Section A: Draft introduction to Localism

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# Draft introduction to Localism

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Introduction

1. One of the cornerstones of the proposal for a single council for Cornwall was to provide ‘A Strong Voice for Local Communities.’ The aim has always been to create a new council which will be committed to actively involving local communities in shaping the areas in which they live.

2. This approach responds to a Government agenda, expressed through various White Papers, which expects local authorities to provide more responsive services and to empower local communities. The ideas and proposals to deliver this new approach have become known as ‘Localism’ and the ‘localism agenda.’ The ‘localism agenda’ has also been identified by all the political parties as a key element of their agenda for local government.

3. The main ingredients of localism can be summarised as follows:
   - Local needs and opportunities – places are different and need local solutions to local problems
   - Local voice and influence – opportunities for all sections of the community to be consulted on and involved in improving their area
   - Locally responsive services – not a one size fits all approach by service providers but services tailored to meet local needs and priorities
   - Local accountability – the performance of all service providers held to account by local communities
   - Local improvement plans – the community helping to shape coordinated plans by all the public, private and voluntary sector working in partnership to improve the area

4. This document provides an introduction to how we are developing our proposals for making localism a reality in Cornwall in two main sections:
   - Localism in Cornwall
   - Community Networks
   - The document concludes by signposting to other more detailed reports in preparation which we intend to bring together into a more comprehensive handbook for localism.
Localism in Cornwall

How will things change?

5. Cornwall is made up of many small communities. We must ensure that they are a strong and vibrant part of our local democracy. The purpose of the localism agenda is to support this goal by providing opportunities for communities to influence decision making and to ensure that public services reflect local circumstances. For this to happen, we have to find new ways to:

- Enable the knowledge, skills, opinions and energy of local people and their representatives to play an active part in building successful communities.
- Bring the council closer to the community and ensure that council services operate on the basis that working with local communities is a central part of their work.
- Show all parties – local councils, community groups, public bodies and private interests – that working together in partnership is the best way to do business and improve your area.

6. The building blocks for this new approach are as follows:

- **Cornwall Council Members** – a new role for councillors
- **Town and Parish Councils** – new opportunities and a new relationship with Cornwall Council
- **Voluntary and Community Sector** – new support and opportunities for community organisations
- **Community Networks** – new forums to bring the council and the community together
- **Area Working** – a new drive for joined up working within the council and with partners
- **Localism staff** – a new team dedicated to making this work
7. Localism is about finding better ways for public services and local communities to work together to help create more successful communities. The main outcomes we are aiming to achieve are:

- To make our local communities better places to live, work and visit
- To improve the health, wellbeing and happiness of residents
- To build the confidence of people and communities so they are better placed to help themselves

Cornwall Council members

8. Whilst councillors have always taken up issues on behalf of their constituents, it has not been easy for them to act as local community leaders. The new arrangements will create more opportunities and expectations that they can play a much more proactive role within their communities. Important new roles will include:

- Leading their Community Networks as the focal point of local partnership working – bringing people together, finding solutions and resolving tensions
- Developing new ways of communicating with and involving all sections of the local community
- Acting as the bridge between the council and the local community – working closely with officers, monitoring performance and following up strategic issues

9. Councillors will have more support locally to perform their role. For example, there will be a base within their community, often at the One Stop Shop, where there will be office facilities and localism staff to support them. They will be able to work closely with their local community network managers and have access to good quality local research and intelligence. They will be kept abreast of what is happening in their area, challenging things where necessary and helping to communicate and coordinate with the local community.

Town and Parish Councils

10. Town and Parish Councils are the first tier of democracy within local government. They bring local knowledge, experience and capacity which has often been underutilised in the past and they can deliver some local services better than Cornwall Council. There needs to be a new positive relationship between Cornwall Council and local councils based around:

- Shared principles of joint working and active involvement in the community networks
- Individual agreements and active partnering to develop new, more devolved forms of service delivery
- Support to build capacity so that local councils can take on new roles
11. Some core principles for working together between Cornwall Council and Town and Parish Councils have been worked out. Other new approaches, such as active partnering, have also been developed. This describes a range of ways – from formal service monitoring to complete devolution - in which local councils can take on a specific role in service delivery. Services which can be considered include street cleaning, litter, maintenance of street furniture and street trees, play areas, and public conveniences.

12. Other support to build capacity will include providing training for local councillors and clerks, helping the Cornwall Association of Local Councils (CALC) to develop its role, and exploring opportunities to share accommodation and facilities.

Voluntary and Community Sector

13. The voluntary and community sector is another vital resource in delivering services to local communities. It can reach parts of the community the council can’t reach and can deliver locally tailored services. There is a need to build on the ‘Cornwall Compact’ and develop a more coherent relationship with the voluntary and community sector. The council will develop a new toolkit of capacity building and commissioning arrangements to enable the sector to be a key player in local communities.

Community Networks

14. Community networks will be the focal point for bringing communities together and driving improvements. Cornwall Council will establish and support 19 community networks across Cornwall based on the main towns and the rural areas which relate to them. **They will be the main way the council connects with local communities.** The community networks will provide a new structure, resources and processes which will:

- Enable all sections of the community to express their views on local issues, services and plans for the future
- Provide a focus for local partnership working
- Hold services to account and ensure they are responsive to local needs
- Develop community plans and programmes to improve the area
15. Further details about how the community networks will work are provided in the next section.

Area working

16. Most council services are now organised and delivered through the three service delivery areas (SDAs). For localism to work, the council has to ensure that

- Services interact with and are responsive to the community networks in their SDA
- Services work together within each SDA to address problems, issues and opportunities in a joined up way in relation to each community network

17. To ensure these things happen, new formal and informal channels of communication and collaboration will be developed between community network managers and area service managers. At the SDA level, area localism managers will facilitate coordination between services and ensure there is a strong focus on the issues and concerns arising in community networks. Reinforcing all this, a Corporate Director will be responsible for each SDA ensuring that strategic priorities are cascading down from the Cornwall Strategic Partnership and that community networks’ priorities are being addressed.

Localism staff

18. A new Localism team has been established to drive and support the council’s commitment to localism. At the community network level, there will be:

- **Community network managers** – senior officers who will be a visible face to the council in each area working with councillors, partners, officers and the local community to make the localism approach work
- **Development officers** – community officers who will support engagement and help develop and implement projects
- **Support officers** – officers who will oil the wheels of administration for councillors and other players
19. Supporting these frontline staff will be the Area Localism Managers in each SDA and a Head of Service who will all be working to ensure the council follows through on its commitment to localism. In addition to the dedicated localism team, each service will nominate a local manager to be the ‘single point of contact’ for that service in each community network.

**Community Networks**

20. This section looks in more detail at the make up of the community networks and what they will do in practice.

**A new structure**

21. The 19 community networks are based on parish boundaries and shown on Map 1. (N.B. The final name of each Community Network will be subject to local consultation). The size and characteristics of each community network will be different and therefore the local issues will also differ. An example of this diversity is highlighted by the fact that the Camborne and Redruth network, with a population of nearly 50,000, will have fourteen Cornwall councillors and has a history of mining and heavy industry, whilst Camelford, with a population of less than 15,000, will have three Cornwall councillors and is based on a rural market town.

22. Each network will have a **Community Network Panel** which will have a strong local influence on local service delivery and will have some devolved functions. In addition to Cornwall Councillors, each Panel may include Town and Parish Councils and other key representatives that reflect local circumstances. Each Panel will meet at least once every quarter.

23. The networks will also look to engage local community groups and the public through regular **Community Network meetings** and other mechanisms. These meetings will be held at least twice a year. The community networks will look to build upon existing best practice and work with Police in relation to the existing **PACT arrangements** (Partners and Communities Together) and with health colleagues to ensure that the **LINks (Local Involvement Networks)** can be developed to be complementary at the local and strategic levels.

24. Whilst the networks will have formal panel meetings and public meeting sessions, much of the work will be carried out in the wider community through the day to day interactions between councillors, groups, individuals and partner organisations.

25. In each community network there will be a base for local members and network staff. In most cases, it will be in the One Stop Shop. In many areas, in addition to providing traditional customer care facilities, we are developing the One Stop Shops with shared facilities with Town Councils, Job CentrePlus, Police and partners in the voluntary and community sector such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

26. Each community network will be allocated a **Community Network Manager** and a **Community Network Support Officer**. In addition to this each community network will have access to **Community Development Officers**.
27. In summary, the key functions for each community network will be to:

- Empower local Councillors and have a local decision making forum;
- Involve local people and engage all parts of the Community;
- Provide a local base and presence for Cornwall Council;
- Provide an enhanced role for Town and Parish Councils;
- Recognise and support the changing role of the voluntary and community sector;
- Identify local needs and priorities;
- Provide a local focus for partnership working;
- Influence local service delivery; and
- Provide a quality monitoring function for local service delivery.

Networks in action – community engagement

28. Each community network will have its own website setting out the work of the network, letting people know what is happening in the area and giving details of key local contacts and local organizations. Community networks will also look to use existing local newsletters to keep people informed and build a positive relationship with the local media. Each network will develop its own Communication Plan which will set out how it aims to communicate with local people and local organizations.

Networks in action – community planning

29. Each community network will develop a Community Network Programme for 3 – 5 years which sets out the needs and aspirations of the network. It is important that we don't lose much of the good community planning that has already taken place, in particular Parish Plans and MCTI (Market and Coastal Town Initiative) Plans and other local plans such as those linked to economic development, community regeneration, heritage and conservation. One of the key tasks of the community network managers will be to map the plans that already exist in each area, make links with existing local groups and partnerships and identify how these can all be brought together.

30. This programme will also be informed by a Community Network Profile which sets out the key social, economic and environmental information for each area. The programme will include an Annual Delivery Plan, which sets out how the Council and partners will shape the delivery of their services in each community network to meet local need.
Networks in action – local funding

31. In addition to playing a key role in influencing the Council’s capital programme and local revenue expenditure, each Panel will have a small Community Chest which can then be used to support local groups and organisations that are helping deliver services and projects that meet local need.

Networks in action – local influence

32. A key role of each community network will be influencing the local service delivery of council services and also those delivered in partnership and by partners. Examples include input into local transport planning, local community safety projects and the development of Cornwall’s Local Development Framework. Each network will play an active role in monitoring local service delivery by the receipt of regular performance reports which indicate performance against the Annual Delivery Plan.

33. Community networks will also be the gateway for the receipt of local petitions and the basis of the receipt and resolution of Councillor Call for Action.

What difference will they make?

34. There is no doubt that setting up Cornwall Council, particularly during a deepening recession, is a major challenge. However we see it as a real opportunity to put people and communities back at the heart of public services. The ethos of community networks is very much about enabling local people and organisations to become active citizens, as opposed to the recipient of services. We hope that by delivering on the above, local people can be more:

- Informed about the services available in their area, the needs of their local population and how they can become more active, through attending local planning days, joining local groups (e.g. a parent and toddlers group, young farmers or a residents’ association) and even becoming part of more formal panels and meetings. They can then become more

- Influential through initiatives like participatory budgeting and active partnering or by becoming elected as a school governor or a local parish councillor. Local people can then become more
• **Interested**, as they see that public services can help them, they can have more of a say in how things are delivered and they may even consider getting involved in the democratic process. Local communities then gain confidence to be more

• **Innovative** in the way that problems and issues can be tackled in their area. By building on the strong history of partnership working in many areas and the recognition that each community is different, the community networks provide a great opportunity to develop local solutions to local problems.

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**Signposting**

35. This final section signposts readers to the portfolio of documents currently in preparation which provide more detailed guidance on the implementation of localism, and community networks in particular.

36. In relation to working with Town and Parish Councils, key documents include:

- Core principles of agreement between Cornwall Council and Town and Parish Councils
- Active partnering with Town and Parish Councils
- Individual agreements on asset transfer etc with Town and Parish Councils

37. In relation to community networks, key documents include:

- Diagram showing functional relationship in Community Networks
- Constitution of Community Networks
- Voting arrangements in Community Networks
- Role of Community Network members
- Councillor call for action (CCfA)
- Dealing with local petitions
- Code of conduct for Community Networks
- How service functions and activities will interact with Community Networks
If you would like this information in another format please contact:

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