

# Localism strategy

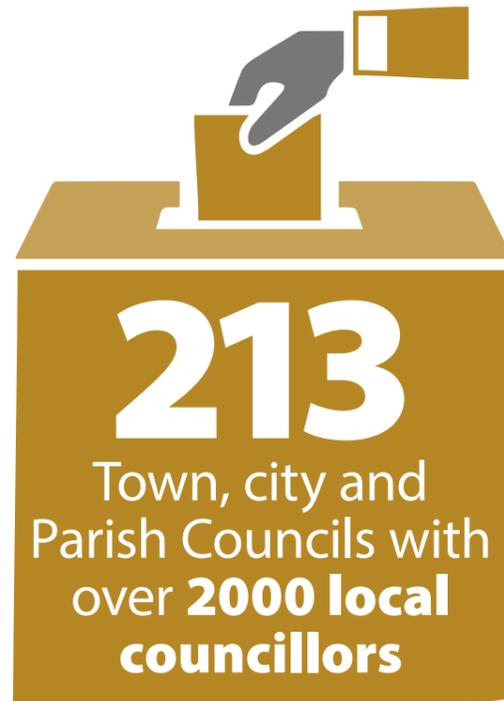
Enabling and empowering local people, town and parish councils and the voluntary and community sector to play an active role in making decisions that affect them and in delivering what their community needs.

## What is it?

Supporting Cornish people and organisations in local communities to take action.



## Context



## What are the priorities?

*Working with local organisations to support locally led development and solutions*

*Supporting local organisations and Cornwall Councillors to work effectively together*

*Devolving assets and services to local organisations better placed to manage them*



## Localism Strategy 2016

*Enabling and empowering local people, local councils and the voluntary and community sector to play an active role in making decisions that affect them and in delivering what their community needs*

*Part of Cornwall Council's Organisational Development Framework*

**Approved by Full Council  
– 16 February 2016**

## Foreword - Mark Read, Head of Customers and Communities

I am pleased to introduce our 2015-2019 Localism Strategy, which sets out how the Council will take forward its commitment to the principles of localism over the next four years.

I believe that by Members and staff working more closely with local councils and community groups, our own organisation and statutory partners will develop a stronger understanding of, and empathy with, the areas we serve. We will also demonstrate that we listen and react to the needs of local communities.

The principles of localism and devolution are cornerstones of the Council Strategy and Council Plan. The Communities and Devolution team are crucial to refining these principles and reshaping the organisation to deliver them. Members, other Council services, partners and local communities have an important role to play too.

Our work over the next four years will build on our Cornwall wide framework of 19 well established community networks and good working relationships with statutory partners, the local council sector (Town and Parish Councils) and the voluntary and community sectors.

Devolution of local services is a priority in the Council's four year budget in order to meet the vast financial challenges the organisation faces over the coming years. More than that, it will also give our local communities the opportunity to shape their areas, support local jobs, make the improvements that sometimes only local knowledge can provide and respond to the local demand.

## Links with other strategies and initiatives

The Localism Strategy complements key Council strategies and plans, including:

- The **Cornwall Deal**, which will devolve powers from Whitehall to Cornwall Council, influencing how we then devolve more to local communities.
- The **Property Strategy**, which will balance the need for savings with Council services' accommodation needs, working closely with public sector partners.
- The **Communications and Marketing Strategy**, which will increase awareness of Council services and achievements and enhance the Council's reputation.
- The **Positive Governance Strategy**, which aims to improve Member engagement and enhanced stakeholder and community engagement.
- Work with partners to build **community resilience** on a day to day basis and in times of emergency.
- Developing and implementing Cornwall's **Local Plan**.

## Cornwall Council's Organisational Development Framework

The Localism Strategy is one of ten strategies which sit beneath Cornwall Council's Organisational Development (OD) Strategic Framework.

Each strategy focusses on a different aspect of the organisation and will contribute to the overall ambition of the OD Strategic Framework:

### ***Cornwall Council; fit for purpose and prepared for the future***

The Localism Strategy will also contribute to the achievement of the four strategic aims of the OD framework:



The actions identified in the ten strategies will be incorporated into the Council's annual business and service plans for delivery. These are subject to the Council's standard risk and performance management processes.

The Organisational Development Steering Group will monitor delivery of the overall framework and progress towards the four strategic aims.

## Context

Cornwall covers the largest geographical area of any unitary council in England and is mainly rural, which can make delivering services more difficult and expensive. To provide better links with local areas, we created 19 community networks. The community networks vary considerably in size but each represents a distinct, recognisable geographic area with its own needs and priorities. Each has a Community Network Panel, which includes Cornwall Council members and a representative from each local council in the network area.

Cornwall has 213 Town and Parish councils, also known as local councils, with over 2,200 councillors. In the last local council elections, approximately one third had elections.

Local councils can raise money locally through an annual precept to provide services in their local community. Local councils in Cornwall have a combined precept of over £15.5 million per year. At present their precepts are not capped, but it is likely that in future larger local councils will be capped. There are legal limits on the services local councils can deliver, but those with the General Power of Competence have more flexibility as to what they can deliver.

We provide local councils with regular newsletters and bulletins on topics that affect them and work with local councils on an individual basis on issues such as planning and devolution. We also have strong relationships with the Cornwall Association of Local Councils (CALC) and the Cornwall branch of the Society of Local Council Clerks (CSLCC), and have developed a number of thematic partnerships e.g. planning to co-design and co-develop policies and procedures.

Cornwall's innovative social enterprise sector and dynamic voluntary and community sector are facing challenging times as sources of external funding reduce. In 2013 these sectors peaked at more than 4,500 separate organisations with a total turnover in excess of £580 million, but in the last 2 years the number of organisations has reduced as organisations have closed or merged and it is estimated that turnover may have reduced by 20%. Nonetheless we have a positive relationship with the sector and work at a strategic level with representative bodies and at a local level with many different organisations.

We recognise that Cornwall is changing economically, environmentally and socially and that these issues interact. More importantly, we recognise that the level of interaction varies from place to place, and we embrace the fact that each community is different.

## Our Localism Strategy

### Our principles



- **Members, staff and partners working with** communities to **find local solutions** and **not imposing** solutions on them.
- Ensuring that **decisions** are made at the **most appropriate level**.
- Embracing the fact that that **each community is different**.
- Identifying and working to **clear evidence based priorities**
- Ensuring local priorities and strategic priorities inform each other.
- Listening and acting decisively and promptly.
- Supporting **equality and social inclusion**.
- Encouraging **local collaboration**.
- Being **flexible and responsive** in the delivery of services.
- With service delivery and asset management, ensuring **devolution is the preferred option** and, at the start, **all options are on the table**.
- Helping ensure that each asset and service is placed with the best **long term custodian**.
- Making **freehold our default position** for asset transfer.
- Doing what's best for each local community and, above all, acting in Cornwall's best interest.

### Linkages

- The Localism Strategy will help local communities to inform strategic decisions and vice versa



## Outcomes

All localism activity we undertake will be:

- **Open and honest** – direct, truthful and factual.
- **Contextual** – recognising that each community is different.
- **Equal** – offering all communities similar opportunities
- **Timely** – with up to date information communicated regularly, consistently and quickly and with “no surprises”.
- **Relevant** – targeted at the needs of the local community, whether urban, rural or coastal.

## How will we deliver the Localism Strategy?

All parts and services of Cornwall Council, Members, portfolio holders and officers alike, and partners have a part to play in delivering localism.

Cornwall Council Members have a pivotal role in working with local communities and will be supported by the Communities and Devolution team. The team comprises three area teams and a dedicated Devolution team with multi-professional support from across the Council.

At its heart, the team includes a community link function undertaken by communities area managers (CAMs) and community link officers (CLOs), supported by communities support assistants (CSAs). Each of the CAMs also leads on a specific part of the localism agenda and works alongside the Devolution team.

The team work closely with the Cabinet Member for Localism and the Localism Policy Advisory Committee. Additionally, the Devolution Board oversees the devolution programme.

## How will we measure our success?

The success of the Localism Strategy cannot be measured directly, but there are proxy measures in the residents' survey that can help indicate whether the strategy is working. We will help:

- Increase the number of residents and partners who feel engaged and know how they can, and do, play a role in public services in Cornwall, wherever they live and work.
- Ensure Cornwall's residents and communities have a voice through improved engagement locally, in the South West and nationally.
- Increase understanding of our priorities and what we have done to deliver them.

We will also monitor and evaluate the strategy's implementation through:

- A residents' survey every 18 months
- The number of devolution projects delivered and savings achieved
- The number of neighbourhood plans and community emergency plans underway
- Regular surveys of local councils
- The number of local councils:
  - with agency agreements to deliver services on our behalf, such as local maintenance partnerships, highway verge management and maintenance of closed churchyards
  - who engage in community network panels
  - who have the General Power of Competence or similar
  - who achieve the Local Council Award
  - who have elections
  - with cluster arrangements in place

## Our Localism Strategy is made up of five strategic aims:



Over the next few pages, each of the five strategic aims will be presented as follows:

- The **strategic aim** describes what we are going to do to support the overall Council Strategy
- The **rationale** explains why this is important and describes the current context.
- The activities explain **what we will need to do** or put in place to achieve our strategic aims.
- The measures describe **how we will evaluate our success**.

## Strategic aim:

### Developing trust and capacity

#### The rationale...

To have an effective localism strategy, we need to support local communities to build their confidence and capacity to take greater control of their own destiny and be more resilient. Each community is different and local capacity depends on the local context. Therefore each community and the organisations within it will need different support.

#### We will achieve this aim by...

- Supporting Members and ensuring that they and local communities are **consulted in a timely manner** and kept informed about local issues so that there are **no surprises** for them.
- **Developing and maintaining effective, co-ordinated two-way communications** with representative agencies via updated website, regular newsletters and bulletins, forums, meetings and networking opportunities.
- **Raising awareness** across the Council of the role of **local Members** and the **Communities and Devolution team**.
- **Raising awareness** across the Council of the local council, community and voluntary sectors and how they work.
- Using local channels such as local newsletters and websites to support local and strategic Council communications.
- **Co-designing and co-developing** important localism policies and procedures, for example working with CALC on planning through the Planning Partnership and exploring new themes such as waste, rural traffic issues and community governance.
- **Setting up a training partnership** to develop and deliver **an accessible training programme** for local councils and voluntary and community sector organisations, making use of opportunities from European funding.
- Working with the local council sector and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to remove red tape so that local councils and organisations can deliver the services they want to.
- Maximising opportunities to secure national support funding for Cornwall, e.g. Our Place, Power to Change.
- **Encouraging volunteering** by Council staff, members and within local communities.
- Supporting local councils to work together in **clusters**.
- **Supporting local councils** to make full use of **ICT** and **social media**.

#### How will we know we've been successful...

- Members, local councils and local organisations
  - will have a mature and meaningful relationship.
  - will work collaboratively.
  - will have effective two-way communications with Cornwall Council.
- Local councils and community organisations, and the individuals involved with them, will be better able to identify local needs and deliver local solutions.
- The public will know how to contact their local Cornwall councillor and local council.
- External funding will be secured.

## Strategic aim:

# Supporting community governance and engagement

## The rationale...

We will endeavour to make better and timelier decisions that are more likely to meet local needs if local communities engage with us to inform our decision making. If local communities feel that they are being listened to, they will feel in greater control of their own destiny, take more local pride and be more inclined to work with us and partners to improve their area. This in turn will reduce their dependence on Cornwall Council and the demands on reducing resources.

## We will achieve this aim by...

- **Supporting Members** in their enhanced local leadership role.
- Develop processes to improve community governance and engagement
- **Maintaining and enhancing community network panels** so that they can:
  - Progress current issues affecting the community network area
  - Engage the public and get their views
  - Help hold the Council and partners to **account for local service delivery**
  - Influence Cornwall-wide strategies, local service delivery, local funding and the delivery of local projects
  - Build relationships between local partners, promote the wellbeing of the community and help communities to work together
- Developing ways to escalate and resolve local issues.
- Supporting Members to use their **Community Chest grants to maximise local benefit** and bring in additional resources.
- **Exploring new ways of devolving power and influence**, to ensure that **decisions** are made at the **most appropriate level**, including giving community networks, Cornwall Council Members and individual local councils greater responsibilities for making local decisions and influencing strategic decisions.
- **Promoting local democracy** at all levels and encouraging candidates from all backgrounds to stand for election at both a Cornwall Council and local council level.
- **Promoting public understanding** of and engagement in the **planning process**.

## How will we know we've been successful...

- Local communities will know that they are being listened to and how their views are being taken into account.
- Local communities and the elected Members that represent them will have more influence and control.
- More than one third of local councils will have elections in 2017 and all Cornwall Council divisions will be contested.

## Strategic aim:

# Supporting locally led long term development

### The rationale...

It is much easier for the Council and our partners to support local communities to plan and deliver long term local social, environmental and economic improvements if they tell us what is needed in their area. We need to help communities tell us about their local needs and the practical measures required to help meet them. We also need to ensure that key services such as planning, transport, property and economic development promote local priorities that complement each other and meet local need. Towns, coastal communities and rural areas are all different and will need different support.

### We will achieve this aim by...

- Encouraging, supporting and incentivising local communities to develop **neighbourhood plans** and **community action plans** e.g. coastal communities bids.
- Supporting initiatives that **re-invigorate town centres** and **coastal communities** by developing **local development frameworks** including:
  - Place based civic regeneration projects
  - Local investment priorities and frameworks
- Supporting initiatives that ensure **rural communities remain sustainable** and become more resilient, particularly Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Community Led Local Development (CLLD) and LEADER projects.
- Enabling communities to access information from a single source.
- Ensuring key services identify and develop local priorities together and set up local mechanisms, including strengthened community network panels and potentially **local delivery boards**, to deliver projects that meet local priorities.

### How will we know we've been successful...

- Each local community, regardless of size, will be able to articulate its local needs and tell us what practical steps Cornwall Council and partners could take to work with the local community to meet these needs.
- There will be an ongoing programme of works in towns and coastal communities across Cornwall with identified sources of funding to deliver them.
- There will be an ongoing programme of works to support the sustainability of rural communities with identified delivery arrangements and sources of funding.

## Strategic aim:

### Supporting local day to day solutions

#### The rationale...

In addition to their long term aspirations, communities may have local issues that need to be resolved with support from the Council and our partners. Some of these issues can be anticipated and prevented. Others, such as severe weather events, cannot and some issues, such as Minorca Lane, are a historic legacy. We need to work closely with statutory partners to put structures and protocols in place to support local communities in tackling local issues as and when they happen.

#### We will achieve this aim by...

- Supporting the establishment of local action groups so public and voluntary sector services, our operational services and partners meet on a regular basis.
- Developing Cornwall-wide **programmes and structures** to manage ongoing issues, for example Local Safety Advisory Groups to advise event organisers.
- Developing **task and finish groups** to deal with local issues in specific areas or around specific themes.
- Supporting **community resilience measures**, such as community emergency plans, to help plan for future severe weather events and other emergency situations and get communities back on their feet after an event.
- Develop measures to support local businesses, particularly SMEs, to become more resilient

#### How will we know we've been successful...

- The Council and partners will be able to use their limited resources to support local communities to deal with local issues.
- Communities and organisations across Cornwall will be able to access a consistent level of support wherever they are.
- More communities will have developed Community Emergency Plans.
- Self-help processes will have been developed to support local businesses recover after emergencies.

## Strategic aim:

### Devolving assets and locally delivered services

#### The rationale...

Communities across Cornwall have different needs. Whilst many statutory services, such as highways, education, health and social care are co-ordinated centrally, it is important that all services, particularly community based services, should be delivered based on local need, by organisations suited to local delivery.

As budget pressures put upon Cornwall Council from central government grow, funding for community based services will reduce or could even end. We need to ensure, where appropriate, that each service and asset is devolved to the organisation that can act as the best long term custodian. The devolution programme offers local communities the opportunity to take on services so they can continue. Often local communities can deliver local services more efficiently and economically than we can. Communities can choose their level of involvement, from influencing how the Council or its contractor delivers services locally to taking on full responsibility for managing and delivering a local service or asset.

The Government has recognised the importance of communities and protecting local assets and delivery of local services through the Localism Act 2011, the Community Right to Bid and the Community Right to Challenge.

#### We will achieve this aim by...

- Putting robust processes in place to implement the Localism Act 2011, in particular the **Community Right to Bid**.
- Building on existing work with local councils and community groups, particularly the existing **agency agreements**, to develop devolution packages.
- Establishing a dedicated Devolution team and multi-professional support team.
- Establishing the **Devolution Programme** as one of the Council's key transformational programmes and accelerating the existing devolution agenda in line with the wishes of local communities.
- Establishing ways to resolve any devolution versus commercialisation tensions.
- Exploring ways to **vary existing contracts** and **shape new contracts** to give communities more say in local service delivery and **local standards**.
- Exploring ways to give local communities a greater role in the delivery of services to **individuals** and particular **groups of need and interest**.
- Developing processes to allow local communities to have an **active role in monitoring service delivery** and **holding providers to account**.
- Developing **policies and processes** to ensure consistent and timely decisions and ensure all communities know their position.
- **Sharing best practice** and **celebrating success**.

#### How will we know we've been successful...

- . In addition to service lead devolution projects e.g. libraries, deliver 75% of the annual devolution programme.
- The Council's base budget for service delivery will be lower and savings achieved.
- The local impact of service reductions will be minimised, savings targets will be achieved and services will continue, tailored to meet local needs and resources.
- Local assets will be protected by being listed as community assets and the Council will not receive any Community Rights to Challenge.

## Summary...

- Localism is a way of working that engages with local communities and the organisations that are active within them, so they play an active role in decisions that affect them and in delivering what their community needs.
- The Localism Strategy focuses on five key areas:
  - **Trust and capacity** – working with communities, local councils and voluntary and community groups across Cornwall to build a trusting relationship, build local confidence and capacity and promote democracy.
  - **Community governance and engagement** – allowing Cornwall Council members and local communities to be more involved in local decision making processes and have greater influence and control.
  - **Locally led development** – using new and existing mechanisms to give communities the tools they need to develop long term plans to deliver local social, environmental and economic improvements.
  - **Local solutions** – ensuring Council services and partners within an area work closely together to make efficient use of the resources available to deal with day to day issues.
  - **Devolution of assets and service** – devolving assets and services to local communities (local council or community group) to maintain local services and assets and help Cornwall Council achieve its budget savings.
- The five activities are interdependent and collectively aim to connect local government and local communities.
- The Localism Strategy will be refreshed annually to ensure it is still relevant and being delivered in line with current needs and opportunities.

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