

West Lindsey Parish Charter

Setting out the working relationship between West Lindsey District Council and Parish/Town Councils

1. Introduction

West Lindsey District Council acknowledges that parish/town councils and parish meetings are at the grass-roots level of local government. In their role as democratically accountable bodies, they offer a means of shaping the decisions of certain services and supporting local communities.

The purpose of this charter is to set out how West Lindsey District Council and parish/town councils and parish meetings can work together to provide high quality and efficient public services for our residents and communities.

The charter is intended to be a starting point, a commitment to work together, and a statement of the principles by which the District Council, parish/town councils and parish meetings approach their work together.

2. Partnership Working

- We (West Lindsey District Council) will work in partnership with you (parish/town councils and parish meetings) in our area to promote sustainable social, economic and environmental development for the benefit of local communities.
- We recognise that as democratically accountable bodies, you are the grassroots level of local government.
- We ask that you recognise the strategic role of West Lindsey District Council and the need for our services to be responsive to identified need and deliver on our strategic priorities.

3. Local Governance

- Members of the public, including members and officers of parish/town councils and parish meetings, can ask a question or make a statement at the start of ordinary meetings of the District Council and our committee meetings. We provide a range of participation schemes which apply to different meetings of the council and its committees which can be viewed online at: www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/democracy

You can contact our Democratic Services Team for further advice and guidance during office hours on one of the following: 01427 676594 / 01427 676595 / 01427 676606

- We will publish the agendas and papers for our meetings online at: www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/democracy

- We will organise the administration of parish/town council and parish meeting elections.
- We ask that you publish the agendas and papers for your meeting on your website if you have one and send copies via e-mail to District Councillors representing your area.
- We ask that you invite District Councillors representing your area to your meetings.
Contact details for our District Councillors are available online:
www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/councillors
- We ask that our officers and members be invited to your meetings on matters of mutual interest.

4. Consultation

- We will organise parish liaison meetings to enable liaison between parish/town councils, parish meetings and ourselves on matters of mutual interest as required.
- We will use plain English and keep our information jargon free when we consult with you.
- We will offer our information in different formats where that is appropriate.
- We will follow the principles of consultation (The Gunning Principles):
 1. Consultation will occur when proposals are at a formative stage
 2. Consultation will give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration
 3. Consultation will allow adequate time for consideration and response
 4. Consultation will be conscientiously taken into account
- We will feed back to you what has been said and what we are going to do as a result.
- We ask that wherever possible and relevant you will respond to consultations when approached by us and by the agreed deadlines.
(For example: by delegating the task to a committee or having an extra parish/town council meeting to meet the deadline.)

5. Information and Complaints

- We will acknowledge communications sent to us within 5 working days of receipt and we will provide a full response (if required) within 20 working days. These are our minimum customer service standards and where possible we will always seek to respond quicker than this. If this is not possible we will contact you to explain why and give you an indication of when you can expect a full reply.
- We will notify you of any programmed maintenance and improvement schemes due to be undertaken in your parish delivered by West Lindsey District Council. This notification will be via e-mail to the parish/town clerk.

- We ask that you notify our Democratic Services Team of any changes to the names/contact details of your parish/town clerk and parish/town chairman so that we can ensure our parish contacts database is up to date.

E-mail changes to: committeeadmin@west-lindsey.gov.uk

- We ask wherever possible to use our website to find information about our services and news updates.

Visit our website: www.west-lindsey.gov.uk

- We ask that you use the following to make a report or request for something that we have responsibility for:

1. Online self-service

Visit our website to use our self-service for reporting and requesting. This is the easiest way for you to report or request and ensures you get the quickest response.

Visit our self-service page: www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/selfservice

2. E-mail our Customer Services

E-mail us with as much detail as possible relating to your report or request. You can include attachments such as photos.

E-mail us: customer.services@west-lindsey.gov.uk

3. Telephone Number for Parish/Town Councils

We provide a dedicated telephone number for parish and town councils. Calls are routed to a senior member of our customer services team. This number is shared directly with parish and town clerks.

- We ask that when we contact you, you send a substantive reply within 28 working days (not including responses to consultation documents). This is unless there are exceptional reasons why this cannot happen.
- If you are dissatisfied with our actions, the response to a request for information, or a failure to consult, you may make a formal complaint through our complaints procedure.

For information about complaints visit: www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/complaint or you can e-mail any comments/complaints to: experience@west-lindsey.gov.uk

6. Standards and Governance Support

- We will abide by Codes of Conduct based on the 7 Nolan Principles.
- We will provide development opportunities and shared learning on standards and ethics for parish/town councillors and clerks.
- We will offer support to parish/town councils and parish meetings if they become inquorate and are unable to conduct statutory business.
- We ask that parish/town councils and parish meetings work with our Overview and Scrutiny Committee to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.

7. Planning

- We will notify a parish/town council of any planning applications made within its parish and allow a minimum 28 day period to make representations (a further 7 days more than the 21 day statutory requirement).
- We will provide advice and support to parishes seeking to develop and adopt a neighbourhood plan. For more information about neighbourhood planning visit: www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/neighbourhoodplan
- We will organise the administration of referendums to adopt a neighbourhood plan.
- We will use adopted neighbourhood plan's to help determine planning applications.

8. Delegating Responsibility for Service Provision

(applies to parish/town councils only)

- If you wish to carry out functions on our behalf we will consider delegation where it provides best value (taking into account cost, quality, local preferences and practicability).

This will exclude a range of services which we are not able to delegate because of their particular statutory nature.

To discuss delegation of a service please contact our Democratic Services Team at: committeeadmin@west-lindsey.gov.uk

9. Finance and Budgets

- We will hold budget consultation events allowing residents along with parish/town councils and parish meetings to have a say and contribute towards our budget decisions.
- We will provide a parish precept tool and advice to help parish/town councils and parish meetings set budgets.
- We ask that parish/town councils and parish meetings submit their precept requests by agreed deadlines.

10. Community Support

- We will provide support to local communities through a range of schemes. These schemes may be available to parish/town councils and parish meetings along with other organisations including community groups, charities and community businesses.

We maintain a directory of community support schemes on our website: www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/communitysupport

- We will provide a single point of contact for parish/town councils and parish meetings needing support with community projects.

E-mail: community@west-lindsey.gov.uk

- We will provide signposting to useful information and other forms of support to help you deliver community projects and improvements.
- We will produce a regular parish newsletter that will provide a range of news and updates from across West Lindsey. You can register to receive the parish newsletter online: www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/parishnews
- We will organise Parish Forum events each year to enable effective sharing of information, engagement and discussion and facilitate question and answer sessions.
- We will administer community rights as part of the Localism Act 2011 including:
 - Community Right to Bid
 - Community Right to Build
 - Community Right to Challenge
- We ask that you use information in our regular parish newsletters to help further promote news and updates to local residents including adding information into local parish newsletters and magazines.
- We ask that you help promote any community support schemes currently available and actively engage with us on community initiatives in your area.

11. Practical Support

- We will provide advice, support and development opportunities to parish/town council councillors and staff to ensure they can meet the needs of their role.
- We will provide training to parish/town council councillors and staff on enforcement including the ability to issue fixed penalty notices.
- We will provide opportunities for parish/town councils to join our street lighting energy and maintenance contracts at a mutually agreed price.
- We will provide opportunities for parish/town councils to join our grounds maintenance contract at a mutually agreed price.
- We will provide translation services for your documents and literature at a mutually agreed price.

To find out more about these practical support services please contact our Democratic Services Team at: committeeadmin@west-lindsey.gov.uk

12. Charter Review

- We will review the West Lindsey Parish Charter every 4 years to ensure it continues to meet the needs and aspirations of West Lindsey District Council, parish/town councils and parish meetings.