

# Statement of Reasonable Expectations

## Introduction

This statement sets out the reasonable expectations for partnership working between Parish and Town Councils<sup>1</sup> and Dorset Council.

Dorset Association of Parish and Town Councils (DAPTC) enters into this agreement in its role representing and supporting its member Parish and Town Councils throughout Dorset.

Both parties support a shared commitment to the communities and residents of Dorset. The statement aims to foster better working relationships, enhance democratic representation, and ensure effective service delivery for the benefit of local communities.

### 1. Mutual Respect and Recognition

- i. Dorset Council recognises Parish and Town Councils as statutory, democratically elected bodies with legislated roles and responsibilities, the power of taxation and a deep understanding of local issues.
- ii. Parish and Town Councils respect Dorset Council's role as the democratically elected Principal Authority in strategic planning and delivery of a range of statutory services across its area.
- iii. Dorset Council also recognises the role played by DAPTC in representing the collective views and interests of most Town and Parish Councils.
- iv. Both parties commit to a spirit of cooperation, valuing each other's contributions and responsibilities, with a view to ensuring an effective and appropriate response to the differing needs and priorities of local places and communities.

### 2. Communication and Engagement

- i. Dorset Council and Parish and Town Councils will recognise and foster the importance of a constructive and regular working relationship between the Dorset Council Ward Member and the parish meeting, parish council or town council they liaise with. This relationship should be based on openness, mutual respect and timely communication, supporting the effective flow of local knowledge, community priorities and informed decision making.
- ii. Dorset Council will provide best effort provision of timely and relevant updates on policies, projects, and decisions affecting local communities, and will consult

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<sup>1</sup> Parish and Town Councils includes precept raising bodies such as Parish Meetings.

with Parish and Town Councils well before making decisions or policy changes that impact their role and operations or the wellbeing of their place and community.

- iii. Parish and Town Councils will share local insights and concerns to inform Dorset Council's decision making by attending regular forums or liaison meetings when established to facilitate open dialogue and exchange of views.
- iv. Clear points of contact will be maintained to ensure smooth communication, by all parties.
- v. Engagement periods will allow sufficient time for meaningful input, and each party undertakes to consider the other's views and insights before making decisions, to seek clarification where necessary, and provide meaningful feedback.

### 3. Support and Capacity Building

- i. Dorset Council, Parish and Town Councils, and DAPTC will collaborate to identify key areas for guidance and training and determine the most effective methods of delivery. This joint effort will aim to enhance the capabilities of Parish and Town Councils and support the expansion of their role within the local governance framework.
- ii. Resources, toolkits, and best practice examples will be shared between the parties to support effective local governance.
- iii. Parish and Town Councils will proactively seek opportunities to upskill and enhance their role in service delivery in key areas agreed by both parties, community leadership and engagement.
- iv. Parish and Town Councils will develop financial and strategic plans for the short, medium, and longer term to set out their ambitions for the community around them and enhance their role in place management.
- v. Elected members for all parties should be supported and trained to understand the benefits of co-working and partnering toward better outcomes for communities they jointly serve.
- vi. Development of personnel in Parish and Town Councils, particularly those in senior roles like Clerks, will be encouraged to enable them to undertake broader roles and responsibilities effectively.

### 4. Collaborative Working

- i. Dorset Council, Ward Members and Parish and Town Councils are encouraged to work directly and collaboratively to identify, design and deliver projects that bring mutual benefit to local communities. This includes early engagement on opportunities, transparent sharing of relevant information, and a shared commitment to achieving positive, practical outcomes for residents.
- ii. Dorset Council, Ward Members and Parish and Town Councils will work together to identify, explore, and, where mutually agreed, pursue opportunities for joint

initiatives and shared services, and including the transfer or devolution of assets and services.

- iii. Partnership working and a problem-solving approach will be adopted to address challenges collectively and improve local service delivery and community outcomes.
- iv. Dorset Council will work constructively with Parish and Town Councils to facilitate changes through Community Governance Reviews where these strengthen democratic representation.
- v. Greater collaboration between neighbouring Parish and Town Councils will be encouraged to ensure best value asset management and service delivery.

## 5. Transparency and Accountability

- i. Decisions and actions will be made transparently, with clear explanations provided for major policy changes or service alterations.
- ii. All parties will uphold transparency in their own operations, ensuring local communities are informed and engaged.
- iii. Mechanisms for feedback and review will be in place to assess the effectiveness of collaboration and address any issues constructively.
- iv. This statement will be reviewed jointly on a periodic basis.

## Conclusion

This statement represents a shared commitment to strengthening democratic representation and delivering better outcomes for Dorset's communities. By fostering mutual trust, engagement, and cooperation, Parish and Town Councils and Dorset Council can work together effectively to serve the needs of residents.

## Signed by

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Nick Ireland, Leader of Dorset Council

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KD Johnson, Chair DAPTC Board

Date:

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Catherine Howe, Chief Executive Dorset Council

Date:

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Neil Wedge, Chief Executive DAPTC

Date:

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