



Parish Charter for Peterborough

Foreword

Peterborough City Council recognises the significant role that Parish Councils have in the lives of Peterborough's diverse communities.

This Charter has been developed in partnership with Peterborough's Parish Councils and represents a mutual agreement to improve joint working between the city council and Parish Councils so that services are delivered more efficiently and meet the needs of the local community.

Cllr Nigel North, Cabinet Member for Communities and Environment Capital.

Parish councils have long been independently providing services to their communities. They have revenue raising powers to fund projects and the provision of services for the benefit of their residents.

With central government's declared aim of dramatically reducing their financial contribution to local authorities it is time for parishes to cooperate better amongst themselves and with Peterborough City Council. In this way we can try to mitigate the effects of the cuts and continue to meet the needs of our communities.

The Rural Vision and Parish Charter are an important step towards effective collaboration in local government.

Henry Clark, Chair CAPALC

CONTENTS

1. *Introduction*
2. *Partnership Working for Communications and Engagement*
3. *Devolved Services and Assets*
4. *Finances*
5. *Monitoring and Evaluation*
6. *Key Contacts*

1. Introduction

The Peterborough Parish Liaison Forum, which comprises all Parish Councils in Peterborough, together with the Peterborough City Council have agreed to publish this Charter, which sets out how they aim to work together for the benefit of local people.

The Charter is designed to support parishes in retaining their distinctiveness while providing a framework that ensures opportunities are embraced and the need to build the ability to withstand external forces is recognised.

Peterborough City Council acknowledges the important role that Parish Councils play as the first tier of local government. Peterborough City Council believes that Parish Councils can be very effective by influencing and shaping the decisions that affect their communities in the following ways:

- ❑ They offer a means of devolving certain services and of revitalising local communities
- ❑ They can represent the views of their area and effectively influence the development of policies and services
- ❑ They can provide valuable feedback on how Council services are working in their area and how changes in policy are likely to affect the local community

Peterborough City Council wishes to strengthen and maintain the relationship with Parish Councils and the local communities they serve in a spirit of partnership and consultation. In turn, Parish Councils recognise the strategic role of Peterborough City Council and that they have to achieve a fair distribution of services across the city as a whole.

This Charter sets out the broad principles upon which Peterborough City Council and Parish Councils will work together. All parties agree to develop and support a process for how the relationship will work in practice.

2. Partnership Working for Communications and Engagement

Both parties will:

- 2.1 Advise each other in advance of key personnel changes (e.g. Council Clerk or the Head of Planning Services)
- 2.2 Make information available to each other and to the public, electronically as the preferred method of choice, as well as other formats
- 2.3 Endeavour to ensure that the customer experience is 'right first time' regardless of service approached with the enquiry
- 2.4 Engage with each other in advance about proposed changes to the operational services they provide. This includes levels of service and/or frequency of service
- 2.5 Seek opportunities for economies of scale and value for money through individual, consortium or clustering arrangements where possible
- 2.6 Respect and promote the role of elected councillors as representatives of their communities
- 2.7 Promote active democracy to ensure communities are able to have a say and help to develop a shared vision, identity and sense of belonging

Peterborough City Council will:

- 2.8 Seek comments from Parish Councils before making decisions which affect the Parish Council's residents or the Parish generally
- 2.9 Allow Parish Councils a reasonable time to make comments in response to consultations (this period may be determined by statutory consultation requirements)
- 2.10 Circulate information / news of interest to Parish Councils
- 2.11 Signpost customers to local Parish facilities where available
- 2.12 Offer support for the development of Parish Council websites where needed
- 2.13 Organise, via the network of the Parish Liaison Forum, information events, training and/or briefing sessions
- 2.14 Arrange for relevant officers to attend Parish Council meetings when appropriate
- 2.15 Treat all Parish Councils equally on merit regardless of size
- 2.16 Support the exploration of establishing new Parish Councils in areas that have demonstrated a desire for neighbourhood governance

Parish Councils will:

- 2.17 Adopt arrangements which enable them to respond to Peterborough City Council consultations in a timely way
- 2.18 Encourage direct participation from the Parish Council and their local community in the implementation of activities to support the Sustainable Communities Strategy
- 2.19 Attend information, training and briefing events organised by Peterborough City Council and where possible provide local venues to host these events
- 2.20 Nominate representatives to be co-opted to the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities
- 2.21 Promote the services and events of Peterborough City Council amongst the local community and make information available for residents via local means.
- 2.22 Enable training for Councillors and staff

3. Devolved Services and Assets

Peterborough City Council will:

- 3.1 Develop and publish criteria against which requests for the devolving of services to Parish Councils will be considered
- 3.2 Formally consider and respond to requests from Parish Councils for the devolving of services
- 3.3 Respond to requests from the Parish Council to 'enhance' a service provided by Peterborough City Council through payment of a contribution (or other means agreed)
- 3.4 Put in place formal agreements, including financial arrangements, to clarify the arrangements and deliver enhanced services within the agreed terms

Parish Councils will:

- 3.5 Prepare an appropriate business case to demonstrate how local services will be managed if seeking to do so or if wishing to exercise powers for the first time. The business case must prove the capacity to finance and deliver the service and show the benefits for the local community
- 3.6 Submit formal requests, with sufficient notice, to Peterborough City Council if it wishes to contribute towards an enhanced service.

4. Finances

It is noted there are no additional funds available for implementing the Charter. The Charter is established with the principle of finding innovative ways of maximising contributions and benefits to make the best of limited resources that respond to local need in the most cost effective way.

Peterborough City Council will:

- 4.1 Consult on proposed changes to service provision and budget implications in a timely manner
- 4.2 Provide information to support Parish Councils in determining their precepts
- 4.3 Meet the administration and staff costs associated with elections and Neighbourhood Plan referendums whilst national legislation mandates the council to do so

Parish Councils will:

- 4.4 Provide precept information by the mutually agreed deadline
- 4.5 Implement financial planning procedures that produce budget forecasts for a minimum of 3 years

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

- 5.1 The Charter and any associated delivery framework will be reviewed on an annual basis by the working group of the Parish Liaison Forum. The first review will take place in March 2016.

6. Key Contacts

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This Charter is signed by:

Chair of the Parish Liaison Forum

Chair of CAPALC

CEO CAPALC

Chair Parish Liaison Forum Working Group

Leader of Peterborough City Council

CEO Peterborough City Council

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