

## **NOTICE OF MOTION**

### **Notice of Motion - Sustainable Communities Act**

That this Council

(i) notes that local authorities and their communities know best how to improve local areas and solve local problems and so should determine how to promote thriving communities; and so

(ii) supports the bottom up process in the Sustainable Communities Act designed to allow local authorities and their communities to drive the help and assistance that central government gives to promote thriving, sustainable communities;

(iv) notes that the Act became law in October 2007 with full cross party support and that this was a result of 5 year campaign run by a coalition of over 90 national citizens organisations called Local Works;

(iv) notes that the Act gives local authorities the power to

- make proposals to government on the action and help government must take or give to promote sustainable communities in that local authority's area, and
- argue for a transfer of public money spent in that local authority's area and it's related function from central to local control;

(v) notes that the Act defines the sustainability of local communities broadly, that definition having the 4 aspects of

- the improvement of the local economy,
- protection of the environment,
- promotion of social inclusion, and
- participation in civic and political activity;

(vi) notes that the Local Works coalition, that campaigned for 5 years to see the Act become law, give a number of reasons for why a local authority should choose to use the Act, those reasons being

1. Assistance from government - Community decline is happening everywhere and local authorities are not able to prevent it on their own. They need government help. This Act gives government a legal duty 'to assist local authorities in promoting the sustainability of local communities'. So by 'opting in' local authorities are, in fact, signing up to receive that 'assistance'.

2. Power to determine that assistance - The Act also gives local authorities (and their representative body, the Local Government Association) real power to

determine the nature of the assistance that they receive from government, as explained more fully in our campaign broadsheet on implementing the Act (contact us for free copies).

3. Strength in numbers - By opting in, local authorities can act in unison to put in proposals to government supported by their colleagues elsewhere. Joint suggestions by many authorities will make it even harder for the government to refuse to act on suggestions made by local authorities.

4. Transferring functions and monies from central to local control - The Act also enables local authorities - and thus local authorities acting together - to request the transfer of functions from government or government agencies to themselves. Because decisions on these requests must be made by the LGA and the Secretary of State trying to reach agreement (i.e. in co-operation), this can be used to regain from central government control of many powers and spending that affect local areas.

5. Access to Central Spending Accounts Information - The requirement in the Act for the government to 'open the books' will mean that local authorities will know just how much extra money they can access if they push for a transfer of functions.

6. Democratic citizen involvement - All politicians (and many local authority officers) talk a lot about lack of public involvement in democracy. The recent Power report showed that the more people think that their involvement matters, the more they are likely to get involved. The very 'hassle' required by this Act (reaching agreement with – not consulting – citizens' panels) empowers citizens. Local authorities may well consider that this is a way of increasing citizen involvement; and

(vii) resolves:

- when invited to by central government, to consider using the Act by preparing and submitting proposals on how central government can help; and
- to request the Chief Executive to write to local MPs and the Local Works campaign, informing them of this decision.

Proposed by Councillor Keith Taylor

Seconded by Councillor Dee Simson  
Councillor Paul Elgood