

The Parish Charter

Serving the Communities of Telford & Wrekin by working together

26 Local Councils

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

And
Telford & Wrekin Council
May 2012



Introduction

The purpose of the Charter is to build on the already effective Co-operative / partnership-working between Telford & Wrekin Council and the Parish and Town Councils (Local Councils) in the Borough. When signing up to this document, both Telford & Wrekin Council and Local Councils collectively agreed to work together to ensure we serve the public to the best of our ability and to be more efficient in the way we work together 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 maintain the good relationship between the Council and the Local Councils in Telford & Wrekin, to actively encourage Cross-Parish working and 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. The Charter enables 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. This will take into consideration any changes brought about from the Localism Act
4. The Charter has the full commitment of Telford & Wrekin Council, the Local Councils of Telford & Wrekin and the Association of Local Councils (ALC). Together they will engage in regular liaison about issues of common interest.
5. The Charter will be monitored and evaluated, through the Parish Charter Monitoring Group, 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. The use of the parish reporting system will be promoted and encouraged.

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Glossary of Terms

TWC	Telford & Wrekin Council
ALC	Association of Local Councils
PTG	Parish & Town Council Group
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. This includes;

- 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 is 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 consultation library and annual community engagement programme published on www.telford.gov.uk/yourviewsmatter – so that Local Councils can link to any activity.

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 the Chair (or nominated representatives) and Clerks to attend with Telford & Wrekin Councillors to discuss particular issues of common interest. 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/email 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 / Telford and Wrekin Association of Local Councils, Parish and Town Council Group 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 & Neighbourhood 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 a 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. This specific area, will also take into consideration future changes brought about from the Localism Act

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

Details of the roles and the relationship between the Parish Forum, Parish & Town Council Group, Telford & Wrekin Council and Local Councils is shown in Appendix 4.

Telford & Wrekin Council will provide a single point of contact service for parish clerks and members and 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 recognises its duty under the Equality Act 2012 and is committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination in all its forms. Equality and fairness are at the heart of all that it does and believes in, and it will work to ensure that it promotes equality of opportunity, foster good relations within, and between, the Borough's diverse communities, and work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

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, Parish & Town Council Group and the Parish Charter Monitoring Group. The document will be reviewed regularly. 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. If 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 they are 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, Parish & Town Council Group 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 recognise their duty under the Equality Act 2010 and are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination in all its forms. Equality and fairness are at the heart of all that it does and believes in, and it will work to ensure that it promotes equality of opportunity, foster good relations within, and between, the Borough's diverse communities, and work towards the elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

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, Parish & Town Council Group and the Charter Monitoring Group. The document will reviewed regularly. 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.”

This document was approved by the Managing Director, Leader of the Council and Chair of each Local Parish and Town Council and was updated following a review in March 2012.

Appendix 1

Issues that Telford & Wrekin 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 / Local Development Framework. These proposals and applications are 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> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgetary matters • Re-organisation / staffing

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, with the relevant officer:

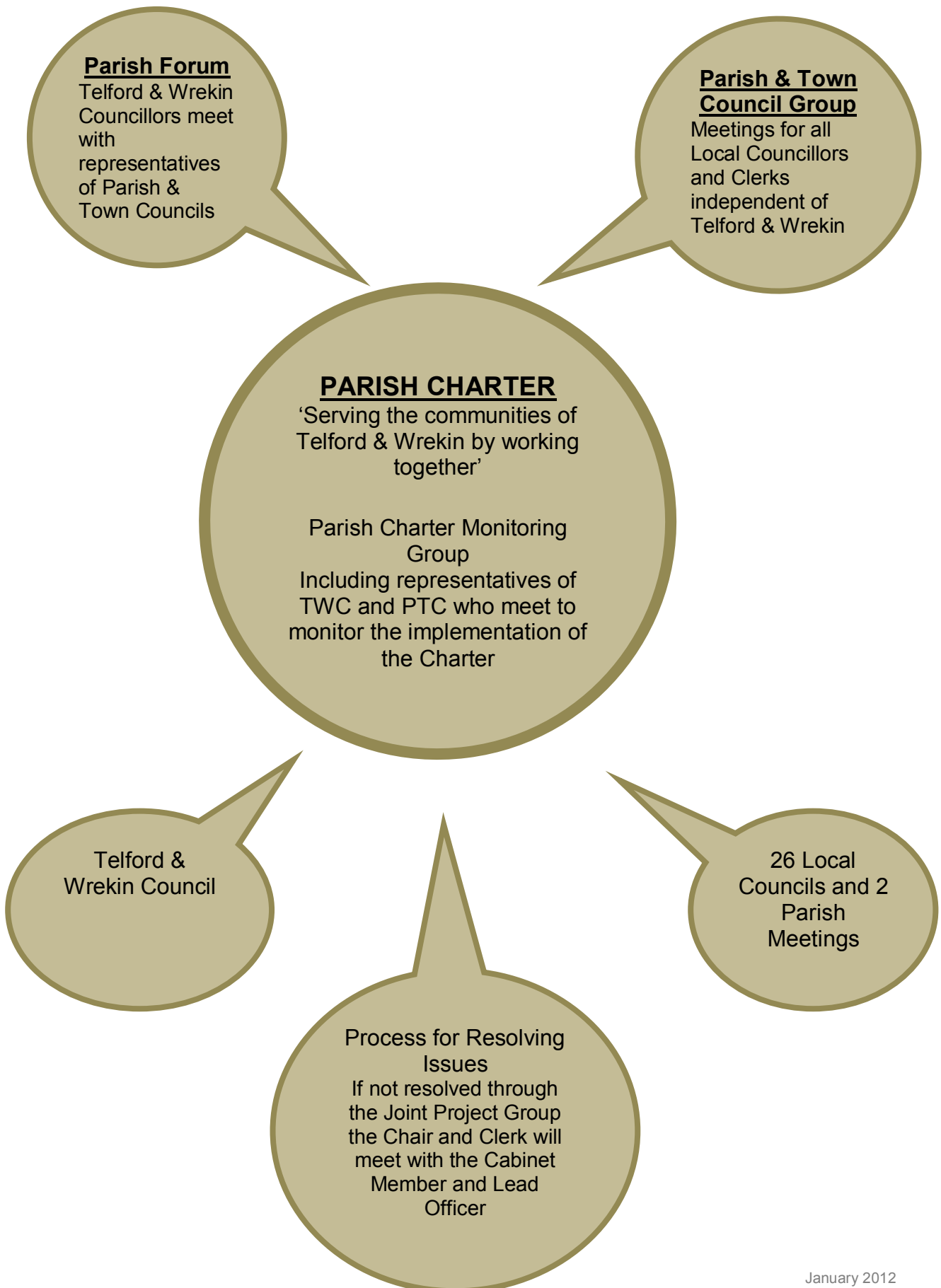
Functions	Who to contact
Human Resources	John Harris
IT	Kirsty King
Legal Services	Jonathan Eatough
Salaries / payroll	Julie Pugh

Appendix 3

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

Some of the functions	Who to contact
Recycling provisions	Dave Hanley
Some road safety measures	Dave Hanley
Minor repairs / erection of signs, litter picking	Dave Hanley
Information access point provision	Andrew Meredith
Grass cutting	Dave Hanley

Appendix 4



Appendix 5

Co-operative Values

Being a Co-operative Council is about us working together with our residents, partners and local organisations to collectively deliver the best we can for Telford and Wrekin. We believe that how we do things is just as important as what we do. That is why we have adopted Co-operative Values.

These Values were developed by the Co-operative Commission and are based on what residents and partners including representatives from Parish Councils told the Commission about the sort of council and borough they would like to see in Telford and Wrekin. We have listened to the Commission and are committed to putting Co-operative Values at the heart of our organisation.

Our aim is for our actions to speak louder than our words.

Openness and Honesty

- We will - be open and honest in the way we work and make decisions and communicate in a clear, simple and timely way
- We would like everyone - to take action and responsibility for themselves and their community to the best of their abilities

Ownership

- We will - be accountable for our own actions and empower people with the skills to help themselves
- We would like everyone - to take action and responsibility for themselves and their community to the best of their abilities

Fairness and Respect

- We will - respond to people's needs in a fair and consistent way
- We will and would like everyone - to respect and care for themselves and others, value the different ideas and skills that people bring and treat each other as equals

Involvement

- We will - work together with the community, involve people in decisions that affect their lives and be prepared to listen and take on new ideas
- We would like everyone - to work with and support others, get involved and share their views to help us develop the way we do things