

KERRIER DISTRICT COUNCIL

RESPONSE TO THE LYON'S INQUIRY CONSULATION

The Council has considered fully Sir Michael Lyon's Inquiry into Local Government, and welcomes and fully endorses the need for change.

The Council is committed to providing the highest quality of services to all of its residents, whilst ensuring that at all times it achieves value for money in each of its various activities.

The Council has considered Part 1 of the consultation document and has agreed that any changes which emerge from this exercise should only be considered for implementation if they advance the seven key principles indicated below:

LYON'S PART 1 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

1. Community Leadership

The conventional role of the Elected Member has changed beyond recognition. It is no longer about power, control and expenditure; the agenda has evolved and is about influence, advocacy and management.

2. Value for money and priorities

All public services must deliver more and higher quality services to customers in a social and political environment which has ever increasing expectations, but where citizens are not willing to pay more.

3. Democratic Unification of Public Services

There is an imperative to join up the strategic direction of all public service providers and operational outcomes for all public services, so as to make them properly aligned. This will have the added benefit of making them more efficient, effective and mutually supporting whilst still maintaining democratic accountability.

4. Localism

Local communities should be empowered to allow citizens the responsibility for not just their own lives, but also the care of their environment and the shape of local services.

5. Devolution

Central Government must cut bureaucracy, set general strategic parameters for operation only and devolve power to democratically accountable Local Government so that it in turn can devolve power at the community level.

6. **Local Community Identity**

Locally delivered services are best shaped and developed by locally elected bodies. It is also recognised that there is a need to establish a framework where these bodies consider and address strategic issues of mutual importance within a trans-local authority forum.

7. **Change Must Enhance Services**

Cornwall's peripherality, geography, rurality and demographic profile present a unique mix of issues. It is too early for the Council to take a formal position in relation to reorganisation beyond agreeing the general principle that any changes which may emerge must be based solely on improving the services which are delivered to our communities.

The Council's response to Part 2 of the report is set out below:

LYON'S PART 2 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

The Council:

1. Agrees that the current funding arrangements are in need of an overhaul.
2. That the current system, despite obvious inadequacies, does have certain merits and should be retained until a suitable replacement is determined. Any such replacement should only result from extensive consultation.
3. There a number of immediate improvements which could be made to lessen the burden of council tax for those less able to pay:
 - Easier access to council tax benefit by increasing the current threshold from £16,000
 - Renaming council tax benefit as a council tax credit and promoting the scheme to raise Public awareness
 - Removal of Police funding from local council tax
4. The LAGBI scheme is a recognition of the need for local authorities to forge closer working with the business community and authorities should be given autonomy in the setting of business rates (subject to floors and ceilings).
5. The report recognises that local needs and delivery costs vary throughout the country. The FSS mechanism tries to address this issue although in rural areas of mixed population density and social high deprivation, an equalisation of cost and service standards is difficult to achieve. Various short-term funding regimes have proved invaluable, but a more sustainable long-term source of funding is needed to help local authorities deliver the appropriate quality of service to their communities

In conclusion the Council agrees with the need for change but at this time considers that it is too early to make a specific proposal in regards to the shape of Local Government in Cornwall.

The Council considers that any change to the shape and nature of Local Government or of the mechanism for its future funding, should come only as the result of full consultation with all stakeholders and the local population

BARRY MANNING

Chief Executive

Kerrier District Council

10 March 2006