



# Localism and Devolution

## A fresh approach

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Customers and Communities Service  
Communities and Devolution

# **Localism and Devolution – A fresh approach**

**Introduction by Jeremy Rowe**

**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Localism**

Cornwall Council is committed to the principles of Localism and Devolution. Anything we can do to make discussions with our communities more transparent and productive will be hugely beneficial to all of us. It is my strong hope that, through working more closely with local councils and community groups, our own organisation will develop a stronger understanding of, and empathy with, the localities we all serve and demonstrate that we listen and react to the needs of local communities.

As part of the work to develop the Council Strategy and the Council Plan it was evident that the principles of localism and devolution would be a cornerstone. However it was also recognised that we needed to refine what we mean by “localism” and “devolution” and reshape the organisation to help deliver this. The new Communities and Devolution Team which has evolved from the former Localism Team are crucial to this but all members, other Council services, partners and local communities have an important role to play.

We have six years localism work to build on with a strong established framework of 19 Community Networks across Cornwall. More recently, devolution has been identified in the Council's four year budget as a priority for meeting the vast financial challenges the organisation needs to make over the coming years. More than that, however, devolving property and services currently held in Cornwall's administrative centre will give our local communities the opportunity to shape their areas, make the improvements that sometimes only local knowledge can provide and respond to the demand for local facilities, led by the communities they serve.

Localism and devolution represent a mechanism for delivering the latest revolution and the Council's vision for this is one shared by Members, officers are partners alike.

The localism and devolution agenda gives us all the opportunity to help communities shape local democracy for the future and I believe it is a privilege to be at the heart of it.

I am confident that with such a diverse and talented group of officers all working together towards a common goal, we can achieve great things. This is a real opportunity and, in a period where there is much focus on the negative, I believe this can, and will be a very positive asset of the council.

I wish the new team well and look forward to working with them.

## Delivering Localism and Devolution

All parts of Cornwall Council have a role to play in delivering Localism and Devolution, but the newly formed Communities and Devolution Team, part of the Customers and Communities Service, are pivotal. The team comprises three area teams complemented by the work of a newly formed multi-professional Devolution Team.

### The new Communities and Devolution Team

At its heart, the new team includes a “Community Link” function undertaken by both Communities Area Managers (CAMs) and by Community Link Officers (CLOs). This function combines many of the functions previously undertaken by Community Network Managers, Community Regeneration Officers and the Town Centre team. This aims to ensure that Cornwall Council has strong links with all of Cornwall’s communities. CLOs are supported by Communities Support Assistants (CSAs) and by three Communication and Engagement Specialists (CESs) who are aligned to each of the three areas. As well as CAMs performing a “Community Link” function each leads on a specific part of the new offer who all work alongside the Devolution team.

### The new offer

The role of the new team is focussed on five key areas of activities:

- **Community governance and engagement** – allowing Cornwall Council members and local communities to be more involved in local decision making processes and having greater influence and control (Lead CAM – East).
- **Locally led development** – using new and existing mechanisms to give communities the tools they need to deliver local social, environmental and economic improvements (Lead CAM – West).
- **Local solutions**– ensuring Council services and partners within an area work closely together to make maximum use of the resources available (Lead CAM- Mid).
- **Devolution of assets and service** – devolving assets and services to local communities via their town or parish council and/or community group to maintain local services and assets, and assist Cornwall Council to achieve its budget savings (Lead – Devolution Specialist).
- **Trust and Capacity** – working with communities, Town and Parish Councils and voluntary and community groups across Cornwall to build a trusting relationship and to build local capacity (Lead – Asst. Service Head)

The five activities are interdependent and together aim to connect local government and local communities.

## **Community Governance and Engagement (Lead: CAM - East)**

There are some established processes and procedures that are being developed further to support this. These include:

### **Community Network Panels**

The team supports Cornwall's 19 Community Network Areas (CNAs) and the Community Network Panels (CNPs). The Panels are local public forums comprising the Cornwall Councillors and representatives from town and parish councils within the CNA. CNPs take an overview of issues in the area and provide strong local leadership. They can also involve local organisations and other service providers e.g. police and health services. The Panels:

- progress current issues affecting the Community Network Area;
- seek to engage the public and get their views;
- help hold the Council and partners to account for local service delivery;
- seek to influence Cornwall-wide strategies, local service delivery, local funding and the delivery of local projects; and
- work to build relationships between local partners, promote the wellbeing of the community, and strengthen community cohesion.

CLOs advise the Panels, liaising with all the partners involved and working particularly closely with Panel Chairs, and coordinate work to progress the actions agreed at their meetings. Administrative support to the Panels is provided the CSAs and work closely with the CESs to improve public engagement with the Panels.

### **Community Chest**

Each Cornwall Councillor has a small fund – the “Community Chest” - from which they can make local grants to assist projects run by voluntary and community groups in the Cornwall Council area they represent. In 2015/16, each Cornwall Councillor has a total grant fund of £2,000; grants awarded typically range from £100 to £1,000.

The team administers all aspects of the scheme. This includes publicity, advising local organisations on their applications, assessing applications against the grant guidance, processing grants for payment, and monitoring and publishing information about spend.

### **Supporting Members**

The team has an important role in supporting Cornwall Councillors in their local leadership role. The team work closely with Cornwall Councillors in their Community Network Areas, assisting them with queries and helping them to progress solutions to local issues in liaison with Cornwall Council services, other organisations such as town and parish councils, voluntary and community groups, residents

and the business community. More specific help for Cornwall Councillors can include:

- undertaking basic administrative advice and support;
- undertaking general research;
- administering the Community Chest;
- arranging non-political meetings; and
- advising on key local contacts (to facilitate casework for example).

## **Community Engagement**

The team, particularly CESs, support community engagement in a number of ways, including:

- Facilitating consultation and engagement via CNPs as they have an important role as a forum for Cornwall Council and other agencies to consult Members, local councils and other stakeholders on the development of plans and strategies, and projects in their area. [In 2014, the Council agreed that all Panels would officially meet in public session; as part of this, Panels are currently developing plans to maximise the effectiveness of their engagement activities];
- Organising bespoke engagement activities, ranging from participatory budgeting to enable the community to have their say on the allocation of grant monies, to coordinating consultation activity on strategic infrastructure improvements;
- Promoting Community Network Panel meetings and encouraging greater public engagement through a range of communication channels;
- Publicising decisions and activities of CNPs;
- Helping build positive relationships with key organisations in local areas, including town and parish councils, residents associations, community and voluntary sector groups; and
- Working with services to publicise important decisions and actions in the area.

## **Future aspirations**

The Council is keen to further enhance community engagement and empowerment to enable Cornwall Councillors and local communities to be more involved in decision-making processes and have greater influence and control.

Options for this are currently being developed for consideration by Members and subsequent consultation but, in practical terms, they could include:

- Strengthened CNPs which might do one or more of the following:
  - Allocate grant and other one-off funding
  - Have influence/control over local budgets e.g. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
  - Have enhanced influence over decisions, policy and strategy affecting local areas, and over local service delivery

- Have a greater role in coordinating local community engagement across the public sector
- Local decision-making and regulation involving the delegation of Cornwall Council functions to CNPs and/or Town and Parish councils.

Another aspiration is to examine the feasibility of transforming the Community Chest into an online process. The aim would be to enable customers to enquire and fill in the application form via the website (with alternative provision for any customers who cannot or do not wish to do this), and the entire assessment and payment process to be completed online. This should make the process, which is already straightforward, quicker and easier for applicants and Members and more efficient.

## **Locally Led Development (Lead: CAM – West)**

Locally Led Development is the approach by which Cornwall Council and other public sector bodies work with local communities to promote and deliver joined up projects to improve the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the local community. There are some established processes and procedures that are being developed further to support this. These include:

### **Neighbourhood Planning**

Neighbourhood Plans allow people to come together through a local Town or Parish Council and say where they think new houses, businesses and shops should go, and what they should look like.

The team works closely with colleagues in the Planning team to deliver Neighbourhood Plans (NPs). CLO's will be the first point of call for any town or parish council or community group who are interested in developing a Plan.

CLO's will provide enough initial advice and guidance to enable an interested group to decide if a NP is appropriate for the requirements of their community.

If the community wish to develop a NP then CLO's will help support the project plan, provide advice about community engagement and be available throughout the project period for general advice and guidance.

In particular the team, working with colleagues in the Planning Service, can provide:

- Initial engagement with any group to discuss if a NP (or alternative) is appropriate for the requirements of their community;
- Advice about project planning and seeking funding;
- Community engagement advice; and
- Useful contact throughout the process and links to services within Cornwall Council e.g. schools, highways

### **Community Planning**

The team are able to assist any group who would like to produce a community plan. This may be in the form of a town or parish plan, community action plan, community engagement plan or any other form of community engagement.

The team are also able to offer support to develop any other opportunities for local action plans that communities are able to develop as part of the Localism Act.

### **LEADER & CLLD**

The four Local Action Group (LAGs) areas covering Cornwall will be supported by the Communities and Devolution Team to ensure that

projects maximise their potential locally. The £7.3M successfully secured will use the LEADER approach to deliver locally developed projects through the four LAG groups. Each LAG group is supported by a member of the Communities and Devolution Team who will use local intelligence and contacts within the Community Network Areas to link projects together to achieve the maximum impact.

Community Led Local Development (CLLD) is an additional tranche of European Funding that will be in place by the end of 2015. This funding applies to areas of Cornwall that fall into the bottom 30% of Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The funding will be delivered by each of the LAG areas and supported by the Communities and Devolution Team who will assist in delivering projects to maximum effect.

### **Community Energy Schemes**

Cornwall Council recognises the importance of Community Energy Projects and in the emerging Local Plan offers support to “renewable and low carbon energy generation that meets the needs of local communities”.

CLO’s will be the first point of contact for any community wishing to develop a community energy scheme. The CLO’s will be able to help with community engagement, providing information and guidance about setting up a scheme and be the point of contact for communities wanting specialist advice from planners and other officers within Cornwall Council.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) / S106**

The Communities and Devolution Team are currently exploring ways in which existing S106 commitments and future CIL can be locally negotiated. This is to ensure that Locally Led Development achieves the best outcomes locally with CLO’s providing local information and knowledge to ensure that projects maximise their potential.

We will be working with Planning Colleagues and Members to deliver a way in which these can achieve the most effective impact locally.

### **Asset rationalisation programme/ Major Regeneration Projects**

The Communities and Devolution Team are working closely with other council services where opportunities exist to rationalise the property holding of the council and other partners. This forms part of an integrated approach to place based delivery and local place shaping of services for the future.

The team are also working closely with colleagues internally and with external bodies to develop and help deliver some major projects that



will have a regeneration effect in our communities. A good example of this would be the current work in Penzance to deliver a circa £3million project to regenerate the Jubilee Pool to ensure its unique offer continues to be a draw for visitor to the area.

### **Future Aspirations**

We are keen to develop local models that will make it easier for local communities to work with the various services within Cornwall Council to pursue local projects that will deliver local social, environmental and economic improvements. We hope to develop an agreed set of priorities and an Action Plan for each CAN.

We will continue to ensure that the role that town centres play – both for a local area and to the wider economy of Cornwall – is fully realised. This will be evidenced by town centre regeneration integrating formally with local development and neighbourhood plans, as well as with Cornwall Council strategy and LEP strategy.

## **Local solutions (Lead: CAM – Mid)**

There are some established processes and procedures that are being developed further to support the efficient use of local resources to help resolve local issues. These include:

### **Town and Parish Councils and local Voluntary and Community Groups**

The team work across Cornwall to support town and parish councils and voluntary, community groups and social enterprises at a local level. Both the CLOs and CSAs help these different groups with day to day queries relating to the work of Cornwall Council and its partner agencies. CLOs can also liaise between the groups and Cornwall Council departments, particularly on issues involving more than one service. This might include helping to advance local projects, sorting out operational problems, or seeking solutions to challenges facing communities, through a combination of advice and active involvement.

### **Local Partnership working**

The team, working with Council services and partners, in particular the Police, have established a framework of local operational partnerships to deal with day to day issues, deal with major issues when they arise. Many of these local partnerships include low-level community safety issues.

Work also includes the operation of Local Safety Advisory Groups which seek to advise those organising local events that can vary in size from village carnivals to event such as Board Masters.

### **Geographic/Thematic Task Groups**

These vary in size and scale and can be established to deal with existing and emerging issues in a particular area e.g. Newquay Safe or issues that affect a particular community across Cornwall e.g. Park Homes. The team can also support key projects being led by other services; this can vary from supporting consultation around key issues (e.g. Council Budget, Local Plan) to supporting the development of major infrastructure projects e.g. dualling A30 Carland Cross – Chiverton Cross

### **Community Emergency Planning**

The team can support any community who are interested in producing Community Emergency Plans (CEPs). These plans enable a community to be more resilient in the face of an emergency such a flood or major fire.

The team can provide support in putting the plan together, providing plan templates, and identifying training and funding opportunities. To

do this, the team works closely with colleagues in Emergency Management, Fire, Environment Agency and the Police as well as the Cornwall Community Flood Forum (CCFF).

### **Emergency Recovery**

The team has a leading role in supporting community recovery following major emergencies such as fire, flooding and severe weather events.

Our central role is to help ensure that an accurate picture of the "situation on the ground" – information on the impact of the emergency locally and the progress of response efforts - is fed back to the central multi-agency response and recovery teams. It is also to help ensure messages from the centre are fed back and disseminated widely in the affected communities.

The team may also, depending on the nature and scale of the incident:

- Set up and run multi-agency drop-in centres in community venues, where local residents and businesses can get advice and support;
- Help to coordinate the provision of emergency supplies, equipment and practical assistance to affected residents and businesses;
- Arrange public meetings/information sessions in affected communities, as an opportunity to keep communities informed of progress, answer their questions, and provide advice and assistance; and
- Administer emergency relief funds designed to support residents and businesses and/or signpost communities to externally administered funds and other sources of practical support

### **Town Centre Support**

The team provides the Council's main support on town centre management including Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).

CLOs work closely with the town centre stakeholders in their area to assist and guide them in delivering support designed to improve the economic performance of that town centre, or help tackle local issues which are affecting town centres. Depending on identified local need this can include:

- Working with/setting up Town Teams with local town centre stakeholders to help coordinate projects to improve the economic performance of the town centre;
- Signposting businesses to the various measures of central support (such as Government grants, EU funding, etc);
- Working with landlords and local commercial agents to help tackle decline, and support inward investment in the town centre; and

- Work with Business Improvement District managers to ensure the Operating Agreement between the BID and Cornwall Council is current, including an annual review of the BID operating agreement.

The team will also work with Cornwall Council Members, Town and Parish Council Members and Cornwall Council Officers to co-ordinate the provision of specialist advice on issues relating to town centres such as Planning, Licensing, Neighbourhood Planning, Car Park consultation, etc.

### **Future aspirations**

We continue to encourage communities across Cornwall to develop CEPs and we are developing a grant scheme to provide financial support to those communities that have a CEP or are developing one.

We intend to develop a *BIDs Cornwall* model (which would be a national pilot). This would develop the economies of scale that the existing BIDs in Cornwall generate. As such, there would be a shared back of house function for all BIDs which would provide them with the resource they need if they are to fully engage with countywide bodies such as the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

As a result of our successful work on Town Teams work has commenced with the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to develop the concept of Coastal Community Teams (CCTs).

We will continue to develop our reputation at DCLG as a leading local authority on town centre management and BIDs and ensuring that we maximise the opportunities this can unlock to ensure a stronger voice for all of our town centres, and benefit from grant funding where available.

# **Devolution of services and assets to local communities**

## **Service Devolution**

The Council has established a dedicated multi-disciplinary team to work with communities to develop devolution proposals.

CLOs should be the first point of contact for any community and will work with the Devolution team to progress projects in this area of work. The team will:

- Maintain an open mind to proposals being developed by a local community;
- Provide feedback to aid groups to develop their ideas;
- Work with community groups and local councils to support them in submitting proposals for consideration;
- Signpost community groups and local councils to resources, guidance and case studies to assist them in their development of their ideas;
- Explain the process so that all parties are aware and understand the likely timescales; and
- Work with groups to manage any transitional arrangements to give projects the best chance of success

A Communications Specialist supports the work of the Devolution team. Their work includes:

- Publicising successful devolution projects through a range of communication channels , including arranging photo opportunities for individual projects where appropriate and identifying case studies to highlight individual projects;
- Providing regular updates on devolution projects for Cornwall Councillors and officers, MPs, town and parish councils and local communities;
- Ensuring local Members are involved in ongoing devolution projects in their local areas; and
- Working with colleagues to identify and build positive relationships with key stakeholders, community leaders etc.

## **Localism Act 2011 – Community Right to Bid**

Under this Act Cornwall Council administers a local Community Right to Bid (CRTB) scheme which allows local communities to seek to list assets of community value. If an asset is listed then it gives the local community a six month opportunity to raise funds to try to purchase the asset if it comes onto open the market.

## **Future Aspirations**

We hope that the establishment of the dedicated devolution team will accelerate the Council's devolution ambitions. As well as supporting the negotiation process we are looking to provide:

- training opportunities for Town and Parish Councils and local voluntary and community groups;
- model specifications and technical advice notes;
- case studies; and
- mechanisms to encourage peer support.

## **Building Trust and Capacity (Lead: Asst. Service Head)**

As well as supporting Town and Parish Councils at the community level, the team works closely with key countywide bodies at a Strategic level to build a more trusting relationship between the sectors that in the long term will help build local capacity for communities to be more active and resilient.

This includes working with the Cornwall Association of Local Councils (CALC – the umbrella body for Town and Parish Councils in Cornwall), the Cornwall Society of Local Council Clerks (CSLCC) and Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum (Cornwall VSF), Volunteer Cornwall, Penwith Community Development Trust (PCDT) and Cornwall Rural Community Charity (CRCC) to help build capacity in communities across Cornwall and support volunteering.

### **Supporting Town and Parish Councils**

The team plays an important link role between town and parish councils and Cornwall Council and other statutory agencies e.g. Police, Environment Agency, and the Office of the Police Commissioner.

The team produces a regular newsletter for town and parish Councils, containing information on a wide range of issues including Council services and initiatives, forthcoming consultations, and information we have been asked to relay by partner agencies.

The team also organises regular events, where town and parish Councils have an opportunity to network with each other, and senior Cornwall Council Members and officers. It also helps to coordinate a range of training activities for town and parish councillors.

### **Supporting voluntary and community Groups**

The team works closely with CRCC and PCDT to provide support to local community groups across Cornwall.

### **Future Aspirations**

Our future aspirations include:

Developing a Cornwall Training and Capacity Building Partnership which will bring together public sector bodies in Cornwall together with representatives from the Town and Parish Council sector and with representatives with the voluntary and community sector in particular to develop a training programme for Clerks, Town and Parish Councillors, trustees and staff alike.

Re-establishing a Planning Forum to enable Cornwall Council to work with Town and Parish Council representatives to review and co-design planning processes.

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## **Glossary / Abbreviations**

<b>BID</b>	Business Improvement District
<b>CALC</b>	Cornwall Association of Local Councils
<b>CAM</b>	Community Area manager
<b>CEP</b>	Community Emergency Plan
<b>CES</b>	Communications and Engagement Specialist
<b>CIL</b>	Community Infrastructure Levy
<b>CLLD</b>	Community Led Local Development
<b>CLO</b>	Community Link Officer
<b>CNA</b>	Community Network Area
<b>CNP</b>	Community Network Panel
<b>CRTB</b>	Community Right to Bid
<b>CRTC</b>	Community Right to Challenge
<b>CSA</b>	Community Support Officer
<b>CSLCC</b>	Cornwall Society of Local Council Clerks
<b>CVSF</b>	Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum
<b>LAG</b>	Local Action Group
<b>LEP</b>	Local Enterprise Partnership
<b>LSAG</b>	Local Safety Advisory Group
<b>NP</b>	Neighbourhood Plan
<b>PCDT</b>	Penwith Community Development Trust

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