

Session 1: Importance of Communication

Where does communication work well?

- Liaison meetings.
- Dual membership of councillors to both county borough and community councils.
- Communication between councils is easier if there is a dedicated officer within the unitary authority.

Problems identified with communication

- Consultation periods are often difficult for smaller community and town councils, particularly if they are held over the summer holidays.
- Smaller councils often find it difficult to send representatives to unitary authority and area committee meetings.
- Difficult for unitary authorities to communicate quickly and consistently with their community councils, since CTC's are very diverse.

How can communication be improved?

- Longer consultation periods, avoiding the summer holidays, wherever possible.
- Agree set response times that unitary authorities and community and town councils should need to respond to correspondence and consultations.
- Code of conduct training.
- Monthly/quarterly newsletters from unitary authorities updating councils, this would help smaller councils, who are unable to send representatives to meetings for updates.
- Have a dedicated officer for community and town councils to contact within the unitary authority wherever possible.
- All councils need to understand each other's roles. A lack of understanding can lead to an inefficient and distrusting working environment.
- Unitary authority representatives could show commitment to community and town councils by attending community and town council meetings wherever possible.
- Community and town councils could become more involved in setting the agenda for Liaison meetings.
- Every community and town council should have a dedicated email address to enable unitary authorities to communicate with them more effectively.

Session 2: Benefits of the Charter

Advantages of a charter

- Will help councils understand each others roles and find effective ways to work together.
- Creates a partnership of equals between all councils that is more inclusive and supportive.
- Encourages community and town council and county borough councils to work together to achieve a common goal.
- Allows councils to share resources such as ICT, access to training etc.
- Will help avoid double taxation.
- By consulting with community and town councils on charters, county borough councils can show that they consult fully with communities before setting priorities.

How to make a successful and sustainable charter

- Important to capture the expectations each council has for a charter, before it is developed.
- Enable open and regular contact between community and town councils and county borough councils during the development of charter. Make sure that both councillors and officers are consulted during the process.
- Set up a working group which can manage the charter and ensure its progression.
- Use the model charter to guide discussions and agreements.
- Build an action plan following the charter so that progress can be tracked regularly. Make sure that the charter is also reviewed annually/at the end of each four year term.