

Statement of Reasonable Expectations

Introduction

This statement sets out the reasonable expectations for collaboration between parish and town councils and Dorset Council. It aims to foster better working relationships, enhance democratic representation, and ensure effective service delivery for the benefit of local communities.

1. Mutual Respect and Recognition

- Dorset Council recognises parish and town councils as statutory, democratically elected bodies with legislated roles and responsibilities, the power of taxation and a deep understanding of local issues.
- Parish and town councils respect Dorset Council's role as the Principal Authority in strategic planning and delivery of a range of statutory services across its jurisdiction.
- Both parties commit to a spirit of cooperation, valuing each other's contributions and responsibilities, with a view to ensuring an effective and appropriate response to the differing needs and priorities of local places and communities.

2. Communication and Engagement

- Dorset Council will provide timely and relevant updates on policies, projects, and decisions affecting local communities, and will consult with PTCs well before making decisions or policy changes that impact their role and operations or the wellbeing of their place and community
- Parish and town councils will share local insights and concerns to inform Dorset Council's decision-making, and will consult....
- Regular forums or liaison meetings will be established to facilitate open dialogue and exchange of views.
- Clear points of contact will be maintained to ensure smooth communication.
- Consultation periods will allow sufficient time for meaningful input, and each party undertakes to give full consideration to the other's views and insights before making decisions, to seek clarification where necessary, and provide meaningful feedback.

4. Support and Capacity Building

- Dorset Council will offer encouragement, guidance and training opportunities to strengthen the capabilities of parish and town councils, with a view to expanding their role in the system of local governance.
- Resources, toolkits, and best practice examples will be shared between the parties to support effective local governance.
- Parish and town councils will proactively seek opportunities to upskill and enhance their role in service delivery, community leadership and engagement.
- Parish and town councils will develop financial and strategic plans for the short, medium, and longer term to set out their ambitions for the community around them and enhance their role in place management.
- Development of personnel in parish and town councils, particularly those in senior roles like town clerks, will be encouraged to enable them to undertake broader roles and responsibilities effectively.

5. Collaborative Working

- Wherever appropriate, Dorset Council and parish and town councils will explore opportunities for joint initiatives and shared services.
- Partnership working will be encouraged to improve local service delivery and community outcomes.
- A problem-solving approach will be adopted to address challenges collectively.
- Dorset Council will identify and pursue opportunities to devolve assets and certain services to parish and town councils that are keen to take them on.
- Parish and Town Councils will assist Dorset Council to identify priority opportunities and collaborate with each other to facilitate widespread transfers of categories of assets and services.
- Dorset Council will work constructively with parish and town councils to facilitate changes through Community Governance Reviews that strengthen democratic representation.
- Greater collaboration between neighbouring parish and town councils will be encouraged to ensure best value asset management and service delivery.

6. Transparency and Accountability

- Decisions and actions will be made transparently, with clear explanations provided for major policy changes or service alterations.
- Parish and town councils will uphold transparency in their own operations, ensuring local communities are informed and engaged.
- Mechanisms for feedback and review will be in place to assess the effectiveness of collaboration and address any issues constructively.

Conclusion

This statement represents a shared commitment to strengthening democratic representation and delivering better outcomes for Dorset's communities. By fostering mutual trust, engagement, and cooperation, parish and town councils and Dorset Council can work together effectively to serve the needs of residents.

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