

Strengthening Community Networks Briefing for Community Network Panels (CNPs)



1. Introduction. A key commitment of the new Council administration is to strengthen and empower Community Networks, and give them an enhanced place-shaping role. The Cabinet approved an approach to achieve this at its meeting on 6.9.17, comprising proposals for improvement based on best practice within Cornwall and other local authorities. This paper sets out an overview of the approved proposals; the full details can be found here: [Cabinet Agenda and Report](#) (see Item 8).

The approach aims to make CNPs the best locality forums in the country and, in so doing, to give the Council the best possible local “tool” to help it achieve the [Priorities for Cornwall](#) and the commitments in the [Council Strategy](#) and [Localism Strategy](#).

Stronger and empowered CNPs will help support all the Priorities for Cornwall, especially the commitments to: “listen and work with the people of Cornwall”, “act in the best interests of Cornwall, putting people first”, “ensure everyone can live well and safely together”, and “give residents and communities a greater say in decisions and make them at the most appropriate level.” They would also support the local leadership role of local Members and town & parish councils.

2. Improvements (Overview). The Cabinet approved a range of proposals, comprising:

- (i) Relatively simple improvements to enhance the existing CNP model, to be implemented in the next few months in close liaison with CNPs (Sep-Dec 2017)
- (ii) More complex improvements, to be developed through engagement with CNPs and other stakeholders prior to implementation between January and May 2018.

The improvements fall under the following headings:

- **Linking:** strengthening the links between CNPs, the Council and its partners
- **Budgeting:** delegating decisions to CNPs about place-based budgets, or giving them more of a say on the use of such budgets
- **Empowering:** CNPs deciding or having more influence over issues including strategy, policy, place shaping, local service provision and enforcement, and devolution
- **Engaging:** increasing public involvement in CNPs; and increasing public engagement by the Council and its partners via CNPs
- **Geography:** options for sub-groups/joint meetings, where desired locally (and thematic joint working across Cornwall/regions of Cornwall)

A key aim is to find a better balance in the **Operation** of the CNPs, between consistency and local flexibility. To achieve this, there will be a “CNP menu.” Every CNP will be asked to follow the “**set menu**” (e.g. issuing a public bulletin after its meetings). They will also be able to choose “**optional extras**” from the menu (e.g. holding “speed dating” workshops like they do in Liskeard & Looe Community Network!). With set menu items, CNPs will have some local discretion (e.g. the content of the public bulletins).

A particular focus for the engagement will be the **Empowering** heading, on what exactly CNPs want and should have more of a say on. It is also hoped that the engagement will produce additional improvement ideas that have not been considered to date.

3. The Improvements (Brief Summary). The approved proposals are listed in detail in [Appendix 1](#) of the Cabinet report, and are summarised below.

A. Set Menu (CNP's must adopt these, but have discretion on how to operate them locally)
Implementation to commence Sep-Dec 2017:

1. Promoting **ways Members can raise issues** on CNPs' behalf (e.g. motions to Council)
2. Each CNP will directly lead a **place-based partnership project** of its choice
3. **Standing items** for Member updates and Town & Parish Council (T&PC) representatives
4. Regular **information sharing** (e.g. on devolution and Neighbourhood Planning)
5. Updates on the progress of the **devolution programme** within the CN area
6. Engagement on any initiatives offering to **delegate functions** (e.g. fixed penalty notices) or **provide enhanced services** (e.g. parking enforcement) to T&PCs
7. Engagement on initiatives to: promote **capacity building** of T&PCs and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector; **raise awareness** of their work; **promote joint working** between them to deliver devolved services in partnership
8. Named **officer contacts** for each CNP (from Council services and partner agencies)
9. Engagement in **community place-shaping programmes**
10. **Engagement & consultation events** will be at or in partnership with CNPs
11. Public will be invited to sign up as free "**subscribers**" to interact with their CNP
12. **Social media** accounts and post-meeting **bulletins** for all CNPs
13. A standard, consistent format across Cornwall for **Public Questions**
14. Council **petitions** facility to be publicised
15. Improvements to CNP **meeting papers**
16. A **CNP Forward Plan**, showing issues to be discussed at forthcoming meetings
17. Minimum meeting frequency: Annual General Meeting and Quarterly Meetings

Engagement in Sep-Dec 2017; implementation from Jan-May 2018:

18. A **CNP Engagement Framework**: a list of issues on which CNPs will be informed and engaged (CNPs will be able to opt out of engagements on some individual issues)
19. Exploring **new ways for CNPs to escalate issues** (e.g. references to committee)
20. "**Highways**": Engagement with CNPs on major capital transport schemes; CNPs to make recommendations on prioritisation of local transport schemes, with budget.
21. To explore a potential defined role for CNPs in **external funding bids** and use by CNPs of **participatory budgeting**
22. CNPs to produce a **2030 CNA Strategy**, comprising a holistic vision and action plan
23. Short "**CNP films**" and **photo storyboards** to showcase the work of CNPs
24. A **CNP handbook**, a guide on the revised CNP model for all participants

B. Optional Extras (CNP's can choose to adopt these if they wish):

1. CNPs to consider scope for **improved links with other partnerships** in CNA
2. **Town & Parish Council presentations** on current work/priorities (on a rolling basis)
3. **Partner updates** (on standing/regular basis)
4. **Community Chest celebration events** (networking with organisations which have received grants and giving them an opportunity to promote their work)
5. CNPs can **co-opt** representatives from local organisations
6. CNPs can invite **public** to suggest **agenda items** (about CN-wide issues)
7. Options for geographic and/or thematic sub-groups and joint groups
8. **Speed-dating workshops** (on model used in Liskeard & Looe)