

# Parish Charter

for South Lakeland 2015-16



To encourage joint working and better communication between South Lakeland District Council (SLDC) and parish and town councils and meetings (local councils).

## Why have a Parish Charter?

We recognise that SLDC and local councils share objectives to improve the lives of the people of South Lakeland.

Better partnership working benefits everyone. This charter contains actions to encourage constructive dialogue. Participants will have a greater understanding of statutory procedures and more scope to provide better services for local people, for example, through devolved local services or council assets. The charter will build on existing localism initiatives (for example Community Led Plans and Neighbourhood Plans) and Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) to develop better services, which meet the needs of local communities.

This Parish Charter has been agreed between SLDC, Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) and local councils in South Lakeland. Its success depends on District and local councils valuing its commitments and actions, and working collaboratively together.

The longer term ambition is for the charter to include other key organisations in South Lakeland to develop better engagement in the design and delivery of local services.

## Parish Charter Action Plan (2015/16)

1) **Improve communications between SLDC and local councils: from making an initial enquiry, providing the right information to aid response, to escalating a problem that has not been resolved.**

- SLDC to provide information on its main contact numbers, services, complaints procedure and customer service standards for Parish Clerks to follow. SLDC to consider requests to improve these procedures
- SLDC Communications team can advise local councils on general communications for newsletters, websites, social media etc
- SLDC to simplify and coordinate its communications to LAPs
- SLDC to notify and seek the participation of local councils to any SLDC policies, plans or meetings specifically affecting the parish. Engagement to be appropriate and proportionate
- SLDC to encourage its councillors to consult and communicate with local councils on matters relevant to them and to make formal reports to local council meetings where applicable

**Outcome:** Enquiries resolved more consistently and efficiently.  
More inclusive decision making.



## 2) Improve interaction between SLDC and local councils in the planning process.

SLDC recognises that local councils will have views on proposals coming through the planning process.

- SLDC officers to present and take questions at an information event in 2015 to cover the pre-application stage of the planning process, the Community Infrastructure Levy and digital communications with the planning service
- Local council clerks (outside the national parks) to nominate a representative to attend and report back at local council meetings
- Local councils to consider using a webpage on their website (where applicable) to record their views on local development sites. Webpage to be signposted from SLDC website as a resource for developers

**Outcome:** Greater dialogue leading to better understanding of the planning process which will lead to better quality input from local councils. SLDC, local councils and developers will benefit from improved and inclusive decision making.

## 3) Increase local councils' understanding of the roles and functions of SLDC.

- SLDC to work with CALC to offer training on its functions and duties for local councillors
- Local councils to request training needs and commit to attend organised training and report back at local council meetings

**Outcome:** Local councils better able to advise new and existing councillors on SLDC functions and duties.

## 4) Clarify the position between SLDC and local councils around precepts and financial arrangements.

- SLDC to meet, or hold surgeries, with any interested local councils on local council/SLDC financial arrangements

- Local councils to make any precept requests in accordance with the timescales requested by SLDC. SLDC to discuss with CALC if any significant changes to existing timetable are proposed

**Outcome:** Greater understanding and clarity for local councils on local taxation. Annual process completed on time.

## 5) Exchange information and aspirations on services and assets in South Lakeland to improve benefit for local communities.

- SLDC will update local councils of best practice in South Lakeland on successful local initiatives
- Local councils to bring their ideas and aspirations for local services and assets to SLDC for consideration
- SLDC will provide advice around procurement activity and offer support in understanding any new national procurement legislation or initiatives on request

This Parish Charter will be reviewed in May 2016 through the production of a monitoring report by SLDC and CALC.