

Oxfordshire Councils Charter

Introduction

This charter has been developed by a cross-council working group to set out a framework for better partnership working in Oxfordshire. The contents of the charter have been shaped by feedback from town and parish councils across the county.

Strategic Aims for the Charter

These aims represent our shared long-term goals. The charter's performance will be measured against these over time.

- 1) **Stronger partnership working between Oxfordshire councils.**
 - Taking a 'local government family' approach to place-shaping, service delivery and supporting the needs of our residents.
- 2) **Enhancing local democracy.**
 - Doing our bit to encourage resident and community participation in local democracy at all levels.

Our Shared Principles

Our shared principles are the 'golden thread' of values that underpin how we aim to meet the charter's commitments and achieve our strategic aims. These principles guide how we implement and integrate the charter, how we work together and how we treat each other.

Mutual Respect

- Recognising and acknowledging our shared values and aims – to represent and deliver for our communities and residents.
- Treating each other with respect, civility, and dignity.

- Treating each council equitably and fairly, acting on good faith.
- Accommodating each council's unique working practices, where practicable.
- Abiding by codes of conduct in demonstrating respect and civility.

Relationship Building

- Building constructive and collaborative relationships between councils, councillors, clerks, officers, partners, and communities.
- Addressing barriers to building effective relationships.
- Creating opportunities to build relationships and connections.

Transparency and Accountability

- Optimising information sharing and communication.
- Sharing best practice, information, data, and knowledge.
- Following-up on decision-making and explaining decisions to communities impacted by them.

Our Shared Commitments

These are our shared commitments to achieve our strategic aims: stronger partnership working and enhance local democracy. The themed commitments are purposely kept at a high-level to enable each council to apply to their own priorities and ways of working individually, without creating an undue burden for councils with less resource and capacity. The aim is to ensure that the commitments are achievable for all types and sizes of councils as it allows each council to interpret and aim for the commitments in line with their own resources, capacity, needs and priorities. The commitments will be underpinned and implemented through specific mutually agreed actions once the charter has been agreed.

Communication

We will...

- Optimise how we communicate with each other.
- Communicate with respect and civility.
- Strive to communicate and explain decision-making.
- Communicate openly and transparently where it is appropriate to do so.

Consultation and Engagement

We will...

- Engage each other in our work as early as practicable, acknowledging the limitations and barriers of different stakeholders and communities.
- Strive to make consultation and engagement as accessible as possible.
- Consider each other in strategic decision making and future planning.
- Follow-up on consultations and feedback where possible.

Resources

We will...

- Share relevant and appropriate information to empower each other to best support our residents and communities.
- Optimise access and signposting to resources and practical support.
- Consider where resources and support can be effectively shared between councils to improve outcomes for residents.

Local Democracy

We will...

- Proactively work to empower our residents and communities to participate in local democracy.
- Take steps to engage young people to participate in our communities and local democracy.
- Centre our communities and residents in all that we do.
- Respect the democratic mandate of councillors at all levels.

Implementation

Once the charter has been agreed at Cabinet and Executive level, all councils will be invited to be a signatory of the charter.

The intention is that the charter remains a living document, with the sign-off of the charter being very much the beginning and not the end-goal of this work.

Once the charter has been agreed and signed-off, the cross-council charter Working Group will work on an action plan to work towards the charter aims and commitments, as well as an approach to monitoring the performance and progress of the charter.