

Stronger Somerset – *for stronger communities*

We will work with people to build strong communities across all of Somerset and we will invest to make this work.

We want **greater power and control devolved to local people**, making sure that public services are delivered in ways that address local needs.

Our communities and devolution team will work across the whole county to take a place-led approach, and not just respond to the most affluent and vocal places.

Places with active communities are **more prosperous, more equal and their citizens need formal services less** in their lives, or later in their lives, than in other places.

In Frome for example, isolated people with health problems are supported by community groups and volunteers. In a 3-year study it was shown that while across the whole of Somerset emergency hospital admissions rose by 29%, in Frome they fell by 17%.

Town Deal Boards in Bridgwater and Glastonbury are further examples of localism in action, creating innovative plans and bringing often diverse communities together through collaborative working, to win investment to help reshape their towns and cities into places where businesses and communities can thrive.

We will strike a new relationship with cities, towns and parishes and will capture this in a Charter.

A Charter will help establish and articulate a **strong collaborative relationship** between town, parish and city councils and the new unitary councils.

We want a **bottom-up approach** that truly reflects the ways that communities operate and interact.

City, town and parish councils will be empowered to work together in the formations and on the issues that suit them best. We will also facilitate relationships with Primary Care Networks to work on health and wellbeing in their communities.

The Charter is an idea backed by the Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC).

The Charter will set out mutually agreed rights and responsibilities and be flexible, recognising the range of local councils and localities across Somerset.

We will develop the Charter through **participative workshops** with parishes, towns and other parties.

We will work with localities to create Locality Agreements.

Locality Agreements will vary in scope and scale to reflect local circumstances, for example:

- **Council Development Agreements** – offered to city, town and parish councils to help with governance arrangements and community engagement, as well as helping them access services such as favourable procurement frameworks, HR and finance.
- **Service or asset-based agreements** – these could involve assets, such as a building or a service, transferred permanently or for a fixed-term
- **People or Place based agreements** – for example, an agreement to work to reduce isolation and inactivity of older people, that would in turn reduce demand on residential care places or the number of emergency hospital admissions.

These agreements could support wider agendas such as population health, or crime prevention. They could involve the investment of money for evidence-based activity with projected benefits to public services.