

Kirklees Parish & Town Councils Charter

Charter between Kirklees Metropolitan Council and the Parish and Town Councils within Kirklees

- **Denby Dale Parish Council**
- **Holme Valley Parish Council**
- **Kirkburton Parish Council**
- **Meltham Town Council**
- **Mirfield Town Council**

Introduction

1. Kirklees Metropolitan Council and the five parish and town councils* in the Kirklees area have agreed to publish a charter which sets out how they aim to work together for the benefit of local people. This Charter is the result of discussions locally to establish a new way of working and to confirm existing good practice.

* Denby Dale Parish Council, Holme Valley Parish Council, Kirkburton Parish Council, Meltham Town Council and Mirfield Town Council

2. Kirklees MC acknowledges that parish and town councils are one expression of grass-roots level of local government in Kirklees. By working with them Kirklees MC aims to act in partnership with local communities, while balancing the needs of the wider community.
3. In their role as democratically accountable bodies, parish and town councils offer a means of helping to shape the decisions that affect their communities. They can offer a means of decentralising the provision of certain services and of revitalising local communities. In turn, the five local councils recognise the strategic and service delivery role of Kirklees MC and the equitable distribution of services which it has to achieve across the borough.
4. This Charter reflects the increasing importance attached by Central Government to partnership working and the development of quality status for parish and town councils.

Sustainability and Local Community Life

5. Kirklees MC will work in partnership with all parish and town councils in its area to help discharge its responsibility to promote sustainable social, economic and environmental development for the benefit of local communities and to promote local community life.

Kirklees Community Strategy and Local Community Action Plans

6. Kirklees MC will involve parish and town councils in the processes of preparing and implementing the Kirklees Community Strategy to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.
7. Kirklees MC Local Area Committees, will consult and involve parish and town councils in the processes of preparing and implementing their local Community Action Plans. Parish and town councils may have their own community strategies and plans. Arrangements will be agreed locally between area committees and parish and town councils, to ensure local plans are complementary and benefit the communities they each serve.

Local Governance

8. Kirklees MC will involve parish and town councils in its local governance arrangements and for liaison in the following ways:
 - Parish and town councillors are invited to attend respective Kirklees Area Committees. At the beginning of each municipal year, arrangements regarding Parish/Town Councillor membership on area committees are agreed, including any voting rights on concurrent functions. These formal arrangements are set out in Kirklees MC's Constitution.

- Where ward and parish boundaries are not co-terminus, parish/town council representation on an area committee will take account of the proportion of households in the relevant wards falling within a parish boundary.
 - Individual Parish and Town Councils will invite relevant Members and Officers of Kirklees MC to their own meetings for specific agenda items when appropriate.
9. Kirklees MC will administer the holding of parish and town council elections. The respective authorities will work together to limit the costs of holding such elections but without compromising the democratic process.

Information and Communication

10. Kirklees MC will give parish and town councils the opportunity to comment before making a decision which affects the local community in their area. In addition to this, Kirklees MC will send Area Committee agenda and papers to Parish Clerks.
11. A list of all Kirklees MC public reports is available on the Council's website. Parish and town councils can request a copy of any public report and are encouraged to comment through Democratic Support Services.
12. Parish and Town Councils may be invited to attend sub committees and working groups that are set up by their Local Area Committee.
13. Kirklees MC will attend meetings with the parish and town councils (or groups of such councils) at a mutually agreed time to discuss matters of common interest.
14. Parish and town councils will send copies of their agendas and relevant papers to Kirklees MC's Head of Democratic Support Services and to councillors for their area. Officers and councillors of Kirklees MC may be invited to speak at parish and town council meetings on matters of mutual interest.
15. When Kirklees MC consults parish councils, it will provide them with sufficient information to enable them to reach an informed view on the matter, and give them adequate time to respond in accordance with the statutory requirements where applicable.
16. Kirklees MC will communicate with parish and town councils and others in the community by publishing Community News regularly and making it available to the local community. It will also keep parish and town councils informed by sending them copies of Area Committee publicity, agenda and minutes.
17. Kirklees MC and parish and town councils will acknowledge letters sent by the other party within 14 days and both will provide substantive answers to letters which need a reply. A full reply will be sent within 28 days from when it has been discussed by the parish or town council, or by agreement if there are extenuating circumstances.

Complaints

18. If either a parish or town council is dissatisfied with Kirklees MC, or Kirklees MC is dissatisfied with a parish or town council, a formal complaint in writing may be made. The relevant council will respond in accordance with their complaints procedure.

Standards Committee

19. Both Kirklees MC and the parish and town councils have adopted codes of conduct, based on the national model code of conduct. The parish councils will work with the Kirklees MC's Standards Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. Kirklees MC has consulted and agreed the following arrangements with the parish and town councils for the appointment of representative(s) to the Standards Committee. Parish/Town Councils nominate two members to be co-opted onto the Standards Committee. These members are co-opted for a period of two years. Nominations are requested from the Parish/Town Councils in rotation in alphabetical order, thus ensuring that over time all Parish/Town Councils are represented. The overall membership of the Standards Committee is 4 Kirklees Councillors, 2 Parish/Town Councillors and 2 independent members.

Delegating Responsibility for Service Provision

20. When a parish or town council achieves quality status and they wish to discharge functions on behalf of a principal authority, Kirklees MC will consider this where it provides best value (taking account of cost, quality, local preferences and practicability). Where it is not good value or practicable, Kirklees MC, in consultation with the parish or town council, may seek alternative ways to influence service delivery at a local level. Where services are devolved, the relevant finance needs to follow the function.

Financial Arrangements

21. The financial arrangements between Kirklees MC and the parish and town councils should be governed by the following principles which are, in effect, among those underlying the concept of Best Value:
 - Kirklees MC will set its Council Tax precept equitably and seek to provide services (and access to them) fairly across all areas, whether parished or non-parished. The parish and town councils have the right to raise a levy, in addition to the precept set by Kirklees MC, which they can use to provide services over and above those provided in their areas by the principal authority
 - Simplicity to keep administrative costs of operation to a minimum
 - Transparency to help understanding
 - Further to paragraph 20 above, where services are devolved from the principal authority to the parished areas, the relevant finance will follow the function. Accounting statements should reflect responsibilities for funding, distinguishing between financing by Kirklees MC (for a service carried out by the parish/town council) and funding raised by the parish/town councils themselves (e.g. using their precepting powers).

Practical Support

22. Kirklees MC will, where practical, offer parish and town councils access to their own support services, to enable them to take advantage of facilities such as printing and purchasing, at a mutually agreed price. All Parish and Town Councillors and Parish and Town Clerks can access KMC's internal training courses at the same cost as to its own services.
23. Parish and Town Councillors who are representatives on Area Committees can access training, development, advice and support through the Local Area Structures Team in the same way as other Area Committee members. Area Committees can extend this training to other Parish and Town Councillors, if this is resourced locally.