LOCALITY ARRANGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE MEMBER:	Councillor Woodburn
LEAD OFFICER:	Chief Executive
REPORT AUTHOR:	Hilary Mitchell

Summary and Recommendation:

The report seeks agreement from the Executive to explore how Copeland Borough Council might pursue proposals for the introduction of locality arrangements in Copeland.

Recommendation 1) : The Executive is asked to commit to examining options for locality arrangements leading to a proposal to be considered by March 2008; and 2) The Executive is asked to delegate responsibility for work associated with developing arrangements in Copeland to the Corporate Improvement Board.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In October 2006 the Government published the Local Government White Paper, "Strong and Prosperous Communities". Among its proposals for improving local governance, the Government set out a series of suggestions for working more closely with communities. Examples of locality arrangements described in the White Paper are given as having the potential to improve local services, raise customer satisfaction and strengthen democracy. (Strong and Prosperous Communities, para.2.61 and elsewhere).

1.2 Following the decision on a unitary Council in Cumbria in July 2007, Copeland Borough Council is now asked to consider how it wishes to proceed with working more closely with the community and in particular on possible arrangements for area management.

2. ARGUMENT

2.1 Engaging more effectively with communities and service users in order to achieve better services and higher satisfaction is not a new concept. For some years local authorities across England have been designing and introducing a wide range of systems and structures to work more closely with their communities. At one end of the spectrum are the community charters, drawn up between the Council and the community, sometimes based on single parish areas. These set out ways for councils to work with other bodies, offer opportunities for improved consultation and communication and in some case set service standards.

2.2 At the other end of the spectrum are the full devolution models of mini local authorities with area Chief Executives and a range of services delivered from area town halls. Between these two are many variations of arrangements for governance, representation, service standards and delivery, community involvement and devolution. Many of the arrangements involve partner organisations in order to

achieve a more joined-up approach to community needs and aspirations, chosen for their suitability for the area and the improvements brought to the communities concerned.

2.3 In an example from Leeds City Council the intended benefits from a system of area management are described:

- *Helping the Council to achieve a more decentralised structure of decision making to provide local services which are more responsive to local needs and priorities*
- *Better linking local elected members with their communities and enhancing their representative role*
- *Improving the quality and value for money of local authority service delivery*
- *Improving the quality of democracy and finding new ways to support citizen participation in local government*
- *Better co-ordinating policy and service delivery between local service providers*

2.3 Following the lead from the Local Government White Paper, Cumbria County Council, in its bid to the Secretary of State for unitary status (January 2007), described how it was piloting a system of Community Boards. It intended to roll out the arrangements to the rest of Cumbria, if the pilots went well. The following describes the purpose of the County's Community Boards and development so far.

"The Unitary bid's community board proposals were intended to develop additional support arrangements for frontline councillors. Within this context community boards would allow councillors to act on community views in concert with other bodies. We have five community board pilots being developed, covering Central Barrow, Grange & Cartmel, Keswick, North Allerdale and North East Copeland. That represents about 20% of the total envisaged."

2.4 The County Council is currently considering the future of the Community Boards scheme and will shortly be approaching all the district councils in Cumbria with a view to seeking their support for the continuation of the Boards.

2.5 The Cumbrian district councils, working together on the Better Government for Cumbria (BGfC) proposals, also included suggested arrangements for working at community level. The BGfC Local Service Forum concept, based on flexible groupings of district councillors working with town or parish councils and other agencies, also allowing for specialist forums of communities of interest, was more radical than the County Council proposals. In particular it envisaged devolution of some service decisions to some local forums, for example, licensing.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

Option 1: The Council could decide now to work with the County Council on the future development of Community boards.

Option 2: The Council could consider a range of models of closer working with the community to assess their suitability for the Borough, including working with the County Council on Community Boards or other locality arrangement.

Option 3: The Council could take no action on locality arrangements.

4. **CONCLUSIONS**

It is recommended that at this stage the Council commits to consider what locality arrangements would work best in Copeland to engage more closely with the community, with a view to coming up with a proposal for Copeland to be decided at a meeting of the Executive before March 2008.

In order to make progress relatively quickly on the work involved it is proposed that the detailed work is carried out through the Corporate Improvement Board, before a formal recommendation is brought back to the Executive.

5. **FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)**

No additional budget is needed for this work. Member and officer time, already allowed for, will be required.

6. **PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT**

To be undertaken as part of the consideration of possible models for future development.

7. **IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN**

Work on this development will achieve objective 1.1.3 in the Corporate Plan 2007/12.

List of Appendices

Appendix A –

List of Consultees: Executive; Corporate Team

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed . This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	Working more closely with the community can help improve a range of local services and quality of life
Impact on Sustainability	Working more closely with the community can help improve a range of local services and quality of life
Impact on Rural Proofing	Working more closely with the community can help improve a range of local services and quality of life
Health and Safety Implications	N/A
Project and Risk	See paragraph 6

Management	
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	Working more closely with the community can help improve a range of local services and quality of life
Children and Young Persons Implications	Working more closely with the community can help improve a range of local services and quality of life
Human Rights Act Implications	Working more closely with the community can help improve a range of local services and quality of life
Monitoring Officer Comments	Dependent upon the Executive's preferences a consequence may be that the Council's constitution would need to be amended if decision making powers were to be devolved.
Section 151 Officer Comments	There is sufficient budget provision to cover this project and therefore there is little or no risk that there will be a future call on reserves for additional funding.

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision   YES