



Doncaster  
Council

# Joint Charter

For the partnership between Doncaster Council and the Parish and Town Councils of Doncaster



This Joint Charter was endorsed at the Parish Councils Joint Consultative Committee meeting held 15th October 2007, and was adopted at the Doncaster Council Cabinet meeting held on 14th January 2009. The Charter has subsequently been reviewed and updated and re-endorsed by the PCJCC in April 2011 and again in November 2013. This update follows a review in November 2018 and re-endorsement in March 2019.

The revised Joint Charter has been adopted by Doncaster Council and following consultation with their Councils the PCJCC representatives of Parish, Town Councils and other affiliated groups within the Borough.

### **Chair of the Parish Councils Joint Consultative Committee**

Duncan Wright

### **Vice – Chair of the Parish Councils Joint Consultative Committee**

Steve Cox

### **On Behalf of Doncaster Council**

Chris McGuinness  
Cabinet Portfolio Holder Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment

## Introduction

1. The Parish and Town Councils of Doncaster and the Doncaster Council have agreed to publish a Joint Charter, which sets out how they aim to work together for the benefit of local people. This Charter is the result of discussions locally to establish a new way of working and to confirm existing good practice.
2. Doncaster Council acknowledges that Parish and Town Councils are the grass-roots level of local government. By working with them, Doncaster Council aims to act in partnership with local communities, while balancing the needs of the wider community.
3. In their role as democratically accountable bodies, Parish and Town Councils offer a means of shaping the decisions that affect their communities. They offer a means of decentralising the provision of certain services and of revitalising local communities. In turn, the Parish or Town Councils recognise the strategic role of Doncaster Council and the equitable distribution of services which it has to achieve.
4. This Charter reflects the increasing importance attached by Central Government to partnership working and the development of Quality status for Parish and Town Councils. Doncaster Council will positively encourage those Parish and Town Councils that wish to strive for Quality Status and/or the General Power of Competence and those communities that wish to create Parish and Town Councils.
5. The Charter is a flexible and an adaptable document, so as to keep pace with changing circumstances and arrangements for local government. The minimum of an annual meeting of the charter review group will achieve this. Any concerns regarding the implementation of the document will be directed to the relevant Cabinet Portfolio Holder to ensure the issues are raised at the meetings of the Charter Working Group. Any proposed amendments to this Joint Charter will have to be agreed by the Parish Councils Joint Consultative Committee and Doncaster Council Cabinet.



## All Parish and Town Councils

### Sustainability

6. Doncaster Council will work in partnership with all Parish and Town Councils in its area to promote sustainable social, economic and environmental development for the benefit of local communities, in accordance with agreed policies.

### Community strategies

7. Doncaster Council will involve Parish and Town Councils in the processes of preparing and implementing the Strategic Borough Plan to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area, and the role, which Parish and Town Councils should take. Doncaster Council will consult and involve Parish and Town Councils accordingly about the content and direction of the Strategic Borough Plan as it affects the local communities they represent.

### Local governance

8. Doncaster Council will hold liaison meetings with representatives of all Parish and Town Councils that wish to take part. This is currently achieved via the Parish Council Joint Consultative Committee (PCJCC), and any working group assigned by this Committee. The meetings of the PCJCC are to be held three times a year.
9. Parish and Town Councils will invite representatives (members and/or officers) of Doncaster Council to meetings where deemed appropriate. Doncaster Council Members will be encouraged to take an active involvement in Parish and Town Council Matters.
10. Doncaster Council will administer the holding of Parish and Town Council elections. The respective authorities will work together to limit the costs of holding such elections.
11. Where a Parish or Town Council (or Group of Parish and Town Councils) has prepared an agreed Neighbourhood Plan consistent with the requirements of the Localism Act, Doncaster Council will honour its proposals and priorities. Doncaster Council will work to strengthen the links between these Parish and Town Councils and the local strategic partnership (Team Doncaster Partnership) in order to improve the delivery of local priorities.

### Consultation

12. Doncaster Council will aim, where appropriate, to give Parish and Town Councils in a timely manner, the opportunity to comment before making a decision, which affects the local community. In furtherance of this, Doncaster Council will circulate, on request, a link to its public reports of committees and subcommittees to parish clerks.
13. To help achieve the objectives laid down in this Charter, liaison and consultation (both formal and informal) will be further developed at Parish and Town Council level through regular meetings or specific service consultative groups and, at officer level, individually or through working parties and groups.
14. Parish and Town Councils will send copies of their agendas and papers to Doncaster Council and to Councillors for their area upon request.

15. Doncaster Council supports the Parish and Town Council liaison function; an officer will be nominated from Doncaster Council's Strategy and Performance Unit<sup>1</sup> to act as the responsible officer for this duty.

## Information

16. When Doncaster Council consults Parish and Town Councils, it will provide them with sufficient information to enable them to reach an informed view on the matter, and give them adequate time to respond in accordance with the statutory or designated requirements where applicable.
17. Doncaster Council will communicate with Parish and Town Councils and others in the community as appropriate, for example notification of programmed highway maintenance.
18. Doncaster Council and Parish and Town Councils are committed to Customer Care, and excellence in Customer Service, all parties will respond to enquiries prompt and professionally. In regards to responding to correspondence received, both parties will send a full substantive reply or an acknowledgement within ten working days. If an acknowledgment is sent, the full substantive reply will be sent within 20 working days, or a time frame agreed by all parties. In the unlikely event that correspondence is not responded to, and all other routes have been exhausted an appeal can be presented to the nominated officer from Doncaster Council's Strategy and Performance Unit<sup>2</sup> and will be escalated appropriately.
19. Doncaster Council, where appropriate, in discussion with the Yorkshire Local Councils Association (YCLA), is committed to providing the necessary training to its Elected Members and Officers about the roles and functions of Parish and Town Councils.

## Standards

20. Both Doncaster Council and the Parish and Town Councils in the Borough have adopted a code of conduct, based on either the Doncaster Code or the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Code. Parish and Town Councils will work with Doncaster Council's Monitoring Officer to promote and maintain compliance with their adopted Code'.
21. When an alleged breach of the Code is reported, members of Doncaster Council and Parish and Town Councils in the Borough will comply with the procedure set out for dealing with alleged breaches of the Code.

## Delegating responsibility for service provision

22. If a Parish or Town Council (or group of Parish and Town Councils) wishes to take on sole or shared responsibility for Service Delivery (outside of the Community Right to Challenge – see 34), Doncaster Council will consider this, and where it is considered as best value (taking account of cost, quality, local preferences and practicability), approve and assist with the change in arrangements. Where it is not best value or practicable Doncaster Council will, in consultation with the individual or group of Parish or Town Councils, explore alternative solutions to encourage more local-level input into service delivery.
23. Doncaster Council is committed to the principle of enabling localised partnership working arrangements with Parish and Town councils, for example if they wish to make financial contributions or other provisions in order to improve the frequency or quality of Doncaster Council services in a local area e.g. increasing the frequency of grass-cutting of public amenity

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<sup>1</sup> If the team or officer changes the PCJCC meeting will be informed.

<sup>2</sup> If the team or officer changes the PCJCC meeting will be informed.

spaces. To ensure there is a clear added-value that Doncaster Council will establish and publicise details of what constitutes the baseline service-standard and will provide transparent and consistent costs for enhancements and additions.

24. Any local arrangement will normally involve a service-level agreement including provision for Doncaster Council to pay the Parish or Town council to deliver the service. Such agreements will be subject to periodic review based on defined criteria and a termination clause if the service levels or criteria are not achieved. Examples of what can be considered are:
  - dedicated staff to be based solely in a town or parish area
  - the transfer of assets from Doncaster Council to local control
  - arrangements to increase the frequency of service delivery to suit local needs
25. Local Councils wishing to make new arrangements with Doncaster Council should initially contact “Head of Streetscene and Highways Operations” to discuss.
26. Subject to agreement with the Doncaster Council a Parish or Town council may wish to undertake service enhancement itself rather than contract with the Doncaster Council.

#### Financial arrangements

27. Doncaster Council has previously set out its financial arrangements for Parish and Town Councils in accordance with its own and government best practice guidance, including that from central government and other recognised bodies on avoiding double taxation. -
28. The return of the Parish Precept information to Financial Services should be undertaken in a timely manner as specified by the Council's Section 151 officer.
29. Where a Parish or Town Council, by agreement with Doncaster Council, take on the provision of services in its area (part or full service transfer), the level of funding to support the transfer will be agreed with Doncaster Council.

#### Local community life

30. In consultation with Parish and Town Councils, Doncaster Council, in conjunction with other agencies, will promote local community life through a wide range of initiatives, for example practical support for projects and funding initiatives and applications.

#### Practical support

31. Doncaster Council will, where practical, offer Parish and Town Councils access to their own support services, to enable them to take advantage of facilities such as printing, purchasing, IT support, etc. at a mutually agreed price. In particular, assistance will be offered in identifying and helping to meet the training needs of Parish and Town Councils.





## The Localism Act 2011

32. Community Right to Bid – was introduced as part of the 2011 Localism Act. It allows “communities” (a community forum) and Parish Councils a fairer chance to prepare (essentially to secure funding) and bid to buy facilities or buildings that are important to them. Examples are a pub, village shop, allotment, library, community centre and so on. If a Parish or Town Council considers that a particular asset is or would be valuable to the community (normally but not exclusively within its own area) it can “nominate” the asset to Doncaster Council with a request to get it listed. Doncaster Council can refuse to list the asset but if they do they must explain their reasons to the Parish or Town Council. There is no right of appeal for Parish and Town Councils but owners do have the right of appeal against the asset being listed. Once listed, if the asset comes up for sale, the owner must tell Doncaster Council who will impose a moratorium on the sale. There is a 6 week moratorium to allow the Parish or Town Council to express an interest, if they do, then the moratorium period is extended to 6 months to allow the Parish or Town Council to prepare a bid, however, once all bids are in, the owner can sell the asset to the bidder of their choice.
33. Community Asset Transfer - Community Asset Transfer is not the same as Community Right to Bid. Community Asset Transfer deals with an asset that is already in public ownership and allows for transfer of that asset to communities (Parish or Town Councils) at less than its market value if this can be agreed between those participating. Doncaster Council agrees to enter into this voluntary process with all Parish and Town Councils in the Borough.
34. Community Right to Challenge – came into force 27th June 2012. This community right gives Parish and Town Councils, either singly or in a group, the opportunity to “express an interest” in running a service currently provided by Doncaster Council. Expressions of interest that comply with the requirements set out in the Act will trigger a procurement exercise conducted by Doncaster Council in compliance with the Act and its own procurement procedures. Doncaster Council undertakes to communicate the outcome of the procurement exercise to involved Parish and Town Councils and explain the reasons for any unsuccessful challenge.

