



A Charter

Between

Powys County Council

and

Welshpool Town Council



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RAR/July 2013

1.00 Basis of the Charter

1.01 Introduction

Welshpool Town Council in the County of Powys and Powys County Council have agreed to enter into a charter which sets out how the parties 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. It is a set of guiding principles by which the parties will work together. It will not compromise the autonomy of the councils involved.

1.02 Partners to the Charter

This Charter is between:

Welshpool Town Council

Triangle House, Union Street, Welshpool, SY21 7PG

And

Powys County Council

County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, LD1 5LG

2.0 The Charter

2.1 Partnership

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.

2.2 Powys County Council and Welshpool Town Council

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

Both parties recognise the strategic importance of Powys County Council and the economy of scale and equitable distribution of certain services they are able to achieve.

3.0 Local Governance

3.1 Expectations

The parties are clear about the expectations that are required 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. Both parties are clear about the role of councillors at all levels in the relationship and in community leadership.

3.2 Liaison

Powys County Council will meet with the Town and Communities Councils as required by way of meetings with Local Council Forums (in line with the County Council operational areas). In the case of Welshpool this will be known as North Montgomeryshire.

3.3 Forum

The Forum will be run by the Town and Community Councils of the area in 3.2 above and both the County, Town and Community Councils will contribute towards the agenda.

3.4 Council Information

Both Councils share agenda papers and minutes of Council meetings (including Cabinet, scrutiny and other committees) electronically. Both parties shall share agenda papers and minutes with interested officers and councillors when appropriate by electronic means.

3.5 Contact between the parties

Both parties will appoint a nominated member of staff to be a liaison officer between Powys County Council and Welshpool Town Council (Town Clerk). Both parties contact the nominated officer on the agreed issues and make them aware of any difficulties being encountered.

3.6 Representation

Welshpool Town Council councillors or officers (as appropriate) will be formally represented on key local partnerships and committee meetings where they affect the development and future planning of Welshpool.

Powys County Council will seek to ensure that these arrangements are regarded as suitable and sufficient.

Welshpool Town council (councillors/officers - as appropriate) who take part on key partnerships will ensure that they represent the views of the residents of Welshpool.

Welshpool Town Council will invite councillors/officers of Powys County Council to meetings as appropriate and will provide a space on its meeting agenda for presentations.

3.7 Electoral Matters

The Returning Officer will administer the holding of community and town council elections and will notify the need for elections in a timely manner.

3.8 Election of Town Councillors

Welshpool Town Council will support local elections using co-option as a last resort to promote local democracy.

3.9 Election details

The Returning Officer will involve community Welshpool Town Council in the local election planning process in their area and will encourage participation in the local election process by members of the local community.

Also to involve Welshpool Town Council in any awareness raising/publicity to encourage nominations for candidacy at local elections. The Town Council will ensure wide publicity of vacancies to maximise community representation.

3.10 Other meetings

None of the principles in this Charter would prevent other meetings being held when appropriate on any matters of mutual interest.

3.11 Powys County Council decisions

The County Council and will give Welshpool town council the opportunity to comment before making a decision that affects the local community.

3.12 Consultation

Welshpool town council will respond to consultation opportunities in a timely manner, addressing the key issues in the consultation document.

3.13 County Council public meetings

Powys County Council will advise the Town Clerk of the dates of its public meetings where such meetings could affect the residents of Welshpool.

4.0 Information and Communication

4.1 General

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.

4.2 Powys County Council will provide for Welshpool Town Council

Both parties will provide a list of named contacts, telephone numbers and where possible e-mail addresses.

Both parties will utilise the agreed contact points and respond in the most appropriate and timely method.

Both parties will ensure that the other party will have access to the appropriate documents to aid this agreement.

5.0 Joint working and engagement

5.1 Partnership working

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.

5.2 Targets and objectives

Such goals shall be issued as follows:

- a) Powys County Council will issue a list of objectives for the area of Welshpool.
- b) Welshpool Town Council shall issue a list of objectives through its Town and Community Plans as adopted.
(see appendix A & B)

5.3 Equal partnership benefits

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 Welshpool. If doing things differently achieves a better and more sustainable service, both parties will seriously examine these methods.

5.4 Devolved services.

Powys County Council will be clear about how devolved services can be discussed and agreed. Both parties will use the agreed procedures if there is a wish to progress devolved services. This will include giving due consideration to devolving services that would provide better value for money and/or enhanced services.

5.5 Reduction or ceasing of services

Powys County Council will not cut any services in Welshpool without first giving Welshpool Town Council the opportunity to consider taking over such services.

6.0 Planning and Development

6.1 Planning consultations

Powys County Council will uphold its statutory duty to consult community and town councils on all planning applications in their communities, make appropriate responses to the County Council recognising the parameters imposed by planning law and agreed planning policy.

6.2 Planning decisions

Powys County Council will ensure that Welshpool Town Council receives copies of decisions made on applications relevant to their area, and make further clarification where requested. Welshpool Town Council will progress any further clarification with the council officers concerned.

6.3 Section 106 obligations

Powys County Council will consult Welshpool Town Council when assessing what is needed for the Community of Welshpool under 'planning obligations'.

6.4 Professionalism

Both parties will maintain an objective and professional approach to planning matters at all times.

7.0 Training and support

7.1 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.

7.2 Practical Support

The County Council will make available, if requested training for Town Councillors.

7.3 Support services

Powys County Council, where practical, will offer community the Town Council access to support services, to enable them to take advantage of facilities such as IT, legal services, personnel services, purchasing at a mutually agreed price.

7.4 Ethics

Both parties will provide an ethical service to local people, following the appropriate standards and Codes of Conduct. Both parties will encourage links between the Town Council and the County Council standards committee.

7.5 Code of conduct

Powys County Council, through the appointed Monitoring Officer, will support the Town Council in the timely consideration and provision of advice in relation to the application of the Members Code of Conduct. Both parties will act in an appropriate manner 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.

8.0 Financial arrangements

8.1 General

Both Powys County Council and Welshpool Town Council 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.

8.2 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.

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

Both parties will recognise that there are certain instances where it is not appropriate or desirable for Powys County Council to delegate service delivery. Where it is not appropriate or desirable to delegate service delivery,

Powys County Council will seek ways in which local information from communities might be used to enhance service delivery to better meet citizen needs.

8.3 Sustainability

Both parties 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.

9.0 Strategy and Plans

9.1 Information technology

Both parties will work towards adopting electronic methods of working wherever feasible to achieve improved communication and to reduce waste.

9.2 Community Strategy

Both parties recognise the strategic importance of the proposed Place Plans (as set out in the Welsh Government Planning Bill) as the overarching strategic vision and priorities for the Welshpool local area.

Furthermore, both parties recognise that the Place Plans will only be fully effective if it is informed by the grass roots experiences from within our communities.

Powys County Council will involve Welshpool Town Council in the development of the Place Plans for Welshpool and area.

Both parties will be given the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Plans in its development stage.

Powys County Council will involve the Town Council in the implementation of the Place Plans as far as it relates to Welshpool

9.3 Town and Community Plans

Powys County Council will, when taking decisions affecting Welshpool, take into account the Town Centre Plan and Community Plans of the Town Council.

9.4 Council Meetings

Both Councils facilitate public participation at all relevant meetings of their council's and its committees to encourage community involvement.

Powys County Council will brief community the Welshpool Town Clerk on the nomination process so that they are equipped to assist any potential candidates who come forward for election to any County bodies on which Town and Community Councils could sit.

10.0 Delivery of the Charter

10.1 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 be reported on six-monthly during the year concerned.

10.2 Officer responsibility

Powys County Council will nominate a lead officer and the Town Clerk of Welshpool shall jointly be responsible for the development and monitoring of the action plan.

10.3 Priorities

Both parties will together agree priorities for inclusion in the action plan. Responsible officers of Powys County Council will have due regard to the action plan and include relevant actions in their service plans for the year. Both parties will undertake to implement all actions relevant to them coming from the action plan.

10.4 Monitoring and Review

The Charter will be fully reviewed every four years following local elections, or more often if there is a need to do so. Both parties will actively contribute to the review of the Charter and will arrange for the development of an action plan linked to the Charter.

11.0 Conclusion

The undersigned are committed to the principles and statements with the charter, for the benefit of local people:

Cllr Barry Thomas

Powys County Council

Cllr Malcolm Douglass

Mayor of Welshpool Town Council

Robert A Robinson

Town Clerk Welshpool Town Council

Dated 1st June 2014

Appendices

- A. *Welshpool Town Council Town Plan*
- B. *Welshpool Town Council Community Plan*