

Draft Discussion Document

Locality Working in Copeland

July 2008

LOCALITY WORKING IN COPELAND

INTRODUCTION

The term “Locality Working” is used to describe a range of structures and activities which enable public sector agencies to work in localities with community residents to improve the local quality of life.

Various forms of locality working have been in place in England since the 1980s. There are some common factors in these arrangements, but locality arrangements can vary widely from place to place. In Cumbria, the County Council introduced Local Committees in 1995. The model of Local Committees is one type of locality arrangement, but there are many others in operation across England.

The value brought by Locality Working to a local authority has been described as:

- 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

ASSUMPTIONS

- 1) The localities in Copeland for which arrangements are being considered are the five localities identified in the Sustainable Communities Strategy for West Cumbria “Future Generation”, namely:
 - Whitehaven
 - North East Copeland
 - Egremont
 - Mid-Copeland
 - Millom and South Copeland
(see attached map)
- 2) Arrangements for locality working in Copeland will have common features, but may not be exact replicas in each locality.
- 3) Copeland Borough Council and Cumbria County Council will be working together to develop joint locality working arrangements. Other public sector agencies are also currently supporting greater involvement in neighbourhoods to achieve their aims. It is one of the objectives of locality working that public sector agencies will work together to tackle issues arising in localities more effectively in a joined up way.

- 4) Locality working will support delivery of the Sustainable Communities Strategy. If all the public sector agencies are engaged it will be possible to tackle the more complex issues of localities and close the gap between the communities and the average for Cumbria.
- 5) The structures for locality working in Copeland will include three main elements (see attached model). This structure has been endorsed by the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership Leadership Group and mirrors the structure of the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership. The Locality Governance Board will comprise elected members and other community leaders, plus representatives of the community. The Community engagement meetings, which are likely to be based on the existing Neighbourhood Forums, will allow residents from the localities to be involved in the improvement of quality of life in the area. Representatives of public sector agencies, particularly officers with responsibility for the locality, will work together and co-ordinate services to meet community needs better.
- 6) Locality working will require resourcing to support its development and successful delivery against objectives. Some new resources may be available, and agencies' mainstream resources may need to be redirected.
- 7) Locality working arrangements should include decisions taken locally about some devolved budgets.
- 8) Staff resources must be made available to support work in the localities for community development, supporting governance and enabling good communication between the participants. These may come from the existing establishments of local authority or other agencies.
- 9) Although local authorities have a particular role and responsibility to enable locality arrangements to be set up and work well, other public sector agencies also have business objectives that will be met through successful locality working. As far as possible therefore the locality arrangements should be multi-purpose, and allow for example, statutory engagement between Police and the community, to avoid the need for parallel arrangements.

METHODOLOGY

A group of County and Borough Council officers met to work on the proposals for Copeland arising from the LSP Leaders' Group decision on arrangements for future locality working in West Cumbria. The reason for work undertaken by the group was to provide more information to help understanding and encourage discussion among the authorities and agencies.

The group of officers deliberated on what the arrangements might be in an ideal model of locality working, not specific to any locality or based on any existing model. It was recognised that there would be all sorts of constraints on achieving the expected outcomes, when the arrangements are established in the five localities.

The proposals put forward for discussion with a wider group of interested parties were:

ASSUMED PURPOSES OF LOCALITY WORKING

Locality Working will be a better way of providing public services through:

- Being more in touch with communities and responding to their needs better.
- Providing services for communities which are shaped to locality needs and not 'one size fits all'
- Enabling a range of public sector agencies to work more locally in communities to improve local conditions
- Delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy "Future Generation", which is locality based and targets disadvantage at local and West Cumbria level
- Meeting the requirements of the Local Government white papers and new Government performance regime.
- Community leadership - a bigger role for non-executive councillors and engaging other community leaders to work effectively
- Blurring agency boundaries - an end to 'it's not our responsibility'.
- Demonstrating improved performance for all agencies under CAA

PROPOSALS FOR ELEMENTS OF THE COPELAND LOCALITY WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

Community Engagement

Who Will Be Involved?

- Residents of the locality - no fixed or standing membership.
- Businesses operating in the locality
- Elected Members from 3 tiers
- Voluntary sector representatives.
- Other community leaders.
- Local schools
- Faith groups.
- Young people.

What Will They Deal With?

- Quality of life issues.
- Anything of concern to local residents.
- Specific consultations from agencies.
- Use in statutory consultation mechanisms (Police, Health)

Why

- Agencies to improve understanding of community needs and priorities.
- To achieve greater improvements in services.
- To provide quality assurance for decisions taken in Governance Board and delivered by public sector agencies.
- To increase accountability of local governance to electors.

How

To make community engagement work well in localities the following will be needed:

- Regular community meetings .
- An action plan for the community to monitor
- Agencies to become more listening and responsive.
- Agency decisions explained better.

- Use of technology and other channels to reach as many as possible
- Sometimes local focus groups or sample surveys run to gauge opinion.

When

- By April 2009.
- Programmed meetings in cycle to feed governance board and agencies' service delivery representatives.
- Pilot before then?

Where

- On the patch.

Local Governance Board

Who Will Be Involved?

- One elected member from each Borough ward and County division in the locality.
- A member from each parish council in the locality
- Regeneration partnership representative.
- Community representatives (2)
- Co-optees from locally based stakeholders (4)
- Public in attendance
- Supported by officers (could be lead and community officers plus advising officers, such as finance or legal experts depending on agenda items).

What Will They Deal With?

- Issues raised by the community.
- Sustainable Community Strategy priorities for the locality.
- Information about locality profiles and service levels.
- Spending decisions for any budgets devolved to the Boards.
- Service developments affecting locality
- Influencing agencies' mainstream funding allocation.
- Agencies' service standards in the locality.

Why

- Develop stronger community leadership.
- Improve agencies' responsiveness to local needs
- Support decentralised governance.
- Recognise local distinctiveness and diversity.
- Gauge local support for major change in agencies' activities or service plans.
- Strengthen alliances across agencies' boundaries.

How

To make locality working work, the following will be needed:

- Top level political leadership to ensure responsiveness.
- Agencies to shape service delivery systems to recognise locality differences (through data)
- An action plan for the locality
- Regular managed meetings.
- Training for all participants in community engagement topics

- Clear agenda and follow up actions.
- Reliable communication back to agencies.
- Terms of reference.
- Resourcing – people and budgets.
- Political buy-in and cross referral to councils, local committee, OSC
- Accountability - constitutional links to pick up responsibilities for portfolio-holders, services and OSCs.
- Opportunity for public Q&A in agenda.

When

- From 1 April 2009
- Meetings at least quarterly
- Always following Community meetings
- Pilot to start sooner?

Where

- On the patch.

Public Services Agencies' Representatives

Who Will Be Involved?

- Managers responsible for service delivery in localities.
- All managers in all agencies could be asked to respond to service requests from localities.
- Senior managers to lead and sell.

What Will They Be Dealing With?

- Changes to public services delivery to recognise locality differences.
- Routine service requests from localities.
- Proposals for changes to corporate and service plans.
- Working across service agency boundaries e.g. joined up customer access points.

Why

- Greater synergy and joined up approach in public sector
- Contribute to greater efficiency perhaps through more opportunities for shared services
- Services to reflect more local needs and preferences.

How

To make locality working work, the following will be needed

- Top level leadership to lead change in culture and organisation.
- Big selling exercise.
- Organise intra-agency and inter-agency communication.
- Performance management.
- Corporate and service planning formats to reflect more focus on locality working.
- Shape resource planning to reflect delivery in localities
- Consider cross-agency matrix management

When

- Occasional meetings of managers with locality focus.
- Continuing need to respond to locality issues

Where

- Locality- based occasionally.
- Virtual meetings and conversations more frequently.



