

**LOOE TOWN COUNCIL
KONSEL TRE LOGH**

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**Report from the Deputy Mayor on a Cornwall Mayors' and Clerks' meeting
in Redruth on Thursday 10 October 2024**

Purpose of report

To update Council on the meeting for information and to invite Council to **resolve** whether to agree the draft statement on devolution circulated separately.

Report

This occasional and informal meeting sits outside the Larger Councils' and CAP meetings. It provides the opportunity to share issues of common interest between Town and Parish Councils (T&PCs).

On this occasion there were representatives from Bude-Stratton, Camborne, Camelford, Falmouth, Hayle, Looe, Lostwithiel, Marazion, Newquay, Penzance, Redruth and St Ives.

National devolution

Stephen Reynolds (Mayor of Penzance) had drafted a proposed paper on national devolution. (See proposed statement separately circulated). It argued for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to be treated as a political and geographical entity in any discussions about devolution with central government; this as distinct from Cornwall being, for example, part of a "Greater South West" or joined with Plymouth ("Plymwall").

It was recognised that many services and agencies already operated over a wider geographical area than Cornwall alone and that this proposal was not intended to interfere with the benefits of such cooperation. This is solely concerned with political devolution.

It was understood that government plans for devolution may be included in the Autumn Statement and that any collective submission by Cornish T&PCs was therefore very urgent.

It was agreed that Mayors could judge whether to sign up personally to the statement or to do so after consulting Councillors individually, in either case seeking a formal Council resolution as soon as practical. Some present felt they would need a Council resolution before committing at all.

Meanwhile attempts would be made to establish Cornwall Council (CC)'s current thinking on this issue.

The importance of engaging with new MPs as soon as possible was stressed.

For Looe Town Council, our meeting is early enough to consider the devolution statement. The statement is currently only in draft form so Council should consider if they wish to endorse the view that,

- a) *Looe Town Council supports a devolution option for the Duchy of Cornwall that devolves powers to Cornwall, and not to a broader combined region alongside other large authorities in the south-west.*
- b) *The Council authorise the Mayor to sign a joint statement with Mayors and Chairpersons of town and parish councils across Cornwall that supports this view and which can be circulated to Cornwall's MPs and other interested parties.*

Cornwall Council and T&PCs

There were concerns about communications between over-stretched officers at Cornwall Council and T&PCs and these were aired in some detail.

It was agreed that the May 2025 elections provided an opportunity for reset and that T&PCs should prepare a draft protocol for relationship between T&PCs and a new administration at CC. Some present had wider national contacts and believed that such protocols may already in place elsewhere (eg Wigan). Enquiries would be made to see if we could learn from such examples.

Although it was recognised that some T&P Councillors may not be in place after the May 2025 elections it was felt that work should start without delay on this protocol.

CALC

The value and role was discussed along with the concern that some T&PCs were leaving CALC, presumably owing to costs.

Voluntary Visitor Levy scheme

The feasibility work being undertaken by Real Ideas on behalf of Penzance, St Ives and Looe was explained. It was suggested that it would be valuable to all T&PCs if the outputs could be shared when available, perhaps with two face to face presentations of the findings to enable full discussion.

It was appreciated that, while a compulsory visitor tax was commonplace in most popular tourist locations abroad this was generally backed by national or regional enabling legislation that was not yet available in England.

Benefits to visitors frequently promoted abroad were discussed. These could include area travel cards, free or discounted entry to attractions etc.. These were often paid for through visitor levies. It was appreciated that visitor levies should always be used for the direct benefit and enhancement of the town in which they were raised and that this could be a positive incentive for many visitors.