

Committee: **Executive Committee**

Date of meeting: **13th November 2019**

Report Subject: **Charter of Common Agreement between the Community and Town Councils and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader / Executive Member Corporate Services**

Report Submitted by: **Bernadette Elias, Head of Governance & Partnerships and David Arnold, Policy Officer**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
	15.10.19	30.10.19				13.11.19		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to present the new Charter of Common Agreement between the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) and each of the four Community and Town Councils (CTCs) for approval.

2. Scope and Background

- 2.1 In October 2018, the Welsh Government published an [Independent Review on CTCs in Wales](#). Amongst its recommendations was for working relationships between CTCs and county borough councils to be strengthened further, as well as for CTCs to play a role in improving well-being for the benefit of future generations.
- 2.2 The previous Charter of Common Agreement between BGCBC and each of the four CTCs was last reviewed before the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFGA). The Independent Review published in October 2018 therefore presented a good opportunity for the Charter to be refreshed in line with the WBFGA and to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
- 2.3 Progress towards agreeing a revised Charter of Agreement and refreshed working arrangements has been positive. Each CTC has bought in to the principle of acting in line with the WBFGA and committing seven well-being goals and its five ways of working. This provided the basis of the discussions at three workshops which were organised to progress the development of the new Charter.
- 2.4 The Charter is designed to build on existing best practice and embrace the shared principles of openness, respect, honesty and common priority of putting citizens at the centre. It sets out how BGCBC and each CTC aim to

work together towards our collective long-term goals in a collaborative, preventative and integrated way, particularly in relation to the WBFGA as well as:-

- Ethics
- Local governance and information
- Consultation
- Land use planning
- Budget setting
- Practical support
- Monitoring and reviewing the Charter

2.5 The refreshed Charter of Common Agreement attached at Appendix A has now been approved by all four CTCs and endorsed by the Quarterly Liaison Committee (QLC) at its meeting in September 2019.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 1) Executive is invited to approve the new Charter of Common Agreement between BGCBC and the four CTCs attached at Appendix A, which was approved by the CTCs and endorsed by QLC members in September 2019.

3.2 2) Executive is invited to provide specific further comments prior to the approval of the new Charter of Common Agreement

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

4.1 The Charter of Common Agreement aligns to the Council's Well-being objectives and the Corporate Plan and also supports delivery of the Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

There is a reputational risk for the Council if the Charter of Common Agreement is not approved, as well as a risk of the Council not maximising opportunities to work with CTCs effectively through an agreed Charter.

5.3 ***Legal***

In 2007 the Welsh Government published a Local Government Policy Statement "A Shared Responsibility" which set out the expectations of Local Authorities and the support that the Welsh Government aimed to provide. It focused on:

- ensuring that public services are centred on the needs and experiences of citizens;
- encouraging specialisation and economies of scale to be achieved through cross boundary collaboration; and

- encouraging integration and responsiveness to the diverse needs of citizens to be achieved through cross sector collaboration.

In response to this policy statement, a joint guidance document “A Shared Community - Relationship Building and Charters for Unitary Authorities and Community and Town Councils” was released in 2008 by the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), One Voice Wales and the Welsh Government.

The focal point of the guidance is the emphasis on establishing formal relationships between county borough councils and CTCs by agreeing a Charter of Common Agreement.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

The relationship management and liaison between the Council and each of the four CTCs has moved under the remit of the Head of Governance and Partnerships. The Policy Team now lead on the liaison arrangements with CTCs.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

To support the implementation of the new Charter, a CTC Clerks Forum was established. This Forum enables CTC clerks to meet regularly to share issues and best practice, as well as raise matters for consideration in advance of QLC meetings.

Arrangements have been strengthened to ensure an appropriate strategic agenda for the QLC meetings, whilst additional support for CTCs such as a practical briefing session on the My Services BGCBC app is being arranged.

Positive feedback from the CTCs has been received regarding the new working arrangements and the collaborative way in which the new Charter was developed.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Maintaining good, collaborative working relationships between BGCBC and the CTCs in line with the WBFGA will increase accountability amongst partners and improve outcomes for the public by protecting and enhancing the social, economic and environmental well-being of Blaenau Gwent in ways that are sustainable for current and future generations.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The revised Charter of Common Agreement has been developed through a period of consultation and engagement with the CTCs, ensuring Clerks and CTC members’ participation in the process.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

Putting robust collaborative arrangements in place through the Charter will enable all partners to work together to balance short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to meet long-term objectives. The monitoring and

review procedures built into the revised Charter will enable partners to ensure that the joint commitments remain appropriate and relevant in the long-term.

6.5 Preventative focus

The preventative nature of the joint commitments within the new Charter is expected to improve working relationships amongst all partners.

6.6 Collaboration / partnership working

BGCBC together with Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council, Brynmawr Town Council, Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council, Tredegar Town Council, as well as any newly established CTC(s) since the inception of this revised Charter, are all partners committing to work together collaboratively within the Charter of Common Agreement.

6.7 Integration(across service areas)

The commitments set out in the revised Charter foster and encourage a coordinated, integrated and collaborative approach across the Council and each of the CTCs.

6.8 EqIA(screening and identifying if full impact assessment is needed)

An EqIA screening exercise been undertaken, with no adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics identified.

7. Monitoring Arrangements

As set out in the Charter of Common Agreement, a review will be undertaken jointly by all partners (BGCBC and the CTCs) once during each Council term, or more often as appropriate if deemed necessary. The partners will conduct this review and develop an annual progress report against the commitments within the Charter and presented to an appropriate QLC meeting.

Background Documents /Electronic Links

- **Appendix A – 2019 Charter of Common Agreement between the Community and Town Councils and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**
- [Independent Review Panel on Community and Town Councils in Wales Final Report \(October 2018\)](#)