

Charter

Lancashire County Council, Rossendale Borough Council and

Whitworth Town Council Charter

Introduction

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

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:

- Openness
 - Mutual Respect
 - Honesty
2. Lancashire County Council and Rossendale Borough Council acknowledge 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 Lancashire County Council, 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 roles of Lancashire County Council Rossendale Borough Council and the need to ensure that services are appropriately delivered on a much wider stage.
 4. This Charter reflects the increasing importance attached by the Borough, County 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.

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Sustainability

6. Lancashire County Council and 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

7. Lancashire County Council and Rossendale Borough Council, and as partners 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 about the content and direction of the community strategy as it affects the local communities it represents.

Local governance

8. Governance arrangements will include:
 - Lancashire County Council and 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 Lancashire County Council and Rossendale Borough Council to meetings as appropriate to the agendas.
 - Representatives of Whitworth Town Council to be included on the borough Council's Neighbourhood Forum for Whitworth.
 - A commitment from Lancashire County Council, Rossendale Borough Council and Whitworth Town Council to involve themselves in the above arrangements.
9. Rossendale Borough Council will 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

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Consultation

10. 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 of 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.
11. Lancashire County Council already has a protocol with Whitworth Town Council in relation to the Town Council's rights at Lancashire Local meetings and the protocol is deemed to form part of this Charter.
12. Lancashire County Council is in the process of agreeing a county-wide Charter with Parish and Town Councils the provisions of which, once agreed, will be deemed to form part of this Charter.
13. 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
14. 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.
15. Whitworth Town Council will send copies of their agendas and papers to Rossendale Borough Council, Lancashire County Council and to borough and county councillors for their area. Officers and councillors of the Rossendale Borough Council and Lancashire County Council will be given an opportunity to speak at parish and town council meetings on matters of mutual interest.

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16. Rossendale Borough Council will send copies of their agendas and papers to the Whitworth Town Council. Officers and councillors of the Whitworth Town Council will be given an opportunity to speak at Council meetings on matters of mutual interest.
17. 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

18. 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. Likewise, Lancashire County Council undertakes to continue to produce Vision regularly and to distribute it to all households. Whitworth Town Council will reciprocate and make space available in Whitworth Valley News for Rossendale Borough Council and Lancashire County Council.
19. Lancashire County Council and Rossendale Borough Council will ensure that their customer contact centres are given appropriate information about the Town Council, and vice versa.
20. Lancashire County Council, Rossendale Borough Council and Whitworth Town Council will acknowledge letters sent by any of the other parties, and will provide substantive answers to letters which need a reply in line with their Council's Customer Service Standards.
21. If any Council is dissatisfied with the action of another in relation to 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

22. Lancashire County Council, 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.

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Lancashire County Council will assist if requested by either Rossendale Borough Council or Whitworth Town Council. 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.

Delegating responsibility for service provision

Phase Two

23. The further development of the Charter will explore opportunities for Whitworth Town Council to discharge functions on behalf of Lancashire County Council an/or Rossendale Borough Council. Lancashire County Council and 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 Lancashire County Council and Rossendale Borough Council will, in consultation with Whitworth Town Council, explore alternative solutions to encourage more local-level input into service delivery.

Financial arrangements

24. 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'*].
25. Where Whitworth Town Council takes on the provision of certain services, the level of funding will be agreed by Rossendale Borough Council or Lancashire County Council as appropriate, and Whitworth Town Council.

Local community life

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

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27. Whitworth Town Council will promote local community life through initiatives including its quarterly publication the Whitworth Valley News, the innovative Amberwatch scrolling LED text system and the Whitworth Town Council website.

Practical support

28. Lancashire County Council 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

29. Lancashire County Council, Rossendale Borough Council and Whitworth Town 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 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

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

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Land use and development planning:

31. Section to be developed as part of Phase Two

Delegation of Functions and Service Provision:

Phase Two

32. Lancashire County Council *and* 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 either 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]

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