

## **Cross Parish Charter – Severn Parishes Alliance (SPA)**

This charter has been developed by a cross-council working group to set out a framework for better partnership working. The intention for the charter is that it is a voluntary framework that will help shape how FoDDC ( Forest of Dean District Council) & TBC (Tewkesbury Borough Council) councils can work together in partnership to support better service delivery and outcomes, and to work together to ensure thriving local democracy across the county.

This charter is not designed to replace or override existing frameworks, such as codes of conduct or councils' individual ways of working, but to enhance them, with a particular focus on cross-council working and recognising the role of local councils in supporting a thriving local democracy.

### **Strategic aims for the charter**

These aims represent our shared long-term goals as signatories to the charter. The charter's performance will be measured against these aims over time.

#### **1. Stronger partnership working between FoDDC & TBC councils.**

Taking a cooperative, collaborative and collective approach when working together for the wellbeing of our diverse communities, improving service delivery and supporting the needs of our residents.

Success looks like:

- Councils share best practice with each other, consistently working to improve how services are delivered and experienced by residents.
- Councils can identify opportunities where there is value in working collaboratively in partnership to deliver better outcomes for residents and communities.
- Councils are breaking down barriers to better partnership working.

#### **2. Enhancing local democracy.**

Working to empower resident and community participation in local democracy at all levels, recognizing that local democracy goes wider than the election cycle.

Success looks like:

- Councils use the tools and resources at their disposal to advocate for their communities and residents.
- Councils can identify barriers to resident and community participation in local democratic processes and take steps to break down those barriers.
- Councils can identify and build on opportunities to engage with their communities, particularly with underrepresented groups.

### **Our shared principles**

Our shared principles are the values that underpin how we aim to meet the charter's commitments and achieve the charter's strategic aims. These principles guide how we

implement and integrate the charter, how we work together and how we treat each other as partners.

### **Mutual respect**

- We recognise and acknowledge what unites us – representing and delivering for our communities and residents.
- We treat each other with respect, civility, and dignity, abiding by our respective codes of conduct.
- We understand that different types of council operate differently – we respect our differences and act on good faith.

### **Relationship building**

- We foster constructive and collaborative relationships and connections between councils, councillors, clerks, officers, partners, and communities.
- We remove barriers to building effective relationships.

### **Transparency and accountability**

- We share information and communicate transparently.
- We are transparent with processes and how councils make decisions.
- We signpost appropriately.

## **Our shared commitments**

These are our shared commitments that will help to achieve our strategic aims: stronger partnership working and enhance local democracy. The commitments are purposely kept at a high-level to enable each council to apply them to their own priorities and ways of working, providing a framework for councils to shape how they work together.

### **Communication**

Councils will:

- Enhance how we listen and respond to one another. Availability and accessibility will be central to how we interact.
- Communicate with respect and civility, maintaining an open dialogue.
- Communicate openly and transparently, explaining processes and decision-making.

### **Consultation and engagement**

Councils will:

- Engage with one another at the earliest opportunity, recognizing the diverse perspectives and challenges faced by various stakeholders and communities.
- Ensure that consultation and engagement processes are as accessible as possible.
- Actively follow-up on consultations and feedback in an appropriate manner.

## **Resources**

Councils will:

- Share relevant and appropriate information to empower each other to best support our residents and communities.
- Optimise access and signposting to resources and practical support.
- Identify opportunities where resources and support can be effectively shared between councils to improve outcomes for residents.

## **Local democracy**

Councils will:

- Empower our residents and communities to participate in local democracy, including young people and underrepresented groups.
- Put residents and communities at the heart of what we do.
- Respect the democratic mandate of all councillors.

## **Implementation**

All FoDDC & TBC councils will be invited to be a signatory of the charter. The intention is that this charter remains a 'living' document, with the charter being the beginning and not the end of this work to improve partnership working.

Once the charter has been agreed by FoDDC & TBC councils, each council will be responsible for their own implementation of the charter's principles and commitments.