

Localism and Devolution – the Curate’s Egg

Cornwall was the first rural authority in the country to be offered a devolution deal. The Devolution Deal gives Cornwall greater powers over public sector funding and is the first stage of a longer journey towards delivering the full Case for Cornwall.

The Deal covers a range of key areas including:

- Integrated health and social care
- Transport
- Employment and skills
- EU funding
- Business support
- The public estate
- Energy
- Heritage and culture

With the devolution deal comes a requirement to make savings (cuts) of £196 million. See <https://vimeo.com/127831650>

So, localism and devolution's primary purpose is to help sustain locally-led service delivery at a time of unprecedented budget challenges for local government and devolution was recognised by the Council, in 2015, as a key component of the Council Strategy 2015-2019.

In implementing this framework the shared aims are to:

- Continue to develop a ‘holistic’ long-term place based approach (as opposed to a short-term single service based approach) to local service delivery;
- maintain community access to services that might otherwise be at risk;
- increase satisfaction with services;
- provide greater local influence over services;
- where possible, maintain and enhance standards;
- enhance the role of local councils in their communities;
- generate greater community pride in local areas;
- promote engagement of local communities in local government; and
- achieve ‘value for money’.

<https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/media/13154151/Devolution-Framework-for-Town-Parish-Council-and-Community-Groups-March-15.pdf>

Options for Greater Local Involvement

Option 1: Influencing and monitoring local service delivery: Cost-neutral option. Gives opportunity to control how CC contracted services are delivered locally.

Option 2: Joint delivery / service enhancement: Opportunity to add to existing contract or to provide services over and above those contracted by using other provider. Cost is met by PC.

Option 3: Agency Agreements, Management Agreements, Licenses and Sponsorship: Devolution of funds based on minimum level of service provided by CC. Basic standards are imposed. PC can enhance service either by more cost effective

procurement or adding funds. Areas covered are grass cutting and public rights of way. Also areas within highway boundaries by licence (usually for flowerbeds), management agreements, or sponsorship (by private organisations). Base level funding provided by CC and topped up by PC.

Option 4: Delegation of service delivery: PC takes full responsibility for service delivery on behalf of CC. Financial position to be agreed between all parties.

Option 5: Transfer of a service: If CC withdraw a service the PC can agree to continue providing it at their own cost including the cost of asset transfers.

Option 6. Exclusions; Generally not relevant to our PCs.

Implementation.

PC +or – community group approach CC for “scoping” meeting. Evidence of intent must be provided – PC minutes – and discussions with Strategic Devolution Group begin.

Analysis

Devolution could have the following positive impacts:

- Created the opportunity for placing more appropriate maintenance contracts
- Create employment opportunities in the parish
- Promote community cohesion by involving more residents.

It could have the following negative impacts:

- Passing the buck to the PC for the failings of CC.
- Significantly increasing the precept charged to parishioners.
- It could just go horribly wrong as it is also liabilities that will be devolved.
- CC also wish to devolve services to the Community Network Panels. There is little clarity about how the CNPs and PCs will coordinate their efforts.

Suggestion.

We ask Jeremy Rowe, Cornwall Council portfolio holder for Localism, to attend a PC to deliver a talk on devolution.