



The Parish Charter

Serving the Communities of Telford & Wrekin
by working together!
26 Local Councils

Chetwynd	Chetwynd Aston & Woodcote
Church Aston	Dawley Hamlets
Edgmond	Ercall Magna
Great Dawley	Hadley & Leegomery
Hollinswood & Randlay	Ketley
Kynnersley	Lawley & Overdale
Lilleshall & Donnington	Little Wenlock
Madeley	Newport Town Council
Oakengates Town Council	Rodington
St Georges & Priorslee	Stirchley & Brookside
The Gorge	Tibberton & Cherrington
Waters Upton	Wellington Town Council
Wrockwardine	Wrockwardine Wood & Trench
Also representing:	
Eyton Parish Meeting	Preston Parish Meeting

and

Telford & Wrekin Council



Telford & Wrekin
C O U N C I L

MAY 2009

TELFORD & WREKIN PARISH CHARTER

INTRODUCTION

This Charter has been drafted to build on the already effective collaborative / partnership-working between Telford & Wrekin Council and the Parish and Town Councils (Local Councils) in the Borough. By signing up to this document, both Telford & Wrekin Council and Local Councils collectively agree to work together to promote sustainable, social economic and environmental developments for the benefit of all local communities whilst seeking not to compromise the quality of life of future generations.

1. The overall aim of the document is to improve relationships between the Unitary Council and the Local Councils in Telford & Wrekin, paying particular attention to improving consultation and communications about policies and decisions that affect communities.
2. There are 26 Local Councils within the Borough, and two Parish Meetings, all playing a valuable role in the fabric of local life. Parish and Town Councillors and Clerks possess unique knowledge that can help the planning and decision-making processes. It is recognised that Local Councils and Ward Members are the grass-roots of local democracy and community leadership.
3. This Charter will enable those Local Councils that wish to take on services or facilities, as a devolved function, to receive the necessary training, support and funding where appropriate.
4. This Charter has the full approval and commitment of Telford & Wrekin Council, the Local Councils of Telford & Wrekin and the Shropshire Association of Local Councils (SALC). Together they will engage in regular liaison about issues of common interest.
5. This Charter will be monitored and evaluated, through the Parish Forum and Wrekin Area Committee, with a view to making appropriate amendments as necessary. This is a living document.
6. Telford & Wrekin Council and all Local Councils agree to respond in a helpful, timely and efficient manner to all communications from Local Councils and Telford & Wrekin Council respectively.

TELFORD & WREKIN PARISH CHARTER

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TWC	Telford & Wrekin Council
SALC	Shropshire Association of Local Councils
WAC	Wrekin Area Committee of SALC
Local Councils	26 Parish & Town Councils and 2 Parish Meetings
SLCC	Society of Local Council Clerks
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL'S COMMITMENTS TO THE PARISH & TOWN COUNCILS

1. Consultation, Liaison and Engagement

Telford & Wrekin Council recognises the importance and value of communication and in particular keeping Local Councils informed of issues affecting their own Parishes.

Telford & Wrekin Council will consult on all statutory matters: these are matters in which Telford & Wrekin Council has a statutory requirement to consult with Local Councils, for example amendments to Public Rights of Way and Planning Applications, taking into consideration statutory time limits.

Telford & Wrekin Council will receive a 'green card' from any Local Council wishing an application to be discussed at a Plans Board Meeting and will invite representations from Local Councils at that meeting, as per the Council's Constitution.

Non-statutory matters: these are matters in which there is no statutory requirement to consult but Telford & Wrekin Council recognises that the views of its stakeholders and partners (such as Local Councils) are essential to effective decision-making.

Telford & Wrekin Council will consult on all issues on which the grass-roots tier of local governance would benefit– including

- Key corporate arrangements which affect the work of Local Councils or the delivery of local services
- Issues of strategic policy
- Other issues of relevance to all or a number of Local Councils

Meaningful consultation will be **in advance** of any decision-making by officers or by the Cabinet, giving sufficient information and an acceptable amount of time will be agreed to allow Local Councils to give consideration to the matter.

There will be a named officer to whom queries regarding such consultations can be addressed and will take into account all the views offered by the Local Councils.

In the event of individual officers or Members taking decisions which are contrary to the expressed wishes of a Local Council, the Clerk should be informed and reasons given before a final decision is made.

Matters of strategic policy will be discussed directly with all Local Councils where the community or locality are likely to be affected by the outcome.

Following consultation, Local Councils will receive feedback on the outcomes.

A list of the different types of matters is set out in Appendix 1.

Liaison

Telford & Wrekin will host briefing sessions on major issues that are the subject of consultation and will promote full engagement on all key issues.

There will be a database of planned consultation activity so that Local Councils can incorporate them into their own work plans.

There will be procedures in place to ensure that the consultation practices are relevant and current at all times.

Telford & Wrekin Council, with Local Councils, will organise Parish Forum Meetings, for Chairmen (or nominated representatives) and Clerks to attend with Telford & Wrekin Councillors to discuss particular issues of common interest. There will be at least four such meetings in each Council Year. The Agenda will be set, in the main, by the Local Councils and distributed by Telford & Wrekin Council.

2. Information and Communication

Effective working between the Local Councils and Telford & Wrekin Council depends on clear information being available to all.

Telford & Wrekin Council will

- Maintain an up-to-date list of Members and Officers, their duties and contact details.
- Use plain language in all communications. The use of acronyms will be limited and when used, should include an explanation of their meaning
- Ensure there is a clear understanding of the role of Local Councils and the importance of engagement on relevant matters.
- Provide information electronically wherever possible and encourage all Local Councils to equip themselves to receive information in this way
- Provide an acknowledgement of information requests within 5 working days and respond within the Terms of the Customer Charter.

3. Local Governance

Telford & Wrekin staff will endeavour to make themselves available to Local Council Clerks and Councillors by phone or in meetings.

Ward Members will be encouraged to attend Local Council meetings in their Wards.

Wherever practicable and appropriate, special topic meetings will be arranged with relevant Local Councils.

4. Community Planning

Telford & Wrekin will ensure that Local Councils are consulted and involved in the substance and direction of community strategy as it affects the local communities represented, and that they have the opportunity to take an early and active part in the formulation of policy and service delivery. From time to time Telford & Wrekin may wish to consider initiatives for neighbourhood working – any such considerations will be developed with the Local Councils recognising the collective role that is shared in delivering local community leadership.

5. Practical Support & Ethics

Telford & Wrekin will offer assistance in identifying and helping to meet the training needs of Local Councils and work with Shropshire Association of Local Councils, Wrekin Area Committee and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), as training providers and administrators, within the National Training Strategy.

Telford & Wrekin Council will acknowledge and support wherever possible all Local Councils in developing their own projects. This will include the production of Parish Plans and applications for Quality Status.

Local Authority teams will be available to give assistance on Legal and HR matters, IT and website provision and others.

Appendix 2 gives an indication of the services available and the costs involved.

Telford & Wrekin will work with Councils to achieve Quality Status and will strengthen links with the Local Strategic Partnership in order to improve the delivery of local priorities. TWC will support any request to act as an information point for the Borough and will welcome dialogue regarding enhanced service and facility provision.

Telford & Wrekin Council and all Local Councils have adopted the Code Of Conduct based on the National Code of Local Government Conduct and will work with the Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct at all times.

6. Delegation of Responsibility for Service Provision

Where a Local Council (or group of Local Councils) wish to take on delegated responsibility for the delivery, management or monitoring of services provided by TWC, it will discuss and support opportunities for devolution where this is lawful and represents best value (taking account of cost, quality, local preferences and practicability).

Where the provision of a service is devolved or transferred to a Local Council(s), the financial arrangements and partnership framework will be agreed by Telford & Wrekin with the relevant Local Council(s).

Telford & Wrekin will Endeavour to ensure that Parish & Town Councils receive sufficient information regarding any financial aspects of their work or devolved functions by the end of October in order that Local Councils can give consideration within their budget process.

Functions that may be offered to Parish and Town councils by Telford & Wrekin Council are covered in Appendix 3.

7. Information and Complaints

A Joint Project Group will be set up, with Member and Officer Representatives of the Unitary and Local Councils, to liaise between the Parish Forum, Wrekin Area Committee and Telford & Wrekin Council with regards to the effectiveness of the Charter.

Details of the roles and the relationship between the Parish Forum, Wrekin Area Committee, Telford & Wrekin Council and Local Councils is shown in Appendix 4 including the Joint Project Group.

Telford & Wrekin Council will acknowledge all written communications from local councils (including letters, faxes and emails) and provide a substantive reply to all written communications that need a reply as per the Customer Charter:

TWC will aim to resolve any breach of the Charter by early and constructive dialogue. If this has not been possible, a meeting between the Chairman and Clerk of the Local Council with the responsible Cabinet Member and Lead Officer of Telford & Wrekin Council will take place to discuss the issue and find a mutually acceptable resolution. If something goes wrong, the two Authorities will act quickly and efficiently to put it right, and if a resolution cannot be agreed, TWC will help customers to use its formal complaints procedure.

8. Equality of Opportunity

Telford & Wrekin Council is committed to eliminating discrimination in all its forms and providing equality of opportunity to all the communities it serves. Equality is at the heart of all that it does and believes in, and it will work to ensure that it promotes equality of opportunity and work towards the elimination of discrimination.

9. Review and Operation of the Charter

The commitment for this Charter to support the work of Telford & Wrekin Council and Parish & Town Councils across the Borough will be enhanced by the provision of suitable and adequate information and guidance to raise awareness within the Authorities.

This will be one of the roles of the Parish Forum, Wrekin Area Committee and the Joint Project Group. The document will initially be revised after a twelve-month period and again after two years. However, changes in functions or legislation may dictate that it be updated as and when required. It will also be renewed following any Local Government Elections.

PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL COMMITMENTS TO TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

1. Consultation, Liaison and Engagement

Local Councils will include correspondence for communication on the next available and appropriate agenda and respond within the agreed timescales. They will respond to consultations by Telford & Wrekin Council on any matter within the time limit specified. If, for any reason this is not possible, the Clerk will inform the relevant officer of the Borough and appropriate discussions will take place.

Local Councils, as the grass roots and closest to the communities, will be the eyes and ears for the Borough Authority. They will inform the relevant departments at Telford & Wrekin Council of any matter in need of attention (e.g. dangerous or fallen trees, potholes, kerbs, bollards and street lighting) at the earliest opportunity, using the Borough's Reporting Systems.

Local Councils may nominate snow wardens and tree wardens to work closely with the Borough to represent the communities with issues that they may or may not be aware of.

Local Councils will ensure that agenda items for the Parish Forum are notified in good time.

Local Councils may submit a 'green card' on an application where they consider a decision by Plans Board to be more appropriate. Local Councils will be invited to make representations to that meeting as per Telford & Wrekin Council's Constitution.

Clerks may meet together to discuss the implementation of their council decisions and share good practice. They may invite the relevant officers of Telford & Wrekin to join them if desired.

2. Information and Communication

Local Councils will

- Inform Telford & Wrekin of current Clerk's contact details, Councillors names and addresses and other relevant information at the earliest opportunity.
- Use plain language in all communications and avoid acronyms whenever possible. When unavoidable, an explanation of the meaning should be included.
- Provide information electronically wherever possible
- Respond within the directed timescales or inform the appropriate officer of reasons why this is not possible and agree a solution.
- Have the right to initiate the Council's Complaints Procedure if they are dissatisfied with an action of Telford & Wrekin Council

3. Local Governance

The Local Councils will inform the Borough Councillors of the dates of meetings as soon as they are set and will provide them with a copy of the Agenda for each formal meeting plus a copy of the last Council meeting's minutes, three clear days before the meeting on request. Any Local Council that requests an officer from Telford & Wrekin Council to attend a meeting should do so one month beforehand wherever possible, unless in a matter of an emergency. Where issues affect more than one Council, special topic meetings will be arranged and relevant Local Councils will be invited to attend.

Local Councils will provide a space on their meeting agenda for the Borough Councillors to provide a relevant report. It should be noted, however, that if the local council resolves to exclude the press and public for an item, this will include the Borough Councillor unless specifically invited to remain.

4. Community Planning

Local Councils may respond to community planning consultations and invitations to participate either individually or collectively.

Local Councils will welcome the opportunity to work with Telford & Wrekin on any policy or service delivery consideration, recognising the collective role that is shared in delivering local community leadership.

5. Practical Support & Ethics

Local Councils will attend training and information-sharing events whenever possible.

Local Councils will inform Telford & Wrekin of their strategic plan and projects for the future and discuss with relevant officers ways in which the two Councils can work together.

Local Councils and Telford & Wrekin Council have adopted the Code of Conduct based on the National Code of Local Government Conduct and will work with the Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct at all times.

6. Delegation of Responsibility for Service Provision

Local Councils will work with Telford & Wrekin Council and consider any delegated responsibility in detail taking into consideration the cost, quality, local preferences and practicability at all times.

Local Councils will give consideration to financial matters raised by Telford & Wrekin Council within their budget process and will ensure that their precept request is received at Telford & Wrekin Council by the end of January.

7. Information and Complaints

A Joint Project Group will be set up, with Member and Officer representatives of the Unitary and Local Councils, to liaise between the Parish Forum, Wrekin Area Committee and Telford & Wrekin Council with regards to the effectiveness of the Charter.

Local Councils will respond to all communications within the requested timescales wherever possible.

Any breach of the Parish Charter or Customer Charter will be resolved by early dialogue.

If resolution is not possible, the Chairman and Clerk of the Local Council will attend a meeting with the Cabinet Member and Lead Officer of Telford & Wrekin Council in order to find a mutually acceptable resolution. If something goes wrong, the two authorities will act quickly and efficiently to put it right and reserve the right to use the formal complaints procedure if all else fails.

8. Equality of Opportunity

Local Councils are committed to eliminating discrimination in all its forms and will provide equality of opportunity to all the communities we serve. Equality is at the heart of all that we do and believe in and we will work to ensure that we promote equality of opportunity and work towards the elimination of discrimination.

9. Review and Operation of The Charter

The commitment for this Charter to support the work of TWC and PTC across the Borough will be enhanced by the provision of suitable and adequate information and guidance to raise awareness within the Authorities.

This will be one of the roles of the Parish Forum, Wrekin Area Committee and the Joint Project Group. The document will initially be revised after a twelve month period and again after two years. However, changes in functions or legislation may dictate that it be updated as and when required. It will also be renewed following any Local Government Elections.

COMMITMENT

“This Charter will evolve and develop if it is to remain relevant to the changing needs of all Councils and to respect the role that each play in serving their communities. It commits all parties to work together, to ensure that they are able to serve their communities to the best of their abilities.

Telford & Wrekin Council and Local Councils will train staff to ensure that they implement the aims and principles of the Charter.

Where a local Council wishes to work towards Quality Status and / or The Power of Well Being, Telford & Wrekin will offer support wherever possible.”

Signed by the Chief Executive (on behalf of Corporate Directors and officers)

W. Victor Brownlees

Signed by the Leader of the Council (on behalf of Members)

A Eade

Signed by the Chairman and Clerk of each Local Council

P Smart

Colin Potts

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL CONTACT DETAILS

Council Direct For general council enquiries	01952 380000 contact@telford.gov.uk
Customer Quality Team	01952 382507
Emergency Out of Hours	0845 155 9955
Environmental Health	01952 381805
Environmental Maintenance	01952 384384
Highways Maintenance Roads and Footpaths	01952 384000 highways@telford.gov.uk
Parish Charter / Liaison Officer Caroline Oakes	01952 382136 caroline.oakes@telford.gov.uk
Wrekin Area Committee	01952 541939 or 07813 788094
Planning	01952 380380
Public Rights of Way	01952 384614
Trading Standards	01952 381999 tradingstandards@telford.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Issues that Telford & Wrekin Council will refer to Parish and Town Councils for information and/or consultation

Statutory	Non-statutory (and other consultations in which Parish or Town Councils are stakeholders)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge maintenance, closure and diversion • Pedestrian crossings • Public Rights of Way – proposals for permanent legal change • Regional Spatial Strategies that are likely to affect parishes • Roads new and improved, i.e. the need for them, their alignment and the standard of road under consideration (consultation from the earliest stages) • School closures • Traffic regulations (e.g. speed limits, waiting orders, weight restrictions, one-way streets, parking restrictions) • Waste and minerals proposals. These proposals and applications are subject to the provisions of specific regulations which will override the consultation provisions set out in this Charter • Waste and Minerals Local Development Framework. This is subject to the provisions of specific regulations which will override the consultation provisions set out in this Charter • Waste Management Strategy (this will include strategies jointly developed by the Borough Council for recycling and composting, and how biodegradable municipal waste will be diverted from landfill by new waste facilities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area Schools Reviews (invitation to public consultation meetings) • Changes to Children's and Young People/Community and Adult Care services • Changes to on-street parking enforcement • Complaints procedure changes • Customer services standards • Derelict land reclamation and landscaping schemes • Design of Improvement Schemes (e.g. traffic calming, cycle routes, safety schemes) • Highway structural maintenance (e.g. surface dressings (tar and chippings), resurfacing, road closures) • Landscape projects • Libraries – mobile routes, opening hours, buildings issues • Local Transport Plan (invitation to stakeholder forums) • Opening, change of use and closure of Telford & Wrekin facilities in the area • Registration service changes • Winter maintenance (changes to treatment routes) <p>The list can be extended to represent individual Council's plans</p>

Appendix 2

Where any local council(s) seek professional or technical advice from Telford & Wrekin Council, an initial interview (of up to one hour) will be free of charge. Thereafter, any costs will be discussed and agreed in advance.

Functions	Who to contact
Human Resources	John Harris
IT	Tom Greatorex
Legal Services	Matthew Cumberbatch
Salaries / payroll	Julie Pugh

Appendix 3

Functions that may be offered to Parish and Town Councils following agreement between Telford & Wrekin Council and Parish/Town Council are

Functions:

- Recycling provisions
- Some road safety measures
- Minor repairs/erection of signs, litter picking
- Information access point provision
- Grass cutting
- One-stop shops

Appendix 4

