



Buckinghamshire Council's Town & Parish Charter

Our commitment to working with
all local councils in Buckinghamshire

Introduction

This commitment is founded on our respect for all councils in Buckinghamshire as independent, democratically accountable bodies and has one simple aim - to articulate and demonstrate our commitment to work together to serve the people of Buckinghamshire. We have a common purpose to improve the economic, environmental, health and social wellbeing of Buckinghamshire and its residents, businesses and visitors. To achieve this, Buckinghamshire Council will work together with town and parish councils to:

- promote the best interests of the communities we serve,
- provide quality, value for money public services and,
- promote opportunities for greater public participation and involvement in public life.

Buckinghamshire Council will...

- Recognise that parish and town councils are independent democratically elected bodies who work within their own financial constraints and represent communities at a truly local level.
- Understand that parish and town councils are a key connection between the unitary council and their community who can help improve services and foster greater community empowerment, especially through devolution and community boards.
- Develop an action plan that will embed the charter and its aims across the council and to ensure that its delivery is monitored and any arising issues addressed.



To Enable Effective Communication Buckinghamshire Council will...

- Appoint a cabinet member as the council's lead for relationships with parish and town councils and the champion of local councils.
- Establish a senior role within the Policy and Partnerships team to lead on strategic relationships with parish and town councils and local associations.
- Provide a single priority telephone number and email for parish and town councils and a list of key officer contacts (updated every 6 months) to use when contacting Buckinghamshire Council.
- Provide a list of all Buckinghamshire Councillors and their contact details on the Buckinghamshire Council website.
- Ensure a wide range of effective channels are in place to enable two-way communication, spanning all levels of the organisation, including focus groups and local meetings to address issues around service delivery where necessary.
- Work in partnership to explore further opportunities for devolution where this will benefit local communities, in accordance with Buckinghamshire Council policies*.
- Provide parish councils with advance notice/schedule of consultations and aim to allow at least 6 weeks for responses wherever possible.
- Work towards developing a consistent approach to producing summary reports for lengthy consultations and briefings on complex issues, which include a focus on implications for parish councils.

**It is recognised that not all parish and town councils have the resources or the desire to take on additional services and assets and there is no compulsion or expectation to do so.*



To Provide Effective Services and Collaboration Buckinghamshire Council will...

- Encourage Buckinghamshire ward councillors to attend parish and town council meetings.
- Ensure there are opportunities to comment on proposed changes to services that will significantly impact parish and town councils.
- Provide early communication and support in all financial transactions with parish and town councils including precept payments and invoices for the administration of elections, polls and referendums.
- Work with BMKALC to provide training, support and resources to assist parish and town councils including specific training or briefing sessions e.g. standards, planning, local neighbourhood plans and local emergency plans.
- Provide specifications for relevant services along with procedures for monitoring and reporting any developing service issues.
- Improve and agree response times for key services to respond to information requests from parish and town councils.
- Support parish and town councils to address local needs through the provision of advice and signposting.

To enable Parish and Town Councils to contribute to the planning process Buckinghamshire Council will...

- Adopt a 'Statement of Community Involvement' regarding consultation with parish and town councils on planning issues.
- Equip parish and town councils with the knowledge and skills to enable them to share the views of the communities they represent.
- Enable parish and town councils to set policies for their own local areas by preparing Neighbourhood Plans.
- Ensure parish and town councils have the right to request a 'call in' of an application to the committee or request a Buckinghamshire Councillor do that for them and are given a dedicated speaking slot where they have made representation.
- Consult parish and town councils when producing the Buckinghamshire Local Plan that will replace the current adopted local plans on completion, and in addition to the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.

