

## **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

### **LOCALISM POLICY**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report proposes that the County Council adopt a Localism Policy to prepare for new statutory requirements arising from The Localism Act 2011 and to progress a number of commitments set out in the Strategic Plan 2010-14.

#### **Information and Advice**

2. The County Council's Strategic Plan 2010-14 commits the authority to embracing Localism as part of the Priority to foster aspiration, independence and personal responsibility. The County Council is also committed to ensuring that :
  - local people can make decisions about their lives and where they live
  - communities are involved in the way services are shaped and delivered
  - communities can be proud of their local area and residents can help to keep their local areas clean, tidy and safe
3. These commitments can collectively be described as Localism – where individuals are encouraged to contribute and are empowered as a community so that they can achieve their ambitions for the place where they live. The County Council has been working towards this agenda for some time and a summary of achievements was reported to Cabinet in September 2011.
4. In addition to progressing the County Council's existing commitments, The Localism Act 2011 introduced a number of new requirements on local authorities including the implementation of new rights for communities to challenge to run council services and to bid to purchase community assets.

#### **Development of Policy**

5. It was proposed to Cabinet in September 2011 that the County Council's approach to Localism should be based around a policy providing clear direction as to the Authority's commitments, setting out the actions that the Authority intends to take to deliver on them and incorporating the new statutory requirements placed on the County Council by the Localism Act.

6. A draft policy is attached as an appendix to this report which has been developed by a cross party group of elected Members. The views expressed by Members at a seminar held on 1 December 2011 have also been used to inform the development of the Policy.
7. Engagement work with town/parish councils and the voluntary and community sector commenced in October 2011 to inform the development of the Policy. Information on Localism and the new statutory requirements has also been made available on the County Council website.
8. The draft policy includes a number of specific key actions to
  - Deliver an Implementation Plan to ensure that the principles and commitments set out in the policy are achieved
  - Prepare a framework for devolving services for parish/town councils seeking to deliver local services and to evaluate the merits of incorporating a Lengthsman Scheme – a scheme through which parish/town councils could employ an individual to maintain local highways amenities within their area - into the framework following a number of pilots.
  - Prepare statements on
    - the operation of the Community Right to Challenge
    - how volunteering can support the delivery of appropriate public services
    - how the community could use small areas of land owned by the County Council where it surplus to requirements
9. The implementation of these will be subject to the appropriate decision making requirements and will be informed by further engagement with Members of the County Council, town/parish councils, district/borough councils the voluntary and community sector and others.
10. Equality Impact screening has been carried out on this policy and has not identified any adverse equalities impacts. Further screening will take place on the implementation of specific elements of the policy in line with appropriate decision making requirements.

### **Other Options Considered**

11. The proposed policy reflects the consensus reached by elected Members as the developers of County Council policy.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

12. The Council's Refreshed Strategic Plan for 2010-14 has a specific action to embrace Localism. It was proposed to Cabinet on 14 September 2011 that a policy should be adopted to progress this action.

13. A number of new statutory requirements arising from The Localism Act 2011 are expected to commence during 2012. The adoption of a policy provides a consistent approach for the authority to follow in the preparations for these new requirements.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

14. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

15. It is recommended that County Council approve the Localism Policy and that a further report on implementation of the Policy be provided to the appropriate body.

**Councillor Martin Suthers OBE**  
**Deputy Leader of the County Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact: Celia Morris, Group Manager Policy**

## **Constitutional Comments (SLB 12/01/2012)**

16. Council has responsibility for approving and adopting the Council's policy framework and is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

## **Financial Comments (MA 12.01.12)**

17. There are no significant financial implications associated with the report, and the key actions detailed within the draft policy will be contained within existing resources.

## **Background Papers**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

County Council Policy Briefing on The Localism Act 2011  
Invitation and Materials Member Seminars on Localism  
Letter to Parish Councils 21 October 2011  
Equality Impact Assessment Screening

## **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

all