

The Charlton Society Neighbourhood Forum Constitution

Name

The name of the group shall be The Charlton Society Neighbourhood Forum (hereafter called the Society). The Name of the Local Authority is North Hertfordshire District Council (hereafter called the Council).

Brief Background and History

Charlton is mentioned in the Domesday book as a small settlement including a mill. It retains its ancient dispersed milling landscape comprising of approximately 30 houses scattered along the length of the mill stream which runs beside Charlton Road from the springs at Wellhead Farm to Hitchin Priory. In 1977 the area was given conservation area protection by NHDC.

The Charlton Society came into existence in 1976 over concerns to preserve an ancient woodland copse at the centre of the village. A successful campaign led to this area being acquired by a woodland society in whose care it remains. From this point it was decided that the village should have a permanent residents association and The Charlton Society was founded. The Society agreed and signed a constitution which was later updated in March 2021 to meet the legislative requirements of the 2012 Neighbourhood Plan Regulations. At the same time the Society changed its title to include Neighbourhood Forum as recognition of its expanding role and responsibilities.

Goal

The overall aim of the Society is to provide a welcoming, democratic forum that is open to all aged 16+ years that live or work in Charlton, as well as those elected to represent the area. Its expressed purpose is to promote social cohesion and enhance the lives and environment for those who live and work in the area, and to produce a Neighbourhood Plan which embodies these aims.

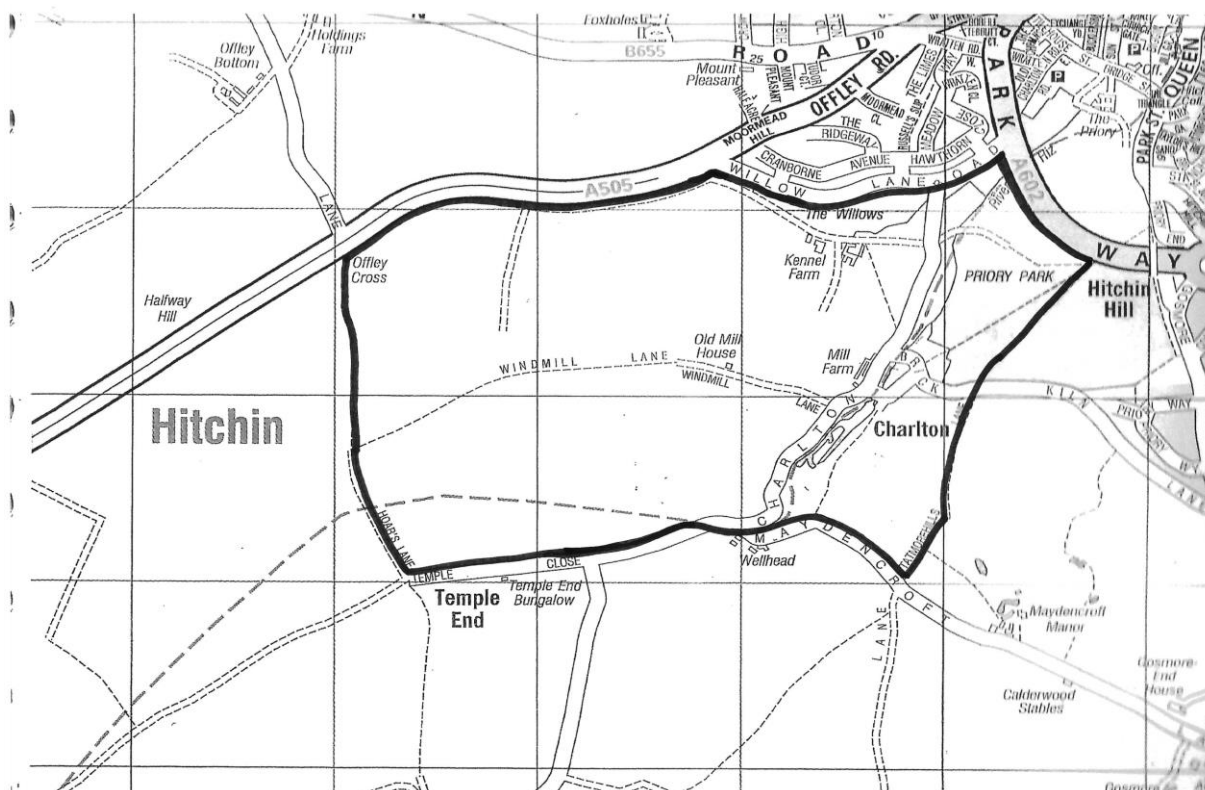
Objectives

The objectives of the Society shall be:

1. To promote the social, economic and environmental well-being for those living and working within the Charlton neighbourhood plan area as defined by this document.
2. To produce a Neighbourhood Plan.
3. To campaign for, and to protect, the housing standards, amenities, general welfare and the rights of all the residents in this area.
4. To encourage a community spirit within the area by generating interest, awareness and opportunities to influence local decision making.
5. To meet, consult and negotiate with the Council and other organisations in pursuance of these objectives.
6. To raise funds, receive grants and donations and apply funds to carry out the work of the Society.
7. To encourage all members to work together in an inclusive and supportive environment to achieve the objectives of the Society.

Charlton Neighbourhood Plan Area

The following map defines the geographical area for membership of the Society and the area covered by the Charlton Neighbourhood Plan.



Membership

Membership of the Society is open to all those over the age of 16 who live and work as well as to elected members of NHDC and Hertfordshire County Council within whose ward the neighbourhood area is located. Membership for those who work (but who do not live) in the area is through completion of a membership form which can be obtained from the chair whose email address is jarvisphil@hotmail.com. Membership of the Society is free of charge and shall imply acceptance of this constitution and any amendments that may be passed at Annual General Meetings. To encourage openness of membership, a notice is placed on the village notice board explaining how relevant individuals can apply for membership of the Society.

Members shall receive notification of Society activities either via email or letterboxes and all members are encouraged to participate fully in activities and at all Society meetings including Annual General Meetings and Special General Meetings.

Records of membership held electronically for the purposes of operating and administering the Society shall not be used for any other purpose.

All those within the Society are expected to conduct themselves in a legal manner befitting the Society ethos and the local community as a whole.

Members who demonstrate behaviour or actions that are deemed by the Committee to be detrimental to the functioning of the Society, or run against the overall aims and objectives of the Society, will be asked to cease such behaviour/actions or be prepared to stand down and relinquish their membership. In exceptional circumstances, the Committee may decide to suspend the membership of an individual in order to facilitate the objectives of the Society.

Any such individual will have the right to appeal via any member of the Committee or, where possible, an independent village resident determined by mutual agreement of the individual and the Committee.

Any member of the Society may resign his/her membership by providing the Secretary with written notice.

Annual General Meetings

The Society shall hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) once per year and within 15 months of the last AGM.

The business of the AGM shall include:

1. Receiving annual reports from the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer, plus other reports on the work the Society has undertaken since the last AGM.
2. The election of Officers and Committee members.
3. Reviewing and agreeing the priorities for the forthcoming year.
4. Reviewing and agreeing any changes to the constitution.

Each nomination proposing the appointment of an Officer (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer) or Committee member shall need a proposer and seconder. There must be consent from the nominee of the nomination. Proposals for the appointment of Officers and Committee members can be received by the Secretary on any date up to and including the date and time of the AGM.

The quorum for an AGM shall be 8 members from at least 5 households, of whom at least 2 must be Committee members including one officer.

Voting

Each Society member has one equal vote. Voting at all meetings (General meetings, AGM's or Special General Meetings) will usually be by a show of hands which requires a simple majority. In the event of a tied vote, the Society Chairperson will have the casting vote. If the vote is considered by the Committee to have the potential for a significant impact on the operation or management of the Society, the Secretary can be asked by the Committee to arrange a confidential ballot.

On occasion, the Committee may deem it necessary to invite postal/email voting, for decisions which benefit from a wider consultation, but which cannot await the next Society meeting. This vote must be submitted to the Secretary and must identify the sender. On occasion, the Committee may deem it necessary to invite votes by proxy when a prearranged vote is being held at a meeting. This vote must be submitted in writing to the Secretary prior to the vote being conducted and must identify the sender.

Affiliations

The Society shall remain independent and shall not be affiliated to political, religious or other organisations.

Management

The Society shall meet at least 4 times per year including an AGM. These meeting will usually be composed of 3 General meetings and an AGM.

All members are welcome to contribute their time, expertise and votes to help define the activities of the Society. The overall management of these Society activities shall be vested in the Committee who will be tasked with:

1. Prioritising activities of the society as laid out in the Society objectives.
2. Authorising and instructing expenditure in line with the Society objectives
3. Generating awareness of current and proposed Society activities.
4. Filling vacancies occurring on the Committee until the next AGM.
5. Establishing sub-committees for the purpose of undertaking specific tasks.
6. Deciding on matters not covered by the constitution.

The quorum for a General meeting shall be 5 members from 5 households, of whom at least 2 must be Committee members including one Officer. If a quorum is not reached, the meeting shall be reconvened, and all members informed (via email and letterboxes) of the new date, time and venue. The quorum for a reconvened General meeting shall be those present.

Special General Meetings

A Special General Meeting (SGM) may be called by the Committee or by a group of not less than 6 members from at least 4 households by requisition. The Secretary will call such a meeting within four weeks from the date of the requisition. The notice of meeting shall detail the motion and be issued to all residents by email or letterboxes.

Only the business stated in the requisition may be debated at the SGM.

The quorum for a SGM shall be 8 members from at least 5 households, of whom at least 2 must be Committee members including one Officer.

Notice of Meetings

The date time and location of any General meeting, AGM or SGM shall be published via email or letterboxes giving at least 2 weeks of notice.

Responses indicating plans to attend or apologies, are kindly requested and should be sent to the Secretary at the earliest opportunity.

The Committee

The Committee shall be composed of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer (the Officers) and between 4 and 8 other Committee members. Members will be elected at the AGM for a period of one year until the following AGM. If a position must be competed, a vote by the Society members present shall determine the winner. Any Committee member or Officer can stand for re-election in consecutive years without restriction.

The Officers

The Chairperson shall:

1. Ensure the Society is properly conducted according to the constitution.
2. Chair and delegate the conduct of meetings.
3. The Vice-Chairperson shall:
4. Step in to assist the Chairperson in his/her duties when required and under the instruction of the Chairperson
5. Fulfil the role of Chairperson should the Chairperson resign or be unavailable to continue in their role, until the next AGM.

The Secretary shall:

1. Give notice of the dates and time and venue of all meetings to all members via email or letterboxes. This should be done no later than 2 weeks prior to a meeting.
2. Give notice of meeting agendas. This should be done no later than one week prior to a meeting.
3. Keep minutes of meetings and records of attendance.
4. Arrange distribution of minutes to all members via email or letterboxes within 4 weeks of a meeting
5. Keep records of Society membership, including a Committee list and contact details.
6. Keep records of key correspondence received and sent regarding the work of the Society.
7. Make available the constitution and any amendments agreed to it.

The Treasurer shall:

1. Account for and deposit with the Society's bank account, all monies received.
2. Sign cheques drawn on the account in accordance with the Committee's instructions.
3. Keep proper accounts at all times and make an account statement and overview of transactions available at all meetings, and upon request.

Any Officer can temporarily delegate their duties to another member. It will remain the responsibility of that Officer to ensure this duty is fully completed within a reasonable timeframe.

Alterations to the Constitution

Any changes to the constitution can be agreed at an AGM.

Complaints Procedure

If any resident has cause for complaint against the Society, any other village resident or any affiliated group, then the nature of the complaint should be submitted in writing to the Chairperson in the first instance. By agreement between the complainant and Chairperson, the matter shall then be handled by the Chairperson alone, the Committee or an independent third party, to help resolve the matter. The third person can be either a Council representative or a village resident deemed by the relevant parties to be impartial and who agrees to mediate. Involvement of the individual or group about whom the complaint is raised, shall be encouraged early and without judgement. If the process is unable to reach a conclusion, the Chairperson shall bring the matter to a conclusion and his/her decision will be final.

If the complaint is against the Chairperson, the written complaint can be submitted to any other Committee member who will further the complaint as above, to help bring about a resolution. If the matter cannot be resolved with satisfaction, the Committee shall bring the matter to a conclusion and their decision will be final.

The matters of complaints shall remain confidential to those involved.

Dissolution

The Society may be dissolved if deemed necessary by members at a Special General Meeting. Any assets or remaining funds after debts have been paid shall be returned to their providers or transferred to local charities or other voluntary groups, having similar objectives of the Society.

