

Draft Charter

Rossendale Borough Council and Whitworth Town Council

Draft Charter 2007-2008

Introduction

1. The Town Council of Whitworth and Rossendale Borough Council have agreed to publish a charter which sets out how they aim to work together for the benefit of local people.

This Charter is the result of discussions locally to establish a new way of working and to confirm existing good practice and teamwork. It is underpinned by the shared principles of:

- Openess
- Mutual Respect
- Honesty

2. Rossendale Borough Council acknowledges that Whitworth Town Council is at the grass-roots level of local government. By working together we aim to act in partnership with local communities, while balancing the needs of the wider community.

3. In their role as democratically accountable bodies, Rossendale Borough Council and Whitworth Town Council offer a means of shaping the decisions that affect their community. They offer a means of decentralising the provision of certain services and of revitalising local communities. In turn Whitworth Town Council recognises the strategic role of Rossendale Borough Council and the equitable distribution of services which it has to achieve.

4. This Charter reflects the increasing importance attached by both the Borough and Town Council to partnership working and the development of Quality Status which Whitworth Town Council has obtained.

5. This is our first Charter and focuses on establishing a framework for working together based on improved communication and understanding as well as clarity regarding roles and responsibilities. There is a shared commitment to continuing to develop this Charter during 2007. This work will also extend the Charter to include Lancashire County Council.

Sustainability

5. Rossendale Borough Council will work in partnership with Whitworth Town Council to promote sustainable social, economic and environmental development for the benefit of local communities.

Community strategies and local strategic partnerships

6. Rossendale Borough Council, as a partner in the Rossendale Local Strategic Partnership will involve Whitworth Town Council in the processes of preparing and implementing the community strategy to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area, and the role which it should take. Whitworth Town Council will input accordingly

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about the content and direction of the community strategy as it affects the local communities they represent.

Local governance

7. Governance arrangements will include:

Phase One

- Rossendale Borough Council will hold quarterly liaison meetings with representatives of Whitworth Town Council.
- Whitworth Town Council will invite representatives (members and/or officers) of Rossendale Borough Council to meetings.
- A commitment from Whitworth Town Council and Rossendale Borough Council to involve themselves in the above arrangements.

Phase Two:

- Representatives of Whitworth Town Council to be included on the Area Forum

8. Rossendale Borough Council will help administer the holding of Whitworth Town Council elections. The respective authorities will work together to limit the costs of holding such elections. This will include:

- Electoral Register
- Election Publicity
- Polling Stations and Postal Votes
- Count

Consultation

9. Rossendale Borough Council will aim to give Whitworth Town Council the opportunity to comment before making a decision which affects Whitworth. In furtherance of this, Rossendale Borough Council will circulate a list of its public reports to committees and subcommittees to The Clerk of Whitworth Town Council at the same time as they are sent to members of the Rossendale Borough Council. Whitworth Town Council can request a copy of any public report and is encouraged to comment directly to members of the Rossendale Borough Council

10. The Borough Council will:

Phase One:

- Circulate the list of planning applications received to Whitworth Town Council
- Consult regarding disposal of Rossendale Borough Council land within Whitworth.
- Consult on Street Naming

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11. To help achieve the objectives laid down in this Charter, liaison and consultation (both formal and informal) will be further developed at town council level through regular meetings or specific service consultative groups and, at officer level, individually or through working parties and groups.

12. Whitworth Town Council will send copies of their agendas and papers to the Rossendale Borough Council and to councillors for their area. Officers and councillors of the Rossendale Borough Council will be given an opportunity to speak at parish and town council meetings on matters of mutual interest.

13. All consultation will take place in line with Rossendale's Community Involvement and Engagement Strategy which includes ensuring that adequate information is provided to any party being consulted. It also ensures that adequate time for consultation is allowed where practicable.

Information and complaints

14. Rossendale Borough Council will communicate with Whitworth Town Council and others in the community by publishing Rossendale Alive regularly and making it available to the local community. It will also keep Whitworth Town Council informed by sending them copies of other relevant newsletters. Whitworth Town Council will reciprocate and make space available in Whitworth Valley News for Rossendale Borough Council.

15. Rossendale Borough Council will ensure that any customer contact centres are given appropriate information about the Town Council, and vice versa.

16. Rossendale Borough Council and Whitworth Town Council will acknowledge letters sent by the other party, and both will provide substantive answers to letters which need a reply in line with their Council's Customer Service Standards.

17. If either Council is dissatisfied with the action of the other a, the response to a request for information, or a failure to consult, then a formal complaint may be made. These will then be dealt with through the respective Council's complaint management procedures.

Standards committee

18. Both Rossendale Borough Council and Whitworth Town Council have adopted codes of conduct, based on the national model code of conduct. Whitworth Town Council will work with Rossendale Borough Council Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. Rossendale Borough Council has consulted and agreed the following arrangements with the Whitworth Town Council for the appointment of representative(s) to the Standards Committee (and sub-committees, if any) :

One Member of Whitworth Town Council who must be present when matters relating to Whitworth Town Council or their Members are being considered. The Town Council Member will be entitled to vote at meetings.

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Delegating responsibility for service provision

Phase Two

19. The further development of the Charter will explore opportunities for Whitworth Town Council to discharge functions on behalf of Rossendale Borough Council, then Rossendale Borough Council will consider this where it provides best value (taking account of cost, quality, local preferences and practicability). Where it is not good value or practicable Rossendale Borough Council will, in consultation with Whitworth Town Council, explore alternative solutions to encourage more local-level input into service delivery.

Financial arrangements

20. Rossendale Borough Council has set out its financial arrangements for Whitworth Town Council at Appendix 1 in accordance with the principles and good practice guidance [*financial principles as set out in the accompanying document 'Guidance on Financial Arrangements with Whitworth Town Council'*].

21. Where Whitworth Town Council takes on the provision of certain services, the level of funding will be agreed by Rossendale Borough Council and Whitworth Town Council.

Local community life

22. Rossendale Borough Council will promote local community life through its Events Calendar On Line where information is provided and by enabling local grants to Area Forums.(subject to budget approval).

23. Whitworth Town Council will promote local community life through....

Practical support

24. Rossendale Borough Council will, where practicable, enable Whitworth Town Council access to their own support services, and enable them to take advantage of facilities such as printing and purchasing, at a mutually agreed price.

- In particular, assistance will be offered in identifying and helping to meet the training needs of Whitworth Town Council (for example, through County Training Partnerships).
- By facilitating joint approaches to multi agency issues.
- By appointing a named liaison officer as a first point of contact if necessary.

Community strategies

25. Whitworth Town Council and Rossendale Borough Council will jointly produce a Neighbourhood Plan for the area. The proposals and priorities will be fed in to the Local Strategic Partnership in developing and implementing the community strategy as it affects the

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local areas concerned. Links between Whitworth Town Council and the Local Strategic Partnership will be strengthened in order to improve delivery of local priorities.

Information and access points

- 26. If Whitworth Town Council wishes to become a local information and/or access point for Rossendale Borough Council services then Rossendale Borough Council will help it to do so. In particular it will ensure that appropriate information and training is provided.

[information on local arrangements - e.g. availability of principal authority staff to run regular surgeries in local council offices]

Land use and development planning:

27. Section to be developed as part of Phase Two

Delegation of Functions and Service Provision:

Phase Two

29. Rossendale Borough Council will consider proposals by Whitworth Town Council to take on aspects of the delivery, management and monitoring of services currently provided by the Borough Council.

This will be the focus of Phase Two of the development of the Charter to address this section.

Appendix 1

[Local financial arrangements for parish and town councils in accordance with paragraph 21 above]

Appendix 2

[Locally drafted arrangements for delegation of functions and service provision to Quality parish and town councils in accordance with paragraph 30 above]