



SEDGEMOOR CHARTER

Sedgemoor District Council recognises the vital role that Town and Parish Councils and parish meetings play in working with it to improve the local quality of life for the communities we serve.

This charter aims to establish effective collaborative working between Sedgemoor District Council and Town and Parish Councils in the District, with particular attention on improving consultation and communication about policies and decisions that may affect communities.

The Charter also offers Town and Parish Councils the opportunity, if they wish, to have a greater involvement in the provision of services for local people.

Sedgemoor
IN SOMERSET

Communication and Consultation

The District Council and the local councils believe that it is important for District Councillors and officers to maintain a close relationship with local councils and their wards including attendance at cluster meetings and Town/Parish council meetings, where possible.

Consultation will be built into the process of developing policies and services, and will be carried out at the earliest opportunity so that there is the best prospect of improving the proposals and allowing sufficient time to gather views.

Consultation documents will be as simple and concise as possible. They will provide an Executive Summary of no more than two pages outlining the main proposals, those who may be affected and setting out the questions being asked and the timescale for responses.

Documents will be made widely available, using electronic means as far as possible. If requested, documents will be provided in other forms.

The minimum time for responses will be six weeks (excepting planning applications). However, if requested local councils who meet on a two monthly cycle will be given an eight-week period in which to respond.

The results of consultations will be made available, with an account of the views expressed and the decisions taken.

Cluster meetings will be utilised as a forum to discuss proposals and enable partner agencies to provide information and seek views on their initiatives. They will also be utilised by Town/Parish Councils to raise issues that concern them.

Planning Framework

Consultation on the new style development plans and how planning applications may in future be dealt with is set out in the Statement of Community Involvement. This document sets out how the community will be involved in planning matters, which sectors of the community will be involved, the stages at which it will take place and the methods used for involvement.

Planning Applications

The District Council will:

-  continue to notify the Town/Parish Council of all planning applications received for its area and allow 21 days for the submission of representations
-  ensure that, when the Town/Parish Council's view differs on planning grounds from the action proposed by the District Council's Group Manager responsible for Development Control under delegated authority, the matter shall be referred to the Council's Development Control Committee and the Town/Parish Council will be notified of this referral.
-  where an application will be decided by Development Control Committee undertake to ensure that, where possible, representations by Town/Parish Councils are reported
-  ensure that the Town/Parish Council can access the website for all decisions on planning applications and any conditions attached

- act on any suspected non-compliance with planning conditions and unauthorised developments reported by the Town/Parish Council and keep them informed of progress
- provide training for local Councillors (in collaboration with Somerset Association of Local Councils, where appropriate) to aid understanding of planning and material considerations with regard to planning applications.

Town/Parish Councils will be expected to:

- Respond in writing, within the agreed time-scales, if they wish to comment on a planning application. It is acknowledged that in some cases, this may require the holding of special meetings.
- specify, as fully as possible on planning grounds the reasons for an objection to, or support for, a particular planning application
- report non-compliance with planning conditions and unauthorised developments, should they choose to

Community Planning

The District Council and Town/Parish Councils will support local consultation to develop Town/Parish and Neighbourhood Plans.

The District Council and Town/Parish Councils will work together to determine those actions that can best be addressed at the Town/Parish level and those that can be tackled by Parishes within Clusters acting together and sharing resources.

Support will be given by the District Council to address issues raised through Parish Planning although the extent of this support will depend on the contribution to District-wide priorities and the level of active local support

The District Council in consultation through the Parish Clusters will identify those priorities that should be dealt with District-wide with other partners through the Sustainable Communities Strategy.

Enhancing the Powers and Influence of Town/Parish Councils

The District Council will work with Somerset Association of Local Councils to assist Councils wishing to obtain Quality Council Status.

The District Council will also consider applications for Town/Parish Councils to provide local services wherever it is practicable.

Monitoring and Review

The District Council will seek feedback on the operation of the Charter in the autumn of each year and will review the charter bi-annually to reflect feedback and any changes in local circumstances.

Signatures

We the undersigned declare our commitment to the Sedgemoor Charter and in so doing, aim to encourage the improvement of our good working practices and embrace the spirit of the agreement.

For Sedgemoor District Council

Leader of the Council

Chief Executive

For Town/Parish Council

Chairman

Clerk

Date

