

Guidance 6 - CODE OF PRACTICE FOR EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

Code of Practice for the Exchange of Information between Community Councils and Aberdeenshire Council

Preamble

It is for the mutual benefit of Aberdeenshire Council ('the Council'), Community Councils in the Aberdeenshire area and the communities they serve that constructive discussion, consultation and information exchange takes place in a positive and meaningful way. This Code of Practice for the Exchange of Information between the Council and Community Councils is intended to help ensure that these organisations exchange reliable information, explanations and guidance in a way that will be beneficial for the whole community.

This Code of Practice shall be monitored and reviewed by the Council.

Aberdeenshire Council: Checklist of Good Practice

Aberdeenshire Council shall:

1. consult directly with Community Councils on all issues where consultation with the public is a statutory requirement.
2. advise a Community Council directly, and in advance of press advertisement, of planning applications within a Community Council's area, through circulation of the Weekly List of Applications and also with regard to Pre-determination Hearings.
3. advise a Community Council of major works proposed by the Council, or of major utility works of which the Council is aware and of any changes to timing or duration of those works, within a Community Council's area.
4. provide appropriate support to empower Community Councils to make informed decisions on matters of concern.
5. provide access to Community Councils with; updated lists of Councillors; officials; all appropriate Council agendas and minutes; and public meeting dates.
6. nominate an officer of the Council to act as a liaison between the Council and Community Councils.
7. endeavour to meet reasonable requests for officer attendance at Community Council meetings.
8. encourage effective, full and careful consultation with Community Councils over matters of common interest by providing sufficient information in adequate time to allow a considered response.
9. ensure that Community Councils are provided, where requested, with reasons for decisions taken (this would be consistent with the Code of Guidance on Openness which COSLA has developed), and that in all cases they are informed about reasons for decisions on cases where they have expressed a view.
10. involve Community Councils in any consultations arranged through public meetings.

11. acknowledge written communications from Community Councils within 5 working days and reply within 20 working days, and encourage the use of the Council's Contact Centre and subsequent feedback process.
12. give Community Councils the opportunity to participate in the processes that lead to decision making on issues relating to their areas.
13. ensure that Community Councils continue to be involved effectively in decentralisation schemes and that decentralised structures are complementary to the role of Community Councils.

Community Councils: Checklist of Good Practice

Community Councils shall:

1. advise Aberdeenshire Council on local opinion concerning matters of interest to that authority.
2. bring to the attention of Aberdeenshire Council matters requiring its attention or action.
3. actively seek the views, opinions and aspirations of the full cross-section of the Community and be able to demonstrate that steps have been taken to consult the local community when appropriate, and in all cases be sure as far as possible that the views they express are representative of those of the community they serve.
4. express the views of their community on proposed plans or projects for that community and applications going before Aberdeenshire Council, its Committees, or Sub-Committees and to Licensing Boards. This should include positive support for acceptable schemes as well as criticism for those which are opposed by the local community. Where appropriate, suggestions for changes should also be put forward.
5. inform Aberdeenshire Council in advance of any consultations being arranged through public meetings.
6. invite representatives of statutory bodies and other organisations, when appropriate, to attend meetings of the Community Council.
7. encourage the public to use their Community Council as a vehicle of communication with Aberdeenshire Council.
8. contact Aberdeenshire Council as soon as practicable regarding matters where the information/action required cannot be provided by the Community Council alone.
9. respond to written communications from Aberdeenshire Council within a reasonable time and encourage the use of an initial acknowledgement system of reply.
10. identify a contact point through whom consultation on planning, licensing, etc. can be co-ordinated.
11. embrace the role, as defined within the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, as a community participation body and work with the Council to participate in improvement processes.