

**Teignbridge District Council
Executive Committee
16th July 2026
Part i**

Town and Parish Council Charter Review

Purpose of Report

To update members of the Executive on the actions undertaken following the adoption of then Town and Parish Charter and actions arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting of 26th May 2026.

Recommendation(s)

The Committee RESOLVES to:

- (1) Note the update on the Town and Parish Charter
- (2) Accept the recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny and the future programme of work

Financial Implications

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Legal or Governance Implications

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Risk Assessment

Risks as detailed in section 2.3
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Environmental/ Climate Change Implications

Environmental/climate change implications as detailed in section 2.4
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Executive Member

Cllr Suzanne Sanders: Executive Member for Neighbourhoods

Appendices/Background Papers

[Town and Parish Charter](#)

[Charter Working Group Membership](#)

[Charter Working Panel Notes](#)

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The Town and Parish Charter was formally adopted by the Executive on the 2 December 2025. The development of the charter was led by the Devon Association of Local Councils, supported by a working group of representative Town and Parish Council Members and Officers from across Teignbridge, as detailed in the background paper.
- 1.2 The charter focuses initially on principles of mutual respect, collaborative working and open communication, recognising that district, town and parish councils are equal democratic authorities with distinct roles and expertise. It sets out a shared framework for how the councils will work together, share learnings and undertake consultation to strengthen local decision-making and deliver better outcomes for communities across Teignbridge.
- 1.3 Communications will be both proactive and substantive, involving regular two-way dialogue between TDC and town and parish councils. A mix of formal channels will be used (such as briefings, meetings, reports and consultations) and informal engagement. Councils agree to work constructively to resolve issues and to keep each other informed of emerging priorities, pressures and opportunities. This will include TDC promoting sources of funding to achieve town and parish projects, and town and parishes providing feedback and learnings.

- 1.4 As part of our commitments to work as constructive partners with town and parish councils, we will uphold shared standards of behaviour and good practice.
- 1.5 To establish a forum for information sharing we have now run two Local Leaders Updates. These are evening online sessions where information on Teignbridge, County and central government projects is given which may support or impact on Town and Parish council business and aims. These have been well attended, supported by presentations from partner agencies such as DALC, with the most recent having representatives from Ashburton, Bishopsteignton, Bovey, Broadhempston, Buckfastleigh, Christow, Hennock, Ilsington, Ipplepen, Kingskerwell, Kingsteignton, Newton Abbot Starcross and Teignmouth attending the session. the session was recorded and circulated to all Towns and Parishes following the meeting.
- 1.6 We worked in partnership with Teignbridge CVS to deliver the first Teignbridge Community Network on 1 April 2026, with more than 60 attendees joining conversations about the issues affecting our communities and the opportunities ahead. Town and parish councillors, alongside community and voluntary sector leaders who provide vital services across Teignbridge, came together to: hear what's happening in the district; share real experiences from the ground; discover new opportunities, resources, and support; influence discussions shaping our communities; and strengthen networks. The next event is scheduled to take place on 15 October 2026.
- 1.7 We are now monitoring town and parish council attendance at events to better understand how engagement and partnership working is functioning in practice. This will help us identify any gaps in communication, participation or information-sharing, and ensure opportunities to engage are reaching the right councils at the right time. By taking a more structured approach, we can target support where it is needed, improve the flow of information, and strengthen collaborative working, helping all councils to be more effectively involved in shared priorities and decision-making.

- 1.8 As per our Charter commitment a complaints process was launched for Town and Parish Councils, sent to Clerks to act as a single point of contact: no complaints have been received through this process to date.

- 1.9 As per the above details, a survey was distributed to Town and Parish Clerks requesting feedback, and a presentation on work following the charter was given to an informal Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 26th of May.

- 1.10 From this, actions arising included:
 - 1.10.1 Action: Add all ward councillors in to the mailing list alongside Town and Parish Councillors for clarity of messaging and consistency of communication.
 - 1.10.2 Action: Re-brand and re-distribute the Structure Guide produced to inform Towns and Parishes of Teignbridge District Councils functional departments and teams.
 - 1.10.3 Action: Update Town and Parish Councils on the role of Teignbridge ward councillors as elected representatives and conduits into Teignbridge District Council.
 - 1.10.4 Action: re-publish the Charter and Structure Guide in the next edition of the Town and Parish Council newsletter

- 1.11 From our internal review additional actions are recommended as follows:
 - 1.11.1 Action: officers in the Strategy and Partnerships team to attend individual service meetings to embed understanding of the charter across the organisation.
 - 1.11.2 Action: address inconsistent connection between ward members and parish councils through update of the Ward Councillor role profile in the work led by Democratic Services.
 - 1.11.3 Action: Officers in the Strategy and Partnerships team to target town and parish councils where there has been limited interaction at TDC-organised events to ensure a wider awareness of information and opportunities across the district.

2. Implications, Risk Management and Climate Change Impact

2.1 Financial

2.1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The costs of any engagement events and officer time are managed through existing Strategy and Partnerships service budgets.

2.2 Legal or Governance

2.2.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The Charter as previously adopted sets out agreed principles of working but is not legally binding.

2.3 Risks

2.3.1 There is a reputational risk if TDC does not adhere to the principles laid out in the charter, mitigated by the fact officer resource has been assigned from Strategy and Partnerships service to support collaboration with Town and Parish Councils.

2.4 Environmental/Climate Change Impact

2.4.1 There are no direct climate impacts arising from this report.

3. Alternative Options

- 3.1 As an alternative, Teignbridge District Council could discontinue actions under the Town and Parish Charter. This would not be recommended as the implementation to date has seen improved relationships with key partners in Town and Parish Councils and there will be concurrent reputational damage from reneging on previous commitments.
- 3.2 A second alternative option is to amend the actions proposed following feedback from officers and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This is not recommended as the actions align with both the principles of the adopted charter and the One Teignbridge commitments under 'The Way We Will Work', alongside supporting greater engagement with colleagues in the most local tier of government.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 The Town and Parish Charter has been well received, but there are still improvements to be made in knowledge of the charter and adoption of its principles, with a focus on those Town and Parish Councils who we engage

with less regularly. The continuation of the engagement activities which have been successful to date combined with the actions proposed will support both the continued betterment of relationships between different tiers of local government and the preparation of continuing Town and Parish Councils for Local Government Reorganisation.