

North Yorkshire Council

Executive

18 July 2023

CONSIDER THE ADOPTION OF THE PARISH CHARTER

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive for Localities

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Executive of the outcome of consultation on the draft Parish Charter and to seek approval for the adoption of the Charter.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This piece of work was originally included as part of the Locality workstream within the Local Government Reorganisation programme. The work has been co-ordinated and delivered by the North Yorkshire Council (NYC) Transformation service and has been undertaken collaboratively with Council officers and a working group of parish representatives. The parish representatives included councillors, clerks and chairs of parish councils from across the geography of North Yorkshire, with representation from the Yorkshire Local Councils Association (YLCA) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC). The Council is grateful to have benefitted from the expertise and commitment of all those individuals involved in the co-production of the Parish Charter, as well as the practical and administrative support provided by the YLCA.
- 2.2 A report to the Executive on 10 January 2023 set out details of the work which had been undertaken to develop a draft Parish Charter. The Charter would define the relationship and understanding between North Yorkshire Council and the parish sector and set out how the parish sector and the new Council will work together in the future. The Executive approved proposals to carry out a 12-week consultation with the parish sector on the draft Parish Charter.
- 2.3 Prior to this the draft Charter had been considered by relevant North Yorkshire Council service areas to avoid duplication and ensure services were informed of, and approved, the contents. The 12-week consultation with parishes has now concluded and, where appropriate, the Charter has been updated to reflect the responses.
- 2.4 The Parish Charter attached at **Appendix A** to this report is the culmination of this work and the joint officer/parish sector representative working group is now presenting the revised Charter for adoption by North Yorkshire Council.

3.0 ISSUES

- 3.1 During the process of developing the Charter, it was recognised that there would be much work still to do following local government reorganisation in North Yorkshire and that there would be a need for an ongoing programme of transformation beyond the new Council's start date in April 2023.
- 3.2 It became clear that under these circumstances, in some areas it would not be possible to finalise detailed working arrangements for incorporation into the Charter, as these:

- would still need to be finalised in some areas as work on the formation of the new Council continues; and
- will be transformed over time as the new Council develops.

3.3 It was therefore proposed that the development of the Charter be a staged process, with ongoing consultation and learning from experiences during the first months of operation of the new Council being incorporated in the document, as appropriate and through a regular review, monitoring and update process.

3.4 As the first stage in this process, a draft Charter was developed to represent a framework through which the new North Yorkshire Council and the parish sector would work together for the benefit of our shared local communities. It also set out further stages in the process by which a more detailed Charter will be agreed, reviewed and updated on a continuing basis.

3.5 The draft Charter was then circulated for wider consultation across all the parish sector in North Yorkshire in accordance with the communication plan considered and agreed by the Executive at their meeting held on [10 January 2023](#) and outlined at section 4.0 of this report. The consultation process has now concluded, and this report outlines the results of the consultation and asks the Executive to approve the amended Charter which is attached at **Appendix A**.

4.0 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN AND RESPONSES

4.1 Consultation with the parish sector was key to the development of the Charter and was undertaken in a number of ways. Parishes were asked to give one response per parish via a short questionnaire focussing on sections of the charter. Parishes were also asked for their views on key areas to develop more detailed working relationships. Consultation questions were asked via an online Snap Survey. Drop-in meetings for parishes were held in each district/borough council area during the consultation period attended by Council officers and volunteer local Councillors who had been involved in the development of the draft Charter through the YLCA.

4.2 City, town and parish councils and parish meetings were sent the following (all of which are included at **Appendix C**):

- Letter setting out agreed approach, details of drop-in meetings, timeline for consultation and request for formal response on the draft Parish Charter on behalf of their parish
- Copy of the proposed draft Parish Charter
- Copy of consultation questions
- Link to consultation questions via the online Snap Survey

4.3 All consultation responses have been collated into the Parish Charter Consultation Outcome Report, which is attached at **Appendix B**. There were 108 responses to the online survey. When asked would your city, town, parish council or parish meeting choose to formally adopt (endorse) a final version of the charter, assuming it was based on the principles and details in the draft Charter? 83% of respondents answered yes and 17 % answered no.

4.4 **Appendix C** contains copies of the information sent out to parishes (as listed at paragraph 4.2) including the initial draft Parish Charter document and the consultation responses in full.

4.5 The feedback from the consultation has been analysed and reviewed collaboratively by the joint working group and appropriate amendments made.

4.6 The Council is grateful to all those who took the time to provide responses to the consultation.

4.7 Highlighted issues raised through the consultation and responses are as follows:

Issue	Response
Should better reflect small parish meetings and larger town/city councils	More detail as to the complexity of parish arrangements and relationships added at appendix 1 of the Parish Charter
Needs more information about process for engagement/consultation regarding planning (including larger/strategic sites)	To be developed through the Parish Charter Review Group as the new unitary Council transforms
Clarification sought on some issues within the draft charter for example use and provision of ICT equipment and the management of local assets/impact of double devolution	Where misunderstandings may have arisen, the text of the draft charter has been amended to provide clarity
Add information about clustering and clarify formal/informal joint arrangements	More detail included at appendix 1
More information and clarity sought around the working arrangements between the new Area Committees and proposed Community Networks (now Community Partnerships)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some additional wording has been provided and it is noted that this will develop in more detail through the work of the Council's Locality Team • Also included reference to the understanding that, North Yorkshire Council recognises the need for strong and successful partnership working with the parish sector as a specific group alongside working with the emerging Community Partnerships
Expand the key contacts area of the draft Charter to provide more links to information relevant to the parish sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This area (appendix 3 of the Parish Charter) has been expanded and updated • It is noted that this could develop further in future
<p>Concerns about the membership and remit of the North Yorkshire Parishes' Joint Liaison Group</p> <p>Concerns about the membership and remit of the North Yorkshire Parishes' Joint Liaison Group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarified that the group is not the only liaison between NYC and the parish sector and that its remit is to review the Charter not to deal with all parish sector communications/concerns generally • Re-named Parish Charter Review Group • Parish liaison will take place in other areas i.e. through NYC's emerging Locality structure and Area Constituency Committees where appropriate • Further discussion has taken place around the membership of the review group, but taking into account the amount of parish partners, it was viewed that the current proposed membership co-ordinated through Yorkshire Local Councils Associations

	<p>(YLCA) is a practical way of ensuring geographical representation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a commitment from the YLCA representatives currently nominated that they are there to represent all parishes in their geography and not just the YLCA Branch • The Parish Charter Review Group will be able to monitor and alter this as time progresses
Concerns that responses from NYC are set to be given within 20 working days and as this is too long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarified that this is a maximum limit and it would be hoped that responses are provided sooner than this and in any event in a timely fashion depending on the relevant issue • The longer time for responses may be required if there was a need to undertake a site visit, for example, or where there was delay due to other practical/unavoidable reasons, and updates would be provided as required
No acknowledgement is given of the role of the National Parks	National Parks referenced in appendix 3 of the Parish Charter
General drafting points and design	Parish Charter amended as appropriate

4.8 It is recognised that there are a number of key areas that North Yorkshire Council and the parish sector will wish to develop more detailed working relationships, and these are noted in the Parish Charter at paragraph 1.6. These include, but are not limited to:

- Community partnerships
- Community Services – such as highways, street lighting, grass cutting, local assets
- Double devolution
- Financial arrangements
- Improving communication
- Locally based services and assets
- Parish sector elections and polls
- Planning
- Refining the details of the parish charter review group
- Resilience planning/emergency response e.g., flooding
- Training and advice

5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 Should the Council not adopt the Parish Charter, this could be detrimental to the future working relationship between the Council and the parish sector.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications to the Council at this time.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no legal implications to the Council at this time.

8.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The equality impact screening assessment was included with the meeting documents for the Executive meeting held on [10 January 2023](#).

9.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The climate change impact screening assessment was included with the meeting documents for the Executive meeting held on [10 January 2023](#).

10.0 DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The data protection impact screening assessment was included with the meeting documents for the Executive meeting held on [10 January 2023](#).

11.0 RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

11.1 In summary, the main risks for the development of the Parish Charter included:

- Timescales
- Managing engagement and expectations
- Duplication of work
- The impact of local government reorganisation and subsequent consolidation and transformation of services

11.2 Risks and associated mitigations have been continually monitored and updated as work has progressed. This included agreement to extend the timescales for the work to allow for a longer, more comprehensive, 12-week consultation with parishes. The co-production process working together in partnership with parishes has helped to build mutual understanding through meaningful engagement and transparency. Work has been undertaken to seek assurances regarding continuity of services and contact methods for parishes. The draft version was also shared and considered by the following LGR workstream boards and services (to avoid duplication and to ensure services are comfortable with the contents):

- Locality
- Planning
- Customer
- Corporate Governance
- Finance
- Waste, Highways, Parking and Streetscene

12.0 CONCLUSIONS

12.1 The Charter encompasses any existing arrangements and service standards as set out in the previous North Yorkshire County Council Parish Charter. It also allows for the development and inclusion of more detailed arrangements as the new Council develops and transforms over time. The Parish Charter is included at **Appendix A**.

13.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 To facilitate and optimise the working relationship between North Yorkshire Council and the parish sector.

14.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

14.1 The Executive is asked to recommend that North Yorkshire Council adopt the Parish Charter attached as Appendix A to this report.

Rachel Joyce
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7 July 2023

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Presenter of Report – Executive Member for Corporate Services, Councillor David Chance

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Parish Charter
Appendix B – Parish Charter Consultation Outcome Report
Appendix C – Parish Charter Consultation Appendices

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: Documents considered by the Executive at their meeting held on [10 January 2023](#) (item 146)

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.