

Decision Session – Cabinet Member for Leisure, 13 September 2011
Culture and Social Inclusion

Report of the Director of Communities & Neighbourhoods

Local Council Charter

Summary

1. A Local Council Charter is a document which sets out principles of working together and co-operation between the local authority and parish and town councils within the local authority area. This report presents a draft revision of the current York Local Council Charter for consideration. Members are asked to approve this draft so that an up to date Charter can be implemented. The development of the current Local Council Charter document was based on discussions to establish improved ways of working together and to confirm existing good practice.
2. The current Local Council Charter:
 - Includes a commitment to the principles of democratic local government.
 - Acknowledges and recognises that parish and town councils are the grass roots level of local government. By working with local and Parish Councils City of York Council aims to act in partnership with local communities, while balancing the needs of the wider locality.
 - Recognises that local councils offer a means of shaping the decisions that affect their communities and of revitalising or sustaining local communities. In turn, local councils recognise the strategic role of the principal council and the equitable distribution of services which it has to achieve.

Background

3. There 31 Parish Councils in York within 12 wards. A local council is a type of local authority which is the 'lowest or 'first' tier of local government. Local councils have the power to precept their

residents to support their operations and to carry out local projects. Local councils have the powers to provide some facilities themselves or they can contribute towards their provision by others.

4. In May 2004 Representatives of City of York Council and the York Branch of the Yorkshire Local Councils Association (representing Local Councils in the City of York area) signed a Local Council Charter which had been mutually developed. (Annex 1) In this first York Local Council Charter document it was stated that the intention was to review this Charter after 3 years from the implementation date.
5. The monitoring of the Charter and its impact / effectiveness is undertaken through the Local Council Liaison Group, the membership of which is made up of representatives from the York Branch of the Yorkshire Local Councils Association and City of York Council. This group prompted a revision of the Charter as more than the three years intended had passed and it was decided at this group that there was no need for a complete change and that the existing document should simply be updated.

Consultation

6. Consultation on the revised Charter has been extensive and a number of revisions of the original document have been suggested, sections of which have either been rejected or accepted on behalf of local councils or of City of York Council.
7. At all stages revisions of the draft Local Council Charter have been discussed and reviewed by the members of the Local Councils Association Liaison Group before being taken to meetings of the York Branch of the Yorkshire Local Councils Association for consultation amongst wider membership and invited non member local council representatives. Internally consultation has taken place with Senior Officers with responsibility in key areas defined within the current and draft revision of the Local Councils Charter.

Options

8. The options available are:
 - a) To approve the draft revised Local Council Charter
 - b) To reject the draft revised Local Council Charter and request further work be undertaken on the draft.
 - c) To reject the draft revised Local Council Charter with no further follow up required.

Analysis

9. The advantage of Option a) is that the Local Council Charter will no longer be in breach of the intended review date and will provide a refreshed set of working principles between City of York Council and local councils in York.
10. The disadvantage of Option b) is that the review process will need to continue having already taken a long time to get to this point. This may have a detrimental effect on relationships with Local Councils particularly with those who are members of the York Branch of the Yorkshire Local Councils Association. There is an intention to undertake a series of training/awareness events for officers, members of City of York Council and of Local Councils as part of the launch of the reviewed Local Council Charter and a delay could impeded the development of a training programme and potentially disadvantage new members and parish / town councillors.
11. The disadvantage of Option c) is similar to Option b) in that officers of City of City of York Council and representatives of the York Branch of the Yorkshire Local Councils Association have put significant efforts into drafting a document which is up to date reflecting current practice. To reject the draft without follow up work may have a detrimental effect on relationships with Local Councils particularly with those who are members of the York Branch of the Yorkshire Local Councils Association.

Corporate Priorities

12. The Local Council Charter is a clear statement of the commitment of City of York Council to deliver services which best fit the needs and aspirations of the citizens of York in partnership with key stakeholders. The draft Local Council Charter as presented has been developed in line with corporate priorities and in particular:
 - We shall be a modern council, with high standards in all we do, living up to our values and be a great place to work
 - We will do our best to make sure that all citizens, regardless of race, age, disability, sexual orientation, faith or gender, feel included in the life of York. We will help improve prospects for all, tackle poverty and exclusion and make services and facilities easy to access.

Implications

13. There are no additional finance, human resources, equalities, legal, crime and disorder, Information Technology, or property implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

14. The implementation of the proposed draft Local Council Charter document does not in itself pose any risk as outlined in the section above. As the content relates to the working relationship between the City of York Council and the Local Councils within the City of York area and customer support both the Assistant Director of Governance and ICT and the Assistant Director (Customers & Employees) have been consulted during the drafting process.

Recommendations

15. The Cabinet Member is asked to approve the draft revised Local Council Charter.

Reason: In order to demonstrate a continued commitment to working in partnership with local / parish councils.

Contact Details

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	Report Approved	✓	Date 1.9.11.
Specialist Implications Officer(s)			
Wards Affected: Bishopthorpe, Wheldrake, Derwent, Heworth Without, Osbaldwick, Haxby & Wigginton, Heslington, Fulford, Huntington & New Earswick, Rural West, Strensall, Skelton, Rawcliffe and Clifton Without			

Background Papers: None

Annexes

- A Current Local Councils Charter first published in 2004
B Draft Revised Local Councils Charter to be considered for approval.