

“A SHARED COMMUNITY”

Strengthening Relationships:

***A Charter between Torfaen County Borough Council
and the Town & Community Councils of Torfaen***

- *Blaenavon Town Council*
- *Croesyceiliog and Llanyrafon Community Council*
- *Cwmbran Community Council*
- *Henllys Community Council*
- *Ponthir Community Council*
- *Pontypool Community Council*

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Town & Community Councils of Blaenavon, Croesyceiliog & Llanyrafon, Cwmbran, Henllys, Ponthir and Pontypool and the County Borough Council of Torfaen have agreed to publish this charter which sets out how we aim to work together for the benefit of local communities whilst recognising our respective responsibilities as autonomous, democratically elected statutory bodies.
- 1.2 The charter builds on existing good practice and embraces the shared principles of openness, equality of status, respect for each other's opinions, honesty and our common priority of putting citizens at the centre. It sets down the ways in which the Councils will work together across key areas to deliver these goals.
- 1.3 This Charter was adopted by each Council on the following dates:

- *Torfaen County Borough Council* ** 2019
- *Blaenavon Town Council* ** 2019
- *Croesyceiliog & Llanyrafon Community Council* ** 2019
- *Cwmbran Community Council* ** 2019
- *Henllys Community Council* ** 2019
- *Ponthir Community Council* ** 2019
- *Pontypool Community Council* ** 2019

2. Recognition

- 2.1 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.

Torfaen County Borough Council	Town & Community Councils
<p>The Council acknowledges and recognises Town & Community Councils as the grass roots level of local government.</p> <p>In their role as democratically accountable bodies, they offer a means of engaging with local people, alternative models of service delivery and revitalising local communities.</p>	<p>Recognise the strategic role of Torfaen County Borough Council and the economy of scale and equitable distribution of certain services it is able to achieve.</p>
<p>Recognises and respects the diversity of Town & Community Councils.</p>	
<p>Acknowledges that the degree of responsibility varies according to size.</p>	

3. Governance

3.1 We will be clear about the expectations that we have of each other in order to facilitate a smooth working relationship.

3.2 We will define the way in which we interact with each other.

3.3 We will be clear about the role of Members and their relationships with regard to community leadership.

3.4 Torfaen County Association of Local Councils (TCALC)

TCALC provides an opportunity for the Town & Community Councils of Torfaen to come together on a quarterly basis to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Each Council will appoint two Members to attend the meetings.

The frequency, timing and venue for meetings is determined by the appointed Members.

Administrative support for the meetings will be provided by the Town & Community Councils.

TCALC provides a vehicle for referring matters of strategic relevance to Torfaen County Borough Council but its primary role is to share best practice and discuss issues of common interest. Questions about operational matters affecting Torfaen County Borough Council should be referred to Clerks in the first instance who will raise the matter with the nominated contact office at Torfaen County Borough Council.

3.5 Local Councils Partnership Committee (LCP)

This committee provides an opportunity for Town & Community Council representatives to meet with Torfaen County Borough Council representatives to discuss strategic, policy issues.

In particular, LCP meetings will look at the Well-being objectives in the local Well-being Statement and the steps proposed by Town & Community Councils to identify activities that could help deliver the Well-being objectives locally.

Support for LCP meetings is provided by the contact officer(s) named below, with input from other key officers. Town & Community Councils may be asked to contribute to reports. Clerks will continue to attend and support members.

Two meetings will take place each year; one in the autumn to influence service and financial planning and another early in the new financial year (April/May) to review the impact and contribution of agreed actions. Other meetings may be held in response to specific circumstances. Meetings may be arranged around a workshop format so that links between objectives and activities can be fully explored.

LCP meetings will be chaired by the Executive Member for Communities, Housing and Anti-Poverty at Torfaen County Borough Council.

Town & Community Councils will be responsible for appointing their own members (two per council). The nominated Town & Community Council representative on the Public Service Board (PSB) will also sit on the committee.

3.6 Other arrangements which underpin the Charter include the following:

Torfaen County Borough Council	Town & Community Councils
Will share agenda papers and minutes of Council meetings (including Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny and other committees) electronically.	Will share agenda, reports papers and minutes electronically.
Will appoint a nominated member of staff to be a liaison officer between Torfaen and Community & Town Councils.	Will raise any matters with the Torfaen County Borough Council nominated officer. including any operational issues raised by Members.
Will invite Town & Community Councils to appoint an elected member to sit on the Public Services Board (PSB) and any other key local partnerships and committee meetings. Torfaen County Borough Council will ensure that these arrangements are regarded as suitable and sufficient.	Will appoint a Member to represent Town & Community Councils on the PSB or other bodies who will represent the views of all Town & Community Councils and provide feedback to them on key issues.
Members & Officers will attend Community and Town Council meetings as appropriate.	Will invite Members & Officers of Torfaen County Borough Council to council and committee meetings as appropriate.

3.7 None of the principles in this Charter should prevent the organisation of other meetings, when appropriate on any matters of mutual interest.

4. Consultation

4.1 We appreciate the importance of meaningful consultation and set out a genuine commitment among all parties to consult on matters of mutual concern.

4.2 We will agree clear, specific and time limited procedures and processes for consultation.

Torfaen County Borough Council	Town & Community Councils
<p>Will give Town & Community Councils the opportunity to comment before making a decision that affects the local community.</p> <p>Will provide service specific areas of consultation including decisions on schools, highways, social care and planning.</p> <p>Town & Community Councils will be granted third party speaking rights to address the Planning Committee where they have previously objected in writing to a planning application.</p> <p>Will make available public reports to Cabinet, panels and committees</p> <p>Will advise all clerks of the dates of its public meetings.</p> <p>Will publish agendas available on line.</p> <p>Will produce Executive Summaries where possible if the consultation document has been produced by Torfaen County Borough Council.</p> <p>Will provide clerks with electronic copies of any other key documents relevant to consultation exercises.</p>	<p>Will respond to consultation opportunities in a timely manner addressing the key issues in the consultation document.</p> <p>Will make full use of the papers available to them to inform local decision-making.</p> <p>Will post their Agendas and Minutes on their websites.</p>
<p>Will commit officers to attend meetings with Town & Community Councils (or groups of councils) at a mutually agreed time to discuss matters of common interest when requested to do so given sufficient notice.</p>	<p>Will provide opportunities for Torfaen Members and officers to address meetings on matters of mutually agreed interest.</p>
<p>Will ensure that only in exceptional circumstances will appropriate consultation not take place in which case a written explanation will be given</p>	<p>Acknowledge that in some circumstances timescales set for receipt of comments on consultation documents are imposed externally and are occasionally very short. It</p>

on request	may be that to meet deadlines, especially on major issues, it will be necessary for Town & Community Councils to hold a special meeting
Will encourage Scrutiny Committees to liaise with Town & Community Councils on relevant local issues.	Will respond to requests to input views to scrutiny committees.
Will allow Town & Community Councils sufficient time to respond to any consultation and receive copies of any documentation.	Will respond in a timely manner.
Will encourage representatives of Town & Community Councils to attend Members' Seminars, which are arranged regularly by Torfaen County Borough Council to brief Members on policy or legislative matters.	Will encourage representatives of Town & Community Councils to attend Members' Seminars, which are arranged regularly by Torfaen County Borough Council to brief Members on policy or legislative matters.

5. Information and Communication

- 5.1 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.

Torfaen County Borough Council	Town & Community Councils
Will appoint a named contact officer to act as a point of contact for Town & Community Councils. Details are set out in the appendix to this document.	Will utilise the agreed contact officer for all enquiries about the services and policies of Torfaen County Borough Council, unless a mode of communication is already in place with another officer.

6. Joint Working and Engagement

- 6.1 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 examine these methods.
- 6.2 It is essential that, where reports, consultations and briefings are constituent elements under this heading, Executive Summaries will be provided wherever possible.

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Torfaen County Borough Council	Town & Community Councils
Will provide suitable opportunities for Clerks of Town & Community Councils to meet representatives of Torfaen County Borough Council to discuss any common concerns and resolve issues.	Will encourage participation by Clerks in opportunities to network and share common concerns.
Will be clear about how to explore devolved services	Will use the agreed procedures if there is a wish to progress devolved services.
Will give due consideration to devolving services that would provide better value for money and/or enhanced services, should such opportunities arise.	Will be clear about how any devolvement of services will provide better value for money and/or enhanced services.
Will identify opportunities to work jointly with Town & Community Councils to communicate and consult with local people and communities.	Will identify opportunities to work with Torfaen County Borough Council to communicate and consult with local people and communities.
Will ensure that consultation on devolvement of services should take place as early as possible	Will consider any approaches on devolvement of services as early as possible after being approached.
Will work with Community and Town Councils to encourage young people to form a youth council and/or consider other ways other ways to engage in the democratic process	Will encourage young people to form a Youth Council and/or be co-opted to the Community/Town Council in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011

7. Land Use Planning

- 7.1 Town & 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.

Torfaen County Borough Council	Town & Community Councils
Will uphold its statutory duty to consult Town & Community Councils on all planning applications in their communities.	Will make appropriate responses to Torfaen County Borough Council, based upon material planning considerations and recognising the parameters imposed by planning law and agreed planning policy.
Assist with the provision of training to Members of Town & Community Councils on planning issues and planning law.	Will ensure that Members and staff receive training on planning issues and have a sound understanding of how planning law works.

Will provide Town & Community Councils with copies of decisions made on applications relevant to their area (in a timely manner), and make further clarification where requested.	Maintain an objective and professional approach to planning matters at all times.
Give Town & Community Councils information about relevant planning committee meetings so that they may attend as observers.	Will take up the opportunity to attend planning committee meetings at Torfaen.

8. Practical Support

- 8.1 In order to be effective, elected members and officers must be well-trained and have the support they need to carry out their roles.

Torfaen County Borough Council	Town & Community Councils
Will provide guidance for IT support and development.	May access training and development opportunities if they arise.
Will share training opportunities if they arise	Will follow procedures set out to access Torfaen support services, but also have opportunities to make own arrangements.

9. Expertise

- 9.1 We will encourage continuous development of Members & Officers, either in their individual groupings or together. Improved expertise leads to professionalism and more effective joint working. To this end, each Council will make their Members and Officers fully aware of the implications of the Charter.

Torfaen County Borough Council	Town & Community Councils
Will share member induction training and other development opportunities (where practical) with Community and Town Members to enable them to understand the role and function of the Unitary Council, to develop their role within the Community Council.	Will provide an induction to newly elected Members to enable them to undertake their role effectively. The Clerks to the six Community Councils will ensure that Community and Town Members are made aware of training and development opportunities offered by Torfaen CBC

10. Ethics

- 10.1 We will provide an ethical service to local people, following the appropriate standards and Codes of Conduct. We will encourage links between Town & Community Clerks and unitary authority Standards Committee.

Torfaen County Borough Council	Town & Community Councils
<p>Will, through the appointed Monitoring Officer, support Town & Community Councils in the timely consideration and provision of advice in relation to the application of the Members Code of Conduct.</p>	<p>members shall 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.</p> <p>Town and Community Councils shall consider the adoption of a Model Local Resolution Protocol under the guidance of One Voice Wales.</p>
<p>At no time, will either Members or Officers of any Council act in a unilateral manner to cause the harassment of either Members or Officers.</p>	<p>At no time, will either Members or Officers of any Council act in a unilateral manner to cause the harassment of either Members or Officers.</p>
<p>Will invite Town & Community Councils to appoint a Member to sit on the Standards & Ethics Committee as a representative of the Town & Community Councils.</p>	<p>Will appoint a Member to sit on the Standards & Ethics Committee as a representative of the Town & Community Councils. The Member will represent the views of all Town & Community Councils and provide feedback to them on key issues unless dealt with under the exclusion of Press and Public</p>

11. Financial arrangements

- 11.1 We 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.

Torfaen County Borough Council	Town & Community Councils
<p>Will, in setting the level of council tax for the area, have regard to services being delivered by Town & Community Councils in its area, and the funding thereof. This will be with a view to avoiding double-taxation.</p> <p>Will request details of each Town & Community Council's annual precept requirement in a manner which allows Town & Community Councils sufficient time to agree annual budgets beforehand.</p>	<p>Will in setting the annual precept, have regard to the timescales for returning information to Torfaen County Borough Council.</p>

Will collect the precept as part of the Council Tax and make payments to Town & Community Councils on pre-agreed dates.	
Will put appropriate Service Level Agreement in place for the delivery of services such as payroll.	Will pay all payroll invoices promptly.

12. Delegating Responsibility for Service Provision

12.1 *Services should be delivered in the most appropriate manner, with regard to value for money and added value for local people.*

Torfaen County Borough Council	Town & Community Councils
Will give due consideration to all reasonably argued cases for the delegation of service delivery to Town & Community Councils, basing its consideration primarily on the principles of wellbeing.	Will, if approached, consider whether it is viable to deliver the services proposed by Torfaen CBC.
<i>Will consider entering into partnerships with Town and Community Councils to enhance service delivery. Where possible there will be Service Level Agreements put in place to govern such arrangements.</i>	<i>Will engage with the citizens in the communities they serve to understand their needs better and convey these needs in a coherent and constructive manner, in accordance with the principles of the PSB Wellbeing Plan currently in existence.</i>

13. Sustainability & Well-being

13.1 *We will embrace principles of Sustainable Development based upon Long Term Planning, Prevention, Integration, Collaboration and Involvement*

13.2 The Public Services Board

Torfaen Public Services Board values the role that Community and Town councils can play and their close connections to the citizens in their areas. The PSB has invited a representative of the six community and town councils to join the Board

and work in partnership to improve the well-being of places and people in the borough.

Under the terms of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, acceptance of an invitation means all partners will play a full part in the PSB taking joint ownership of assessments, plans and reports, as well as joint responsibility for shared delivery and any associated risks.

Torfaen County Borough Council	Community and Town Councils
Will ensure the PSB coordinator provides all information on PSB business to the C&TC rep (and the council clerks) to facilitate attendance and contribution to PSB meetings, workshops, scrutiny sessions and other associated events.	Will nominate a representative to sit on the PSB and that this rep will attend PSB meetings and other events. The C&TC representative (and the Clerk) will share all PSB information with the Chairs and Clerks of all six councils.
Will – through the PSB coordinator – connect the C&TC's to PSB partners to facilitate collaborative and integrated working.	Will use their expertise and community connections to actively engage in the PSB work streams wherever possible.
Will ensure - through the PSB coordinator – that C&TCs have the opportunity to involve citizens in PSB work. This can include citizens being part of specific meetings and workshops as well as broader engagement and consultation.	Will use their connections to grass root organisations and citizens to give people an opportunity to be involved in PSB work and provide relevant support to citizens where required.

14. Local Elections

14.1 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.

Torfaen County Borough Council	Town & Community Councils
Will administer Town & Community and Council elections.	Will notify Torfaen County Borough Council of vacancies in accordance with statutory requirements.

<i>Will involve Town & Community Councils in the local election planning process.</i>	<i>Will encourage participation in the local election process by members of the local community.</i>
<i>Will work with Town & Community Councils and other relevant bodies to raise awareness of local elections and produce publicity to encourage nominations for candidacy at local elections.</i>	<i>Will ensure wide publicity of vacancies on Town & Community Councils to maximise community representation, reflecting the terms of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011.</i>
	<i>Will facilitate public participation at all relevant meetings of the council and its committees to encourage community involvement.</i>
<i>Will brief Town & Community Council Clerks on the nomination process so that they are equipped to assist any potential candidates who come forward for local elections.</i>	<i>Will direct members of the public and existing members to the County Borough Council for advice on the process of becoming a candidate for election.</i>
<i>Will provide help and assistance with the associated legal and administrative processes and procedures.</i>	

15. Monitoring and Review

The Charter document will be reviewed periodically and after every council-wide election or more often if there is a need to do so. The specific arrangements for conducting the review will be agreed at the time.

The Local Councils Partnership Committee will measure **progress annually** in achieving the measures set out in the Charter.

Contact Details

Torfaen County Borough Council

Nominated Contact Officer for Town & Community Councils:

Nansi Salkeld, Business Support Team Leader (Democratic Services)/Leader's Office Manager
Torfaen County Borough Council
Civic Centre
Pontypool
NP4 6YP

Tel: (01495) 742577 (Internal 2577)
Mobile: 07508 548922
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Blaenavon Town Council:

Kevin Warren
Clerk to the Council
Church View
Church Road
Blaenavon
NP4 9NA

Tel: (01495) 790643
Email: blaenavontc@btconnect.com

Croesyceiliog & Llanyrafon Community Council

Adrian Isaacs
Clerk to the Council
Woodland Road Social Centre
Croesyceiliog
Cwmbran
NP44 2DZ

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Cwmbran Community Council

David Collins
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The Council House
Ventnor Road
Cwmbran
NP44 3JY

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Email: david@cwmbran.gov.uk

Henllys Community Council

Adrian Isaacs
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Henllys Village Hall
Henllys
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Ponthir Community Council

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Pontypool Community Council

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