

PARISH CHARTER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Norman Williams
LEAD OFFICER: Terry Chilcott
REPORT AUTHOR: Terry Chilcott

Summary and Recommendation:

This report outlines the work that has been carried out to develop a Parish Charter for the Copeland Area with the County Council and Parish and Town Councils and seeks Members endorsement of the final version of the Parish Charter.

Recommend that Members note the work undertaken to develop the Parish Charter for Copeland and endorse the final draft for Copeland to enter into agreement with Parish Councils, Town Councils and Parish Meetings in Copeland

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Cumbria Association of Local Authorities (CALC) has managed a Parish Democracy Scheme for some years. The programme is aimed at promoting good practice providing training and engenders a more proactive culture amongst Town and Parish Councils. The Scheme provides an opportunity to build on good practice and provide a new and challenging framework for future capacity building. The capacity building programme aims to
- a) develop a greater capacity within the parish tier of local government in Cumbria to meet the needs of communities and assist rural regeneration
 - b) maintain the capacity of Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) to support Town & Parish Councils during a period of change at the national and local level.
- 1.2 Specific objectives of the programme are to
- a) develop partnership working between Town & Parish Councils and Principal Authorities
 - b) increase the levels of community and voluntary sector engagement with Town & Parish Councils to increase the amount of joint working amongst Town & Parish Councils
 - c) identify and support the role of Town & Parish Councils within Local Strategic Partnerships and implementation of Community Strategies

2. ARGUMENT

2. PARISH CHARTERS

- 2.1 Charters are aimed to improve joint working arrangements and develop better understanding between the different tiers of local government. Model charters have been developed based on good practice from around the country. The Charter provides a structure within which Principal Authorities and Local Councils agree to work. It includes a number of generic principals and covers a common set of topics such as Consultation and Communication, Community Planning, Service Delivery and how the document will be monitored and evaluated.
- 2.2 The Charter is a starting point, a commitment to work together and a statement for the principals by which all partners will approach their work together. The document is adapted to reflect circumstances and relate to the arrangements between principal authorities and Parish & Town Councils in their areas.
- 2.3 In Copeland we have developed with Cumbria County Council and CALC a draft Parish Charter which the Executive agreed could go forward for consultation at its meeting on 26th September 2006. This draft also went to Cumbria County Council's Area Committee who agreed to the consultation document.
- 2.4 The consultation on the Charter was subsequently delayed slightly due to the impending White Paper on Local Government Review which it was felt may have materially affected the Charter. Following the release of the White Paper the draft Charter was amended to include references to it and the implications for Parish Councils.
- 2.5 The draft Charter was then sent out under a covering letter from Copeland Borough Council, Cumbria County Council and CALC giving a 2 month consultation period with a deadline for returns of Monday 8th January 2007. During this period we also held a consultation event at Drigg Village Hall on 7th December 2006 to allow an open debate to take place.
- 2.6 Following the consultation period all comments were drawn together in a matrix and circulated to all involved and a meeting convened in February 2007 to consider the implications of those suggested amendments.
- 2.7 A revised draft was then produced for consideration by Copeland Borough Council Executive and Cumbria County Councils Area Committee.

2.8 PARISH PLAN PROTOCOL

- 2.9 In November 2006, Voluntary Action Cumbria produced a draft Parish Plan Protocol which is intended as a guide for local community groups in the preparation and implementation of their plans and to help ensure these local communities can influence development of strategies for Copeland.

- 2.10 The protocol is also designed to facilitate communication and promote good working practices between community and parish planning groups and local authorities in Copeland. A draft of the protocol was circulated to all Copeland Councillors inviting comments and it is felt appropriate for this protocol to form an Appendix to any Parish Charter that we agree.
- 2.11 CALC has consulted with Parish & Town Councils in Copeland to identify any significant comments they may have on the protocol forming part of our Charter and there is general support for its inclusion.
- 2.12 The Protocol had already gone out for consultation to Parish Councils through Voluntary Action Cumbria and has been endorsed by both the Lake District National Park Authority and Cumbria County Council.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 Members may choose not to agree to the Borough Council's commitments in the Charter.
- 3.2 Members may choose to make additional commitments to parishes in the Copeland area.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The Parish Charter and Protocol attached at Appendix A is the result of extensive co-operation between Copeland Borough Council, Cumbria County Council and the Parish & Town Councils of Copeland represented by CALC.
- 4.2 The drafts that have been produced have been extensively consulted on and final agreement has been reached on the content which is now attached at Appendix A.
- 4.3 If the Parish Charter is agreed by the Executive and the County Council it is intended that there will be an official signing up by the 3 bodies concerned and an official launch some time later in the year.
- 4.4 It is recommended that members of the Executive agree to the draft Charter attached including the Parish Plan Protocol.

5. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

- 5.1 There is not anticipated to be any financial implications as a direct result of agreeing the Charter however there will be a call on staff resources in the

delivery of the charter which will need to be monitored throughout the year and considered as part of the annual review.

6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The project for the development of the Charter is now complete, there is an annual review built into the charter process.

7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

7.1 Links directly to Corporate Plan objective QL5 on working with Cumbria Association of Local Councils

7.2 Also 2.1.6 of the new 5 year Corporate Plan - Work with Parish Councils to develop their role as champions of local communities.

List of Appendices

Appendix A - Draft Parish Charter for Copeland

List of Background Documents: None

List of Consultees: Corporate Team

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed . This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Impact on Crime and Disorder | Much of the work of the Parish Council can have a positive effect on Crime & Disorder |
| Impact on Sustainability | Effective Parish Councils can have a positive impact on sustainable communities |
| Impact on Rural Proofing | Parishes have a very positive effect on rural communities, |
| Health and Safety Implications | None |
| Project and Risk Management | NA |

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| Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues | Joint working and ensuring adequate lines of communication and understanding exist is an important element of public service. This is especially important across the three tiers of local government. The proposed Charter represents an opportunity to enhance this liaison and presents the opportunity for further collaboration with the Parish Councils in Copeland. |
| Children and Young Persons Implications | Strong and influential local communities can have a positive effect on children and young people. |
| Human Rights Act Implications | None directly |

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision YES