



Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol
MERTHYR TUDFUL
MERTHYR TYDFIL
County Borough Council



Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council have agreed to enter into a Charter which sets out the way in which they aim to work together for the good of the communities of Bedlinog and Trelewis whilst recognising their respective responsibilities as statutory bodies.

**Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
and
Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council**

CHARTER

Drafted March 2019 - Agreed at Full Council 11th September 2019

Updated 19th October 2021

INTRODUCTION

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council have agreed to publish a Charter which sets out how they will work together for the benefit of local communities whilst recognising respective responsibilities as autonomous, democratically elected statutory bodies.

The Charter is designed to build on existing good practice and embrace the shared principles of openness, respect for each other's opinions, honesty, and a common priority of putting citizens at the centre. The Charter is based on equality of partnership and is not a top-down arrangement.

PARTNERS TO THE CHARTER

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC): democratic@merthyr.gov.uk

Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council (B&TCC): clerk@bedlinogcommunitycouncil.gov.uk

RECOGNITION

We accept the legitimacy and benefits of partnership working whilst at the same time recognising and respecting each other's roles. We aim to work together as a partnership of equals rather than tiers.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council
<p>Acknowledges and recognises that B&TCC is the grass roots level of local government in Bedlinog and Trelewis. It is a democratically accountable body offering a means of engaging with local people, of decentralising the provision of certain services, and of revitalising the communities of Bedlinog and Trelewis.</p>	<p>Recognises the strategic importance of MTCBC and the economy of scale, equitable distribution of certain services they can achieve and that B&TCC comes within the common umbrella of the unitary authority.</p>

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

We will be clear about the expectations that we have of each other to facilitate a smooth working relationship. In this regard, we will define the way in which we interact with each other. We will be clear about the role of Councillors at all levels in the relationship and in community leadership.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will...	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council will...
<p>Establish a Community Council Liaison Group comprised of appropriate MTCBC officers and representatives of B&TCC to meet when appropriate to discuss matters of mutual significance.</p>	<p>Contribute towards the agenda of Community Council Liaison Group meetings and contribute proactively to the attendance and discussion.</p>
<p>Agree to the Head of Democratic Services being the liaison officer between MTCBC and B&TCC.</p>	<p>Contact the Head of Democratic Services on the agreed issues and make them aware of any difficulties being encountered.</p>
<p>Agree to B&TCC being formally represented on key local partnerships and committees. MTCBC will seek to ensure that these arrangements are regarded as suitable and sufficient.</p>	<p>Invite, where appropriate, representatives of MTCBC to meetings and will provide a space on its meeting agenda for presentations.</p>

CONSULTATION

We appreciate the importance of meaningful consultation and set out a genuine commitment among all parties to consult on matters of mutual concern. We will agree clear, specific and time limited procedures and processes for consultation.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council
<p>Will aim to give B&TCC the opportunity to comment before making a decision that affects the local community.</p>	<p>Will respond to consultation opportunities in a timely manner, addressing the key issues in the consultation document; and will make full use of the committee papers available on the internet to inform local decision making.</p>
<p>MTCBC officers will attend meetings with B&TCC at mutually agreed times to discuss matters of common interest when requested to do so and given sufficient notice.</p>	<p>MTCBC Councillors and officers will be given an opportunity to speak at community council meetings on matters of mutual interest.</p>
<p>Will encourage scrutiny committees to liaise with B&TCC on relevant local issues.</p>	<p>Will respond to requests to input views to scrutiny committees.</p>

JOINT WORKING AND ENGAGEMENT

The Charter defines 'Partnership' as working together towards a common set of goals, based on equality in terms of ownership, decision-making and recognition of each party's distinctive contribution. It is recognised that an equal and effective partnership brings benefits and responsibilities to all those involved. Local government at both tiers must work together to promote the economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of our area. If doing things differently achieves a better service, we will seriously examine these methods.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council
Will be clear about how devolved services can be discussed and agreed.	Will use the agreed procedures if there is a wish to progress devolved services.
Will give due consideration to devolving services that would provide better value for money and/or enhance services.	Will be clear about how any devolvement of services will provide better value for money and/or enhanced services.
Will encourage accountability for all acquired activities.	Will take responsibility for aspects of joint working that are signed up to.

LAND USE PLANNING

B&TCC knows and understands the local area and must be able to comment effectively on planning matters. MTCBC can take an overview of the needs of the whole local area and make decisions, taking local views into account.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will...	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council will...
Uphold its statutory duty to consult B&TCC on all planning applications within its communities.	Make appropriate responses to the unitary authority recognising the parameters imposed by planning law and agreed planning policy.
Publish the planning meeting dates on the internet and advise the Community Council of site visits in the area, so that community council members may attend as observers.	Ensure that Councillors receive training for a sound understanding of planning law and encourage them to attend committee meetings.

PRACTICAL SUPPORT

In order to be effective, elected members and officers must be well-trained and have the support they need to carry out their roles.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will...	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council will...
Where practical, offer B&TCC access to support services, to enable them to take advantage of facilities such as printing and IT, purchasing at a mutually agreed price.	Follow procedures set out to access unitary authority support services, but also have opportunity to make own arrangements.

EXPERTISE

We will encourage continuous development of officers and members in both MTCBC and B&TCC. Improved expertise leads to professionalism and more effective joint working.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will...	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council will...
Offer member induction training to B&TCC councillors to enable them to understand the role and function of the unitary authority.	B&TCC will provide an induction to newly elected councillors to enable them to undertake their role effectively.

ETHICS

We will provide an ethical service to local people, following the appropriate standards and Codes of Conduct.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will...	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council will...
Through the Monitoring Officer, support B&TCC in the timely consideration and provision of advice in relation to the application of the Members Code of Conduct.	B&TCC Councillors shall not make vexatious complaints under the Code and will provide all such information as required by the Monitoring Officer to enable the role and functions to be carried out effectively.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Both MTCBC and B&TCC recognise the need for clarity and transparency in financial arrangements. In developing and implementing financial arrangements, relevant national and local priorities will be taken into account.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will...	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council will...
In setting the level of council tax for the area, have regard to services being delivered by B&TCC in its area, and the funding thereof. This will be with a view to avoiding double-taxation.	In setting the annual precept, have regard to the plans for service delivery of MTCBC for the coming year.

DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITY FOR SERVICE PROVISION

Services should be delivered in the most appropriate manner, with regard to value for money and added value for local people.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will...	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council will...
<p>Give due consideration to all reasonably argued cases for the delegation of service delivery to B&TCC, basing its consideration primarily on the improvement of service delivery for citizens whilst ensuring that value for money is retained or enhanced.</p>	<p>Recognise that there are certain instances where it is not appropriate or desirable for MTCBC to delegate service delivery.</p>
<p>Where it is not appropriate or desirable to delegate service delivery, seek ways in which local information from B&TCC might be used to enhance service delivery to better meet citizen needs.</p>	<p>Engage with citizens in their community to understand better their needs and convey these needs in a coherent and constructive manner to MTCBC, such that they can be taken account of when considering service design and delivery.</p>

SUSTAINABILITY

We will work in ways that are sustainable, reconciling the long-term needs with those of the present; and protecting and improving the quality of life of current generations without compromising the quality of life of future generations.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will...	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council will...
Assist B&TCC with information on sustainable practices.	Proactively assess the sustainability of current practices and processes.
Outline how MTCBC is actively pursuing sustainable development.	Investigate projects which contribute to sustainability where beneficial to the community.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY

We recognise the strategic importance of the Community Strategy as the overarching strategic vision and priorities for the local area. Furthermore, we recognise that the Community Strategy will only be fully effective if it is informed by the grass roots experiences from within our communities.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will...	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council will...
Invite a representative of B&TCC to sit on the Community Strategy Partnership in recognition of the local knowledge and experience this will bring.	Nominate a Councillor to be their representative on the Community Strategy Partnership. This individual shall proactively represent the Community Council, raising matters of general concern appropriate to the agenda of the Partnership.

LOCAL ELECTIONS

Fair and open elections are the bedrock of local democracy. We will ensure that elections are freely and fairly contested and encourage local people to become involved in local democracy.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will...	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council will...
Involve B&TCC in any awareness raising / publicity to encourage participation in local elections; and will help to publicise forthcoming local elections on behalf of B&TCC.	Ensure wide publicity of vacancies on B&TCC to maximise community representation; and facilitate public participation to encourage community involvement.
Brief B&TCC on the nomination process so that they are equipped to assist any potential candidates who come forward for local elections.	Steer potential candidates to the MTCBC Electoral Services Manager for legal advice on the nomination process.
Provide help and assistance with the local election legal and administrative processes and procedures.	Recognise the Returning Officer as being responsible for elections and ensure that any queries on processes and procedures are referred to the Electoral Services Manager.
Administer the holding of community council elections.	Notify the need for elections in compliance with legislation.

ACTION PLAN, MONITORING AND REVIEW

This Charter will be supported by the development of an annual Action Plan addressing each of the individual topics contained therein. The Action Plan will be developed on a joint basis and shall attribute responsibilities to each partner. Actions will be accompanied by a timescale and will be reported on at least annually during the year concerned.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council will...	Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council will...
The Head of Democratic Services will be lead officer for the development and monitoring of the Action Plan.	Collectively agree priorities for inclusion in the Action Plan.
The Head of Democratic Services will have due regard to the Action Plan and include relevant actions in their workplan for the year.	B&TCC will have due regard to the Action Plan and include all actions relevant to them during the course of the year.
The Head of Democratic Services will provide regular reports to Full Council (at least annually) addressing each of the topics contained within the Action Plan.	Will agenda regular reports (at least annually) addressing each of the topics contained within the Action Plan.
Arrange for the Charter to be reviewed every four years or as agreed.	Actively contribute to the review of the Charter.
Arrange for the development of an action plan linked to the Charter and will actively contribute to achieving the action plan.	Actively contribute to the development and delivery of the Charter action plan.

CONCLUSION

The undersigned Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council are committed to the principles and statements within the Charter for the benefit of local people.

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Signed:

Leader: Councillor Lisa Mytton

Date:

Signed:

Chief Executive – Ellis Cooper

Date:

Bedlinog & Trelewis Community Council

Signed:

Chair: Councillor Richard Searl

Date:

Signed:

Clerk – Ryan James

Date:
