

# South Gloucestershire's Localism Framework

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## Localism in South Gloucestershire

### Introduction

This document provides an introduction to how the localism agenda is being developed and an action plan that will help to make localism a reality in South Gloucestershire.

### South Gloucestershire's definition

Localism can mean different things to different people and can be delivered in different ways. It is not a set of rules, but a way of working.

To support a joined-up approach to the delivery of localism in South Gloucestershire a common definition is considered to be

*“the devolution and the fundamental shift of power to councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals. Empowering local people to come together to take more responsibility for their community”*

### Background

South Gloucestershire has a long history of actively involving local communities in shaping the areas in which they live and wishes to build on the good practices and working relationships that already exist to deliver its approach to Localism.

Localism or as it is more commonly known, the 'localism agenda', is made up of a number of key elements which can be summarised as follows:

- Local needs and opportunities – places are different and need local solutions to solve their problems
- Local voice and influence – opportunities for all sections of the community to be consulted and involved in improving their area
- Locally responsive services – not a one size fits all approach, but services tailored to meet local needs and priorities
- Local accountability – the performance of all service providers held to account by local communities

### South Gloucestershire's vision

The Area's shared vision as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy is South Gloucestershire 'a great place to live and work'. This is supported by a specific commitment to “engage people of all ages so they feel they belong and can help provide local solutions ...” A strong sense of community spirit lies at the heart of this. The Council, along with its partners wants to encourage and support local communities to get involved and work with it to strengthen their ability to deal with local challenges. The Council also wants to work closely with town and parish councils, voluntary groups, local people and other public sector organisations to establish community needs and to help meet those needs in the most effective way.

## South Gloucestershire's localism principles

Delivery of the vision is underpinned by seven key principles which set out how localism is to be delivered. Through localism South Gloucestershire will:

- Utilise the **strategic community leadership** role of democratically elected representatives
- Create an ethos of building greater resilience within communities – **communities that are strong and self reliant**
- Ensure clarity in the arrangements for **community engagement**
- Aspire for **innovative partnerships** and a flexible approach to partnership models
- Promote **flexibility in the delivery of services**, moving away from the one size fits all approach to one which reflects local needs
- Strive for a **balance** between local delivery and economies of scale
- Ensure robust **accountability and scrutiny** mechanisms are in place where services are devolved

## How will things change?

South Gloucestershire is a mix of long-established urban communities, market towns, small villages and substantial new development; characterised by differing communities with individual needs and aspirations. Localism will not seek to change this make-up but will seek to harness the richness of this diversity by building on what is working well to ensure that all communities are strong and vibrant and contribute to local democracy. Where there are gaps, the localism agenda provides the opportunity to work with partners and local communities to identify solutions that meet their needs.

The main thrust behind the localism agenda is to provide opportunities for communities to influence decision-making, support place-shaping and to deliver services that reflect local circumstances.

Public services will be opened up to new providers such as charities and social enterprises and businesses to encourage more innovation, diversity and responsiveness to public need.

At a very local level, more powers and responsibilities will be devolved to those town and parish councils who wish to take over some assets and services - where this makes sense and delivers better value for money.

The voluntary and community sector will also play a greater role in service delivery. South Gloucestershire already has a thriving voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, and this provides a strong foundation for South Gloucestershire to make localism real.

Big changes are redefining the relationship between Government and communities. A radical legislative programme is underway, a key piece of legislation being the Localism Act. At the same time spending cuts are forcing the public sector to think more creatively about the way it delivers services and find new ways of working together to make best use of limited resources.

But it is not just local government that is changing. The health service is undergoing transformation. Police governance, schools, welfare programmes and benefits will see significant changes too.

It is therefore timely to set out South Gloucestershire's local approach to Localism which encompasses both national and local initiatives.

### **Taking the localism agenda forward**

Whilst it is recognised that working in a way that delivers the localism agenda is not new to South Gloucestershire, engagement events at which a local approach was discussed have yielded a number of areas that require either development or review. These can be broken down into three main sections:

- governance and accountability
- local decision-making
- local delivery of services.

Attached at Appendix 1 is an action plan which outlines the activities members and partners have identified.

The general approach to localism and the delivery of the action plan will be subject to the Council's monitoring and reporting arrangements. Relevant committees will be engaged as guidance or policies are developed for different aspects of the localism agenda or reviews are undertaken.

As guidance, policies and procedures are agreed, they will be published on the online Localism Toolkit which will also signpost to useful information that will support the implementation of Localism.

Best practise and lessons learnt both nationally and locally will guide the development of initiatives as the localism agenda is taken forward.

### **What difference will localism make?**

The localism agenda presents a real opportunity to put people and communities at the heart of public services. Local people can, if we get it right, become more informed, more influential, more interested and more innovative.

By utilising the power of competence the localism agenda also gives local authorities more freedom to work with others and increased confidence do creative, innovative things to meet local people's needs.

## **Leadership roles**

***South Gloucestershire Members*** – Whilst councillors have always taken up issues on behalf of their constituents, localism creates opportunities and expectations for them to play much more strategic as well as proactive roles within their communities. New powers introduced by the Localism Act will enhance the ability of councillors to work with residents and partners to take more responsibility for their communities.

***Town and Parish Councils*** – Town and Parish Councils are the first tier of democracy in local government. They bring knowledge and experience that in some instances could be more fully utilised. Localism provides the opportunity to further enhance relationships by building on the commitments outlined in South Gloucestershire's Charter for Parish and Town Councils and by providing support to build capacity so that local councils can take on new roles.

***Voluntary and Community Sector*** – The Voluntary and Community Sector is a vital resource in delivering services to local communities. It can reach parts of the community that some public agencies cannot reach and can deliver more tailored services. Localism presents the opportunity to build on South Gloucestershire's Compact and identify and support ways to build the capacity of the Sector to take on new challenges and opportunities.

***Residents*** - Councils must connect with all sections of the community, providing a structure and processes that allow residents to express their views on local issues, services and plans for the future. South Gloucestershire has a wide range of committees, fora and networks for bringing together and driving changes to issues of local concern. Some of these processes work better than others; localism presents the opportunity to review these processes to ensure that they are accessible, appropriate and work well together.

***Staff*** – Staff, along with other groups and parish and town councils can have a greater stake in the delivery of public services through expressing ideas on how public services could be delivered differently and in the running of those services; driving improvement in local services.

***The Council*** – The Council as a corporate body must drive, enable and support engagement with and implementation of localism, working with councillors, partners and local people to help them realise expectations and opportunities. Whilst localism means that services could be delivered differently, accountability for specific services will still rest with the council.

**Localism in South Gloucestershire  
Actions arising from the engagement phase**

<b>Governance and Accountability</b>						
	Activity	What needs to be done?	Anticipated completion date	Progress to September 2013	Next steps	Lead officer
1.	Promote and communicate Localism at all levels and how to get involved through clear and targeted <b>communication strategies</b> .	<p>Develop an integrated communications plan which will help gain buy-in and support, encourage participation, and will highlight the opportunities for local communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Complete Plan at the end of initial programme of stakeholder engagement</li> <li>❖ Provide information about what can be done by communities and groups and how to do it</li> </ul>	<p>July 2012</p> <p>On going</p>	<p>Localism communication plan drafted and finalised (v0.4)</p> <p>Developed matrix to map stakeholders against themes most appropriate or relevant (see Communications plan above)</p> <p>Assessed various solutions for collaborative online working and information sharing amongst localism community groups (see communications plan)</p> <p>Collection of web pages (web portal) developed and published <a href="http://www.southglos.gov.uk/localism">www.southglos.gov.uk/localism</a></p>	<p>Communication plan to be put on localism web pages (Oct 2013)</p> <p>Review and finalise action points (Dec 2013).</p> <p>Development of web pages as and when information and opportunities are available.</p> <p>Use of social media to engage and promote activities and opportunities in conjunction with external communications.</p> <p>Ongoing development of portal to incorporate good practice and updated information</p>	Julie Vince Head of Strategic Communications

				<p>Began investigating the setting up of e-groups as a platform for smaller community websites to facilitate on-line collaboration and the sharing of solutions to local issues.</p> <p>Details of consultations on portal e.g. High and street scene consultation and links to online consultation system.</p>	<p>Issues over ownership and hosting; other models to be explored</p> <p>Use of video to disseminate key messages</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	
		❖ Implementation and delivery of Plan	On going	See above	Continue to implement and deliver plan as scheduled.	
2.	Develop <b>targeted training, support and capacity building</b> for parish and town councils and voluntary and community groups to support the uptake of opportunities.	Identify training, support and capacity building needs and develop a delivery plan around each element	October 2012	<p>Completed. System in place for analysing needs using Localism Skills Framework.</p> <p>Continuing to roll out on-going programme of events and conferences for Councillors, Towns and Parishes and Community and Voluntary Sector. Programme details available.</p>	Continue to work with partners on delivering on-going localism support and development through newly formed Localism Training Support Group	Chief Officer Management Team and senior managers (Steve Evans, Director of Environment and Community Services and Linda James, Workforce Development Advisor (Councillors))
3.	Facilitate review of the <b>council's governance</b> arrangements.	Facilitate political group discussions leading to any changes being implemented at the May	May 2012	Completed	N/A	John McCormack Head of Legal,

		AGM				Democratic Services & Monitoring
4.	Ensure a code of conduct is in place following the abolition of the current <b>standards</b> framework.	Hold discussions with the Standards committee members to agree local arrangements	August 2012	Completed	N/A	John McCormack Head of Legal, Dem. Services & Monitoring
5.	Where appropriate, <b>review parish boundaries.</b> (This will take account of existing and unparished areas)	Report to the Licensing, Regulatory and Generally Purposes committee to commence the review – April 2012  Several consultations throughout 2012/13  Creation of parishes – 1 April 2015	April 2015 (Implementation date)	Formal decisions taken at the annual council meeting in May 2013.  Completed  Stoke Lodge and The Common Parish Council, and Emersons Green Town Council agreed	N/A  N/A  N/A	John McCormack Head of Legal, Dem. Services & Monitoring
6.	Support establishment of <b>new parish councils</b> for new parish areas where this is the will of residents.	Provision of support through latter part of 2014 and through 2015	End of 2015	Meetings with Parish Councils August 2013 to start the implementation phase. Creation of new boundaries and legal processes begun.	Legal processes completed	John McCormack Head of Legal & Democratic Services & Monitoring

<b>Local Decision-Making</b>						
	Activity	What needs to be done?	Anticipated completion date	Progress to September 2013	Next steps	Lead officer
7.	Review <b>area fora, safer stronger community groups, other local networks and the partnership infrastructure</b> to ensure	Develop description of broad principles including the different roles of Local Area Forums and Safer Stronger Community Groups and consult	End July 2012	Completed July 2012	N/A	Robert Walsh Head of Safe Strong Communities



	<p>that they are appropriate and work well together and explore the feasibility of delegating more powers to area fora.</p> <p>At the same time consider the purpose of the Parish Charter and Compact in relation to delivering localism.</p>	<p>(i) the relevant committee;  (ii) Local Area Forums;  (iii) Safer &amp; Stronger Community Groups;  (iv) Town &amp; Parish Councils;  (v) Voluntary and Community Sector;  (vi) residents</p> <p>Formal decision on broad principles made by the relevant committee</p> <p>Round 1 consultation workshops (i) consult the relevant committee; (ii) Local Area Forums; (iii) Safer &amp; Stronger Community Groups; (iv) Town &amp; Parish Councils on future number and boundaries of Local Area Forums and Safer &amp; Stronger Community Groups</p> <p>Round 2 consultations</p> <p>Formal decision on number and boundaries of different mechanisms made by the relevant committee.</p> <p>New boundaries and arrangements introduced for new municipal year May 2013</p>	<p>January 2014</p> <p>End January 2013</p> <p>To be confirmed</p> <p>April 2013</p> <p>May 2013</p>	<p>Consultation draft documents agreed by Lead Members for Communities May 2013.</p> <p>Consultation currently under way. See Next Steps</p> <p>See 'Next Steps'</p> <p>See 'Next Steps'</p> <p>See 'Next Steps'</p>	<p>Results to be presented to Communities Committee for decision November 2013</p> <p>Timetable will have to be amended following decision by Communities Committee on broad principles in November 2013</p> <p>Ditto</p> <p>Ditto</p> <p>Ditto</p>	
8.	Ensure processes are in place to respond to	Continue to support the 'front-runner' parishes pilots and	Ongoing	Training for all Parish and Town councils was provided	The Council will complete the process of	Brian Glasson Head of

	<p>provisions related to <b>Neighbourhood Planning</b> – neighbourhood plans and neighbourhood development orders.</p>	<p>evaluate</p>		<p>at a Planning for Local Areas event in November 2012 and a further presentation on Neighbourhood Planning was included at the Council's Localism event on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2013.</p> <p>A new dedicated web page <a href="http://www.southglos.go.uk/neighbourhoodplanning">www.southglos.go.uk/neighbourhoodplanning</a> has been provided giving guidance and links to further information and best practice as well as information on Communities and Local Government departmental funding schemes. This has been regularly updated.</p>	<p>determining how it will discharge both its regulatory duties and support duties in relation to Neighbourhood Planning to ensure clarity and fairness in its approach, and to ensure the appropriate allocation of resources. A briefing paper will be presented to Planning, Transport and Strategic Environment Committee and Community Leads in September/ October 2013</p>	<p>Strategic Planning</p>
		<p>Hold awareness raising and engagement events with members and parish and town councillors</p> <p>Develop a local framework for South Gloucestershire which recognises the diversity of our communities and neighbourhoods</p>	<p>March 2012 and Autumn 2012</p> <p>November 2012</p>	<p>Work with individual communities. In response to specific requests since October 2012, members of the Strategic Planning Policy and Specialist Advice team have met with Charfield, Rangeworthy and Oldbury Parish Councils and Yate Town Council and given detailed written advice to Westerleigh Parish Council</p> <p>Our Strategic Planning and Safer and Stronger Communities teams have worked together to ensure that information and support to communities for community led plans and Neighbourhood Plans is</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Completion of the Policies, Sites and Places Development Policy Document (August 2014)</p>	

				coordinated. This is being taken forward through targeted consultation events with town and parish council in September/October 2013 as part of the initial preparation of the new Policies, Sites and Places Development Policy document		
9.	Put in place a clear policy in relation to <b>Community Infrastructure Levy.</b>	Bring forward the Community Infrastructure Levy (CiL) project in accordance with agreed timescales to enable the council to set its CiL charging schedule by April 2014	April 2014	<p>The following key steps have been taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ CiL members' working group established May 2012</li> <li>❖ Viability Assessment completed November 2012</li> <li>❖ Public consultation of the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule completed January 2013</li> <li>❖ Viability Assessment Review completed July 2013</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Autumn 2013/14 Government announcement on CiL implementation date due [now confirmed as deferred to April 2015]</li> <li>❖ Winter 2013/14 – Reappraise Viability Assessment</li> <li>❖ Winter 2014 - Reform CiL Members Working Group and formulate Draft Charges</li> <li>❖ Spring 2014 – Prepare P&amp;R Committee Report to seek approval to consult on DRAFT charges</li> <li>❖ April 2014 – P&amp;R Committee</li> </ul>	Brian Glasson Head of Strategic Planning

10.	Review <b>consultation and engagement mechanisms</b> at all levels, with a focus on disengaged groups.	Develop consultation guidance	June 2012	Consultation guidance was finalised and distributed by the deadline. Training has also been provided to staff groups and remains available when needed.	Continue to promote guidance, deliver training and ensure that all consultations are carried out in accordance with the guidelines	Janet Faire Head of Operational Support
		Review of Viewpoint	March 2014	The future of Viewpoint is currently being discussed. We are currently looking at options for resourcing this within the team	Take a decision on the future of Viewpoint. Ensure that panel is resourced from April 2014 onwards	
		Review of iNovem online consultation system	March 2014	Review of licences ongoing to ensure that we are subscribed to the correct number of 'user' and 'manager' licences. We continue to develop use of the system and make use of new features as they become available.	Review usage of iNovem.	
		Audit of consultation activities across council – are we talking to the right people in the right ways?	March 2014	Review of local engagement and decision making currently underway. Regular cross departmental meeting take place to plan and coordinate consultation activity.	This review will inform alongside other consultation feedback future consultation actions including the development of consultation plans and processes.	
11.	Ensure processes are in place to hold a <b>council tax referendum</b> if the proposed level of council tax is deemed to be excessive.	Arrangements are in place to be implemented if required	Completed	N/A	N/A	John McCormack Head of Legal & Democratic Services & Monitoring

Local Delivery of Services						
	Activity	What needs to be done?	Anticipated completion date	Progress to September 2013	Next steps	Lead officer
12.	Develop a <b>service transformation process</b> to allow a wider community examination of any significant change in service delivery and a range of ' <b>packages/offers</b> ' which include a potential list of council services that could be devolved and information about professional support services.	Agree a service transformation process with stakeholders  Identify services that could be devolved and develop a range of packages (including support services)	June 2012  February 2013	Completed  Streetcare changes consulted upon. Changes to be approved by Communities Committee November 2013.	N/A  No plans for any more at present	Steve Evans Director of Environment and Community Services  Chief Officers
13.	Ensure mechanisms are in place to respond to <b>community right to challenge</b> applications and the procurement processes that might follow.	Develop a policy framework for assessing challenge bids  Review the council's procurement arrangements to ensure that it meets the requirements of the right to challenge without compromising the council's operational and statutory responsibilities	September 2012  September 2012	Draft policy agreed September 2012 for consultation. Consultation completed. Final policy and report due for consideration by Policy and Resources Committee in September 2013  Reviewed subject to approval of policy. New procurement and commissioning strategy being developed.	Completed  Council's Community Right to Challenge policy signposted in new procurement and commissioning strategy.	Dave Perry Director of Corporate Resources and Deputy Chief Executive
14.	Create and publish a register of <b>community</b>	Develop a policy framework to determine assessment criteria	September 2012	Completed March 2013	N/A	Linda Mawby Valuation and

	<p><b>assets</b> and ensure processes are in place to respond to disposals during the moratorium period.</p>	<p>Develop a process for compiling and publishing the register</p>	<p>September 2012</p>	<p>Completed March 2013. Note: The Register is ready for publication but at present has no entries.</p>	<p>Review current procedures in the light of applications received after 12 months and make recommendations for improvements if necessary.</p>	<p>Asset Manager</p>
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Action plan updated October 2013