

The summary of the report as below to be circulated separately or link please John.

## “Executive summary

Town and parish (local) councils can be an integral part of vibrant communities, along with voluntary and other community sector organisations. However, harnessing this potential is difficult. Town and parish councils have a wide range of powers, but limited duties. They also vary greatly. Size, capacity and appetite are different from local council to local council. Many parishes are small, with a part-time clerk and have little in common with the largest and most active town councils. This means that the roles they undertake reflect their local appetite and capacity. Even in neighbouring parishes, individual councils may choose very different roles.

Principal councils (district, county, unitary etc) also vary in their approach to working with parish and town councils. Some have been very proactive in working with the local council sector to build ambitious programmes of delegation and devolution. Others have less enthusiasm, sometimes shaped by examples of negotiations that have failed, or by concerns about capacity.

At their best, and whatever the scale of their activity, town and parish councils bring:

- a close knowledge of the needs of their communities, with ability to tailor activity accordingly
- an ability to mobilise their communities, coordinating and harnessing individuals and groups to address local priorities
- action that is backed by an ability to raise money locally through a precept.

A key finding of this work is that successful deeper engagement of town and parish councils cannot be imposed by a principal council

Local action must involve leadership from both principal and local councils and will evolve through experience.

This document sets out a framework to guide principal councils who are interested in supporting parish and town councils to play an increased role in local service delivery and place-shaping. It focuses on three areas:

- Building trust - the underlying principles, shared commitments and ongoing dialogue. The key components are:
  - a clear statement of intent, ideally co-produced with the town and parish councils in the area, about the purpose, scope and mechanisms for delegation or devolution to the ultra-local level
  - scoping and listening, to build an understanding of the town and parish councils in the area
  - providing clear information and technical detail about current services or assets as part of a negotiation
  - provision of material support, or funding, to ensure sustainability.

- An implementation toolkit – practical approaches and material for how devolution/responsibility shifts will be achieved. This includes:
  - a clear process to manage expectations and set a road-map
  - clarity about legal or contractual mechanisms for delegation or devolution arrangements
  - forms and criteria to ensure transparency
  - capacity building – a set of considerations to help local councils build their capacity for success.
  
- Other enabling factors for supporting a context of partnership. These cover:
  - collaboration between counties, districts and town and parish councils in “three tier” areas
  - the concept of parish clusters.

This framework has been built from insights from members and practitioners in both the principal and local council sectors and is supported by a selection of case studies to illustrate how it can be applied in practice.

However, the framework must be applied with realism. The diversity of aspiration among both principal and town and parish councils means that it is not realistic to expect a ‘big bang’ of empowerment. A consistent theme of the research undertaken for this project is that success rely on dialogue; patient building on achievements and learning from experience; and careful balancing of policy and softer political and personal relationships. Local action must involve leadership from both principal and local councils and will evolve through experience.”

## **Consultation**

At present Parish Councils are being consulted on the outcomes so far, of a review of the CNAs carried out by the Chairs of the CNAs.

There are some fundamental questions on the function of a CNA

- 1 Does it have a steering or a rowing function?.
  
- 2 Should it be policy making or deliver services or both??
  
- 3 More input into devolvement of services and strategic plans for Cornwall?

1 Not being party to the discussions it is difficult to know fundamentally what CC wishes are for the future.

The proposed changes are generally to try to create a more strategic role for the enlarged CNAs as well as increasing its involvement in local delivery of certain council functions such as Highways and community projects. So it seems both a steering and rowing role with an emphasis on both people and place.

The outcomes of the review are focussed it would seem to addressing some of the outcomes of the LGA report referred to above in particular CC engaging downwards.

This does not create **NOT** a framework that supports a forum for both CC and Parish Councils to be engaged in discussion on **strategic service planning objectives and the delivery of those visions for their local communities.**

The proposed new roles are very extensive but against reducing resources, very unlikely to be deliverable particularly across a larger geographical area (as with LLCNA). There is no proposed workable process for example on how the needs and views of communities can be truly represented when looking to influence priorities for economic growth and subsequently zoning in an area. The creation of Forums will create another layer of discussion.

2 In the case of projects and initiatives building on third sector engagement there are processes that already exist and are funded. There is a possibility that more engagement will help, though if the current engagement is not seen as sufficient, what is being changed to make for better delivery using even more resources through the CNPs

The delegation of Highways minor works budgets is being retained and the possibility of further examples of schemes proposed but then dropped as unworkable. This would be repeated with other service areas having devolved budgets. The delivery is not integrated with input from the technical/ professional teams. This has the effect of duplication of resources.

Whilst there seems to be clarity that there is a dual role seen for the CAP, there is no affordable structure set behind the stated roles and objectives to deliver.

3 How can the objectives of a framework for devolvement be delivered and involve the Parish Councils more effectively?

It would seem the desired role of the CNPs is to coordinate and gather views both from CC and PCs to jointly develop policy and focus delivery as indentified in local areas.

This needs a process such as standing working groups, to follow from identifying an issue to resolution under the control of the CAP that can take into account the broader impact

A recent example is in respect of changes to bus route 77 that traverses the LLCNA. Eve and John raised with the Panel meeting of 6/9/22 the impact to Menheniot and the issue of gaining data.

Actions (SS is the Link Officer) were agreed to

1 **Action:** SS to draft a letter to Cllr Desmonde on behalf of the Panel to request that the bus services and times of buses are reviewed as well as marketing the services.

Cllr Toms suggested that James Church, City Bus should be included in the letter.

**2 Action:** SS to speak to the Community Link Officer for Cornwall Gateway as they have similar issues, and to look at some joint working across the Panels to try and resolve issues.

If a standing working group on Highways and Transport with agreed terms of reference and authority were in place then this matter could be referred with the request to address the specific points raised and to include formal recommendations to go to the Portfolio Holder following the endorsement of the Partnership Panel.

**Proposed response to consultation.**

To create an environment of a true Partnership, as envisaged between CC and PCs, with a workable delivery mechanism it is proposed that terms of reference are agreed to set up standing working groups that are given a mandate to;

- (a) develop draft delivery strategies and policies for particular matters e.g. Highways and Transport, Economic Development and Education, Strategic Planning, Wellbeing. (administratively supported by CC)
- (b) advise CNA and relevant CC Committees to reflect local needs and in response to CC requests for specific advice on potential local impact.
- (c) to encourage and support the local devolution of services.

Membership of the standing working groups would be from CC, PCs and other agencies and interest groups as appropriate.

This will give an effective golden thread through the tiers of Local Government in Cornwall.