

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Leader and Cabinet  
**AUTHOR:** Chief Executive

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13 April 2006

### QUALITY CHARTER WITH PARISH COUNCILS

#### Purpose

1. This report sets out the current position of the development of the Quality Charter with Parish Councils in South Cambridgeshire.

#### Effect on Corporate Objectives

2. Quality, Accessible Services	A Charter could benefit the provision of local services by both Parish Councils and the District Council.
Village Life	
Sustainability	
Partnership	The development of a Charter is being progressed in partnership with the Cambridgeshire Association of Local Councils (CALC).

#### Background

3. The 102 Parishes in South Cambs deliver a range of local services, alongside the district-wide services provided by this Council. Written agreements between some District Councils and their parishes have existed for at least a decade. Sometimes known as concordats, codes of practice, partnership agreements or charters, they set out the ways in which the two tiers of government work with each other.
4. In Cambridgeshire, CALC has been working with the District Council's to progress this agenda. A Model Charter, based on one from Cheshire, has been put forward as a suggested basis for a Charter in Cambridgeshire.

#### Considerations

5. Officers have considered a Model Charter put forward by CALC. It sets out a range of measures covering consultation processes, the provision of information, handling complaints, community planning, and delegating responsibility for service provision. The delegation provision would apply to Quality Parish Councils, who could choose to take on responsibility for some services.
6. Due in part to limited resources, a detailed analysis of the provisions within the Model Charter has not been undertaken. Indeed, it is clear that resource constraints will be a significant factor in considering these issues.
7. The Council's representative on CALC, Cllr Dr Jane Williamson, recently met with the Head of Community Services to review the best way forward. The outcome of this meeting was agreement on a different way to move forward. Instead of considering what the draft Charter document includes, which would be most likely to lead to arguments arising from the differing perspectives of the organisations, an alternative is to focus on the existing relationships between the parties.

8. The Head of Community Services has arranged to attend the next South Cambs District meeting of CALC. At this meeting it is proposed that CALC, Parish Council's representatives, and the District Council explore what they each expect of the others. Once we have clarified this mutual expectation, and what each can deliver, we may arrive at a firmer basis on which to consider the provisions within a Charter.

#### **Options**

9. The limitation of time and resources has meant that no other options have been explored.

#### **Financial Implications**

10. There is no financial implication in the course of action outlined in this report. However if the Charter includes provision for the delegation of responsibilities, this will have financial implication for the council.

#### **Legal Implications**

11. None.

#### **Staffing Implications**

12. None at this stage.

#### **Risk Management Implications**

13. None.

#### **Consultations**

14. As noted above, both CALC and the Council's representative of CALC have been consulted.

#### **Conclusions/Summary**

15. The Charter is the means of improving the working relationship between Parish Council's and the District Council. Starting the process to develop the Charter by an open discussion between the parties focuses on the current relationships and what may need to be changed for the future.

#### **Recommendations**

16. Cabinet endorses the approach to developing a Quality Charter with Parish Councils set out in paragraph 8.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Model Charter draft December 2005.

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