consultations and ensure Local Councils' views are taken into account as part of the Council's decision-making process.
7. Carry out joint consultations with partners when appropriate.
8. Ensure consultation documents for Local Councils include an executive summary and details of someone to contact.
9. Have regard to the views of Local Councils when making decisions.
10. Make sure service managers know of the need to consult Local Councils and have awareness of the Charter.

Local Councils

1. Give views to Principal Councils that represent as many local people as possible.
2. Acknowledge that Principal Council decisions are made democratically and respect decisions.
3. Consult the Principal Councils and other Local Councils about decisions which affect those councils.
4. Recognise that Principal Councils frequently have limitations and constraints when working on consultations, most notably timescales that cannot be influenced.
5. Look for flexible ways to help progress developing consultation responses e.g. a special meeting or task and finish group.
6. Involve Principal Councils in the preparation of Community Led Plans

WALC will manage a database of Local Council contact details which can be used for consultations.

3. GIVING SUPPORT AND HELP: We will endeavour to:

Principal Councils

1. Assist Local Councils to develop community led plans including Neighbourhood Plans, Parish and Town Plans and Community Appraisals and respond to issues raised in these plans.
2. Consider devolving services to Local Councils currently provided by Principal Councils on a case by case basis. Each case will be the subject to its own formal agreement for which a business case will be drawn up enabling an assessment of value, cost, accountability, practicality and any other relevant issues.
3. Provide early notification of information requirements for the collection of the Council Tax on behalf of Local Councils and promptly pay precept payments in line with legislation and mutually agreed arrangements.
4. Consider passing on any grant allocated to Local Councils by Government to compensate for the changes to the council tax base calculations.

5. Let Local Councils have access to the Principal Council's purchasing process where this is appropriate and lawful to help keep costs down.
6. Ensures the District/Borough's Councils Remuneration Panel makes recommendations for Local Councils. A Local Council may convene the Panel and in that case the Local Council would be liable for the associated cost.
7. Resolve complaints informally whenever possible and if need be formally through the Principal Council's complaints process.
8. Provide support to Local Councils around governance and standards issues including free of charge briefing sessions.
9. Support the process for the development of new Local Councils on request, where practical and where resources permit, offer Local Councils access to their support services, for example legal, ground maintenance and pension services to enable them to take advantage of facilities, at a mutually agreed price.
10. Work with WALC and the County Training Partnership for Local Councils to support and encourage training and development of Councillors and Clerks and will when possible send a representative to the County Training Partnership.
11. Encourage Local Councils to achieve the Quality Status through the Governments Quality Town and Parish Council Scheme. Warwickshire County Council will send a representative to the Quality Status Accreditation Panel.
12. Where legal or contractual arrangements and resources permit assist Local Councils for example with equipment for community events, to provide information and advice on such issues as fire safety, health and safety, landscape and community enhancement projects; and any other reasonable assistance as requested..
13. Provide Local Councils where possible with access to the Principal Councils' approved maintenance contractors and agreed schedules of rates and enable Local Councils to commission the Principal Councils' professional consultants for construction related work at agreed price.

Local Councils

1. Encourage the involvement of residents in local government, including encouraging electors to participate in all elections, and adhere to good practice and legislation when filling Local Council casual vacancies.
2. Help residents influence decisions and services, particularly those who have difficulty getting involved.
3. Contribute to the development of a business case for the local delivery of services provided by Principal Councils, in conjunction with neighbouring Councils where appropriate. Work with the Monitoring Officers to promote and maintain high standards of conduct of its Councillors.
4. Put in place a Code of Practice for Handling Complaints against the Council. A model is available from WALC.
5. Try to take up any training opportunities offered by the Principal Councils which are relevant to Local Councils.

The County Council will provide support to WALC.

4. MEASURING HOW WELL WE ARE DOING We will endeavour to:

Delivering these commitments will need openness, transparency, honesty and willingness to self-appraisal by all parties so we can see what is working well and what needs to be improved. Each commitment can, by itself or with supporting indicators, be measured to

show both the level and quality of activity. Progress will be reviewed every 12 months by officers from each Principal Council and representatives from WALC and individual Parish and Town Councils when appropriate.

Each Principal Council will appoint 'Parish Champions' to provide a link with Local Councils.

LIST OF SIGNATORIES TO THE LOCAL COUNCIL CHARTER:

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

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RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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STRATFORD ON AVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

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WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

.....

WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

.....

WARWICKSHIRE AND WEST MIDLANDS ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

.....

DATE