



# 5. SERVING THE CITIZEN

## 5.1 Introduction

A key driver for the restructuring of local government in Cornwall is the potential to improve the delivery of local authority services. The new authority will deliver a uniformly high level of service to all people in Cornwall; services will be more accessible, more efficient and higher levels of satisfaction will be reported. More effective representation and community engagement will ensure that providers are better able to respond to public demands for change. This section examines how local people will access services and engage with local government under the new structure.

## 5.2 Accessing services

Our vision is to transform the ability of members of the public to access public services. People should be able to access services in a manner that suits their needs, in the locations that they find most convenient and benefiting from the most up to date and approachable technology available.

In the future, members of the public will be able to access services in a number of different ways. Most people will be able to make general enquiries without leaving their homes. The new authority will establish a single, consolidated telephone contact centre. Supported by a comprehensive customer relationship management system, the majority of telephone interactions with service users will be handled by front line contact centre staff, leaving back office specialists to concentrate on more complex issues.

In addition the new authority will develop interactive, self service access to information and services through the internet and related multi media platforms.



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## Digital Cornwall

Our vision is for Cornwall to be a place where technology is used to tackle isolation and exclusion, where the use of fuel is reduced, where communities are encouraged to form and evolve and where people can easily access their public services. This vision will be realised through the development of an interactive multi media platform, hosting and distributing programmes and information, via broadband, to PC's, TV's and mobile phones. The platform will host a local digital TV service and, alongside entertainment, the public sector would deliver information and services. Because it will be broadband based, the programmes and services will be fully interactive and on demand<sup>5</sup>.

Interactive digital television will provide unprecedented access for the community to public services and will transform the way in which citizens interact with many services. As well as direct interactive contact with the council, citizens will be able to book a GP appointment through their televisions, access the Citizens Advice Bureau and interact with their children's schools. There will also be opportunities to develop the potential for real time remote contact with citizens with health problems.

In addition, the technology would open up opportunities for citizens to become much more involved with their communities through online consultations and the creation of community content.

The use of familiar television technology offers the opportunity to bridge the digital divide and reach those members of the community who have a fear of technology and do not have ready access to computers.

<sup>5</sup> This work would build on the plans that have already been developed by Cornwall County Council and its partners in relation to the Digital Challenge initiative.

Where face to face contact is favoured or more complex information is required, local people will be able to visit their nearest 'one stop shop'. These will be formed within the main towns which form the centre of the proposed Community Networks (See Chapter 6). These public facing offices will utilise existing premises and ideally will be shared with other service providers, including town and parish councils, and will build on the co-location initiatives that have been developed by the county council in recent years.

The Community Access Points will be staffed by support officers that have been specially trained to help members of the public direct their queries to the appropriate council department and other public services. Access will also be available to specialists to help explain service specific issues; for example, in relation to environmental health, social care, and highways or to enable individuals and businesses to apply for planning permission, either via telephone, web based technology, video link and direct face to face 'surgery' sessions.

Because of the dispersed nature of Cornwall, these offices will be supplemented by smaller, part time (or in some circumstances, mobile) 'access points' based in local community facilities, to be shared with town and parish councils where possible.

We describe how these arrangements will work in more detail using case studies based on the Lizard, Bodmin and Saltash and Torpoint (see case studies 1, 2 and 3) Community Network Areas.



### 5.3 Meeting local need

Services will be tailored to meet the requirements of local communities. A new system of community level governance will be developed and used as the basis upon which local need will be assessed. Staff centred in the Community Networks will monitor the performance of all services on an area basis and would feed that information back to service managers, the corporate core of the new authority and where necessary other service providers. Demographic and performance information will also be made available to members of the public.

Local people will also be able to express their views on service performance through the dedicated call centre, the digital initiatives described above and the Community Access Points.

In addition, members of the public will be able to recommend specific service improvements and influence the shape of future provision through their participation in community planning. Each community will prepare an action plan that will offer local people the opportunity to identify the services they use most and to describe how they would wish those services to be delivered.

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## 5.4 Locally accountable service provision

Beyond the access and engagement initiatives described above, and where members of the public do not feel that their views are being listened to, they will be able to lobby their local members. This will be more effective than under the two tier structure principally because each local member will have a right of access to all the local authority managers in Cornwall. Local members will be able to resolve complex problems (which may currently require the coordinated efforts of members and managers in separate authorities) more quickly.

In some instances, local members will be able to address public concerns directly; by taking decisions relating to the delivery of devolved services or by allocating portions of a delegated budget.

Local people will be able to access their local representative directly or through their nearest Community Access Point, where their member would have an office. Member support officers based within the one stop shops would be on hand to help individuals articulate their concerns.



## 5.5 An organisational structure to support enhanced service delivery

The new organisation will develop on a hub and spoke principle to ensure strong connections between the local community and strategic policy making.

At the hub of the organisation will be the strategic leadership and policy making core. The leader and executive will be supported centrally within the chief executive's office, along with key corporate functions such as performance management. A suggested organisational concept is illustrated at Appendix 3.

Area based managers, each assigned to a number of community network areas, will provide the important link to service teams and the strategic centre. The role of the community development officer will be to identify local needs and priorities, facilitate local partnership working and community planning and support the local members in their decision making and scrutiny roles – ie place shaping. Access to area based service delivery centres and the strategic centre will be enabled by web based technology and video conferencing facilities.

The organisation as a whole will be supported by an overarching ICT structure which will enable a flexible but consistent approach to communication and data management. This is demonstrated in our ICT case study (case study 6).