



Report of the Chief Democratic Services Officer

Executive Board

Date: 18th October 2006

Subject: Parish and Town Council Charter

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Parish and Town Council Forum, working in consultation with officers and Members of the Council has developed a charter to underpin the relationship between the City Council and the local councils within its administrative area.
2. The charter has been endorsed by all of the local councils concerned and is now submitted for endorsement by the Executive Board on behalf of the City Council.

1.0 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 This report recommends that the Executive Board approves a charter between Leeds City Council and the Parish and Town Councils within its administrative area.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 A joint initiative of the then ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister), DEFRA (Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs) and the Countryside Agency was to promote the development of charters between principal local authorities and local councils. The purpose of such charters is to support the development of effective relationships between them. More locally, this initiative has received the support of the Yorkshire Local Councils Association.
- 2.2 For some time, officers and Members of Leeds Council have been meeting with representatives from all Parish and Town Councils through the mechanism of a regular Forum, the purpose of which is to encourage effective joint working for the benefit of local people.
- 2.3 At an early stage, the Forum recognised that an important step in the promotion of joint working would be the development of a charter to underpin the relationship between Leeds City Council and the Parish and Town Councils.
- 2.4 The Forum has developed a charter in consultation with the Council's Directors and its development has been informed by best practice elsewhere in the country and by guidelines¹ published by the LGIU (Local Government Information Unit).
- 2.5 The charter has now been endorsed individually and collectively by Parish and Town Councils and it is now submitted for the approval, by Executive Board on behalf of Leeds City Council.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 A copy of the full charter is appended to this report and its main features are as follows.

Section 1 – Shared Goals

- 3.2 The charter sets out the shared goals of supporting local democracy and working together for the wellbeing of local communities. It encourages local councils to attain of "quality status" to further strengthen confidence in working together.

Section 2 – Practical Support

- 3.3 This section details the support services which the City Council will make available to local Councils. These fall under the headings of Democratic Services, Elections and Electoral Registration, Financial Management, Leeds revenue Services and Financial Development.

¹ Charters for Town and Parish Councils and Principal Local Authorities: A Good Practice Guide April 2005

Section 3 – Working Partnership

- 3.4 This section of the charter sets out arrangements for consultation and for the sharing of information. Particular clarification is made of the roles of Ward Members, Area Committees and Council departments.
- 3.5 A particular feature is the commitment to establishing more detailed arrangements with regard to specific departments and services. Working in close consultation with Council departments, this will form a major part of the Forum's future work programme.

Section 4 – Maintaining High Ethical Standards

- 3.6 The charter confirms a shared commitment to maintaining high ethical standards and explains the contribution played by codes of conduct, the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer.

Section 5 – Allocating Responsibilities

- 3.7 This section gives a commitment to avoiding "double taxation" and paves the way for discussions between Leeds City Council and any local council wishing to discharge functions on its behalf.

Section 6 – Managing the Relationship

- 3.8 The charter details how local councils may avail themselves of the Council's procedure for dealing with complaints and compliments about individual departments or services. Additionally, it establishes how complaints arising from the application of the charter itself will be addressed.
- 3.9 Finally, this section of the charter sets out how it will be kept under review and periodically updated as appropriate.

4.0 Implications for Council Policy and Governance

- 4.1 Adoption of the charter would have no implications for the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.
- 4.2 The charter will contribute to the good governance of the City by clarifying responsibilities and relationships between are no implications.

5.0 Legal and Resource Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal or resource implications arising from this report.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 Adoption by the Council of the attached charter will be a demonstrable commitment to working closely with local councils in the interests of local communities.

7.0 Recommendation

- 7.1 Executive Board is asked to give its endorsement to the attached charter.