

Localism in Action

Case studies, tools and tips from the South West of England

“The time has come
to disperse power more
widely in Britain today.”

The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister,
Coalition Agreement, May 2010



Index

Introduction	5	Chapter 3. Community Led Planning and Neighbourhood Plans	30
Localism and Decentralisation	6	Crewkerne, South Somerset	31
Chapter 1. Participatory Budgeting	8	Martock Community Plan	32
Seven case studies and five tools to help you get organised	8	West Dorset	33
What is PB and how is it evolving into Community Budgeting?	8	West Devon	33
PB Case studies	9	Devon Heartlands	34
• Cornwall	9	Lynton, Lynmouth and Exmoor National Park	35
• Exeter	11		
• South Somerset	11	Chapter 4. Communities Taking The Lead	36
• Devonport	13	Buckland Newton Community Land Trust	36
• Dulverton	13	Connecting communities in Devon - Townstal and Teignmouth West	38
• Wiltshire	14	Area Boards in Wiltshire	39
• East Devon's Section 106 initiative	16	Neighbourhood engagement in Exeter	40
Policing and PB	18	Thorncombe Village Shop	41
Tools for PB	18		
• Rural PB Lessons	18	Chapter 5. Making It Happen	42
• Sample Timetable	19	Participative Methods for Delivering Localism	42
• Checklist of Helpers	20	Local Assemblies	44
• Voting Options	20	Appreciative Inquiry (AI)	44
• Mainstreaming Events	21	Take Part	44
• Initial planning sheet for a PB event	22	Community Hubs	45
The PB Unit	23	CHAMPS - Eyes, Ears and Voices for Communities in Cheltenham	45
Chapter 2. Community Assets	24		
Football pitches in Exeter	24	Chapter 6. Partners	46
Exeter Community Centre	24	Who to Involve and Why	46
Belmont Park Scrapstore	25	Fire and Rescue Services are localism in action	47
Chippenham Sailing and Canoeing Club	26		
Parking and traffic management in Dulverton	26	Chapter 7. Resources, Websites & Contacts	50
Calne Community Hub	27		
Using Fire Stations in Devon and Somerset	28		

For too long, central government has hoarded and concentrated power. Trying to improve people's lives by imposing decisions, setting targets, and demanding inspections from Whitehall simply doesn't work. It creates bureaucracy. It leaves no room for adaptation to reflect local circumstances or innovation to deliver services more effectively and at lower cost. And it leaves people feeling "done to" and imposed upon – the very opposite of the sense of participation and involvement on which a healthy democracy thrives.

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Minister of State for Decentralisation
January 2011

Introduction

In October 2009 thirteen officers from local authorities across the South West met at Creating Excellence in Taunton to develop Participatory Budgeting in the South West. As a small group learning about a topic hard to articulate and with a limited number of enthusiasts, its members did not expect that within two years they would have run a sell-out event, produced this Guide, grown to 29 members, 15 authorities, and 24 projects.

The intention in this Guide is to offer the knowledge and experience that they have developed in the last two years to a wider audience. While not claiming to have all the answers, contributors do have years of practical experience delivering participatory budgeting and supporting communities. You'll find their contact details throughout the Guide, and at the end. Do use these contacts for more information, updates, and to build the community of localism across the region.

The skills needed to work within authorities to loosen the purse-strings and bring them and communities together in a creative way are not special to PB. Other tools for promoting localism are also included. The Group's experience and knowledge of community assets and neighbourhood planning are also outlined in the Guide with their tips and suggestions.

This Guide would not have happened without the enthusiasm and hard work of the core Group members, and the inspirational leadership of Leslie Silverlock and John Skrine. Creating Excellence, which founded and supports the Group, would also like to thank its funders, the South West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership, DCLG, the Group members' continuing generosity with their time, and the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service for sponsoring the SW PB Conference and this publication. It cost very little, but without some regional infrastructure and funding capacity, activity of this kind cannot happen at all.

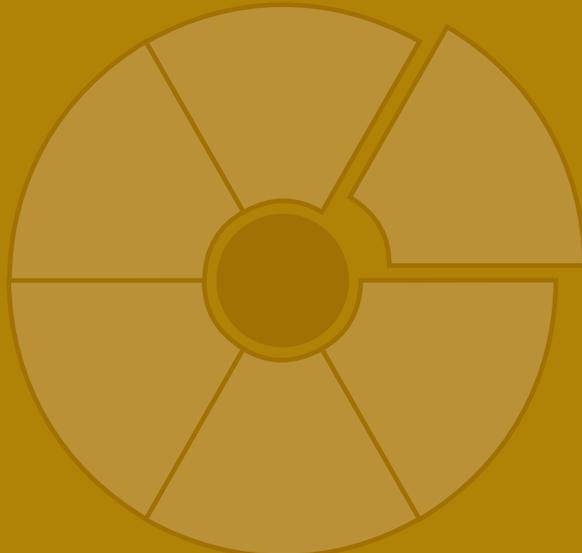
Dominic Murphy, Executive Director
Creating Excellence

Localism and Decentralisation

Councillors are behind localism

“Decisions are better made at the most appropriate level that is closest to the community. If they are: bureaucracy will shrink, decisions will be quicker, actions will be what the community wants at the price the community can afford, neighbourhood plans will be more acceptable, local involvement is enhanced, there is more interest in local parish and town councils.”

Keith Ross, OBE, Leader, Local Government Association
Independents Leader



The Government aims to give power back to people and communities. It intends to take six actions to devolve power, money and knowledge to those best placed to find solutions to local needs: elected local representatives, front line public service professionals, social enterprises, charities, co-ops, community groups, neighbourhoods and individuals.

Six actions of decentralisation

1. Lift the burden of bureaucracy
2. Empower communities to do things their way
3. Increase local control of public finance
4. Diversify the supply of public services
5. Open up Government to public scrutiny
6. Strengthen accountability to local people

This requires a determined programme to ensure that power is given away to the lowest level.

Measures of particular interest to communities include:

The Community Right to Challenge - Voluntary groups, community groups, parish councils and other organisations having a right to express an interest in taking over a local public service, which must be responded to by the local authority.

The Community Right to Bid - Makes it easier for communities to buy buildings or businesses that are important to them when they are under threat of being sold. It gives communities more time to develop a bid and raise the money needed.

Local Referendums - Give people the right to suggest a vote on any issue that they think is important. Authorities and other public bodies must take the result into account when making decisions.

Right to veto excessive Council Tax rises - Local authorities which propose to raise Council Tax higher than a ceiling set by Government will trigger a referendum in which local people can approve or veto the rise.

Community Infrastructure Levy - A requirement that some of the money raised from developers goes directly into the neighbourhoods where it takes place.

Neighbourhood Planning - The right for communities to work with the local authority to develop a Neighbourhood Plan, saying where the community thinks new houses, businesses or shops should go - and what they should look like.

The Community Right to Build - The right for groups of local people to bring forward new developments, the benefits of which will stay in the community.

Putting these measures into practice has the potential to effect a significant change in national life, passing power to a local level.

For more information see: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/>

“At East Devon District Council, we have used Participatory Budgeting to encourage residents and community groups to make decisions regarding the allocation of Section 106 funding for Recreation and Play.

The engagement of the community, and particularly young people, has enabled recommendations to be properly considered, in the knowledge that the views of local residents have been placed at the forefront of our decisions.

I would wholeheartedly endorse the role that Participatory Budgeting can play in taking decision making to the community.”

Cllr. Andrew Moulding, Deputy Leader, East Devon District Council

Participatory Budgeting

Seven South West case studies and seven tools to help you get organised.

1. What is PB and how is it evolving into Community Budgeting?
2. PB case studies – Cornwall, Exeter, South Somerset, Devonport, Dulverton, Wiltshire, East Devon's Section 106 initiative; Policing and PB
3. Tools for PB - Rural Lessons; Planning an Event/Sample Timetable/Checklist of Helpers; Voting Options; Mainstreaming; an initial planning sheet for a PB event
4. The PB Unit.

What is PB?

PB enables local people to take decisions on spending part of the public budget in their area. This helps bring about a change in the relationship between communities, councillors and local authorities. It must be conducted on an inclusive basis. The Local Government White Paper identified PB as a key tool for empowering local people. How do Community Budgets, Place-based Budgets, Small Area Budgets, Neighbourhood Budgets, Participatory Budgeting, and Local Integrated Services all fit together?

These and other names offer a range of approaches for increasing local control of funding (one of the six actions of decentralisation) to give people more control over their area, tailor services to local priorities, and raise the capacity and interest of people to get involved in their community.

- **Community Budgets (CB):**

CBs link public spending to an area rather than individual services or organisations; for example, spending on services for troubled families. That encompasses a wide range of funding streams in an area – including mainstream, private, voluntary and community sector funding or a combination of all of these – so that instead of multiple distant bureaucracies prescribing the services needed and managing the impact of public spending on so local a scale, decisions can be made freely and flexibly at a local/frontline level.

The Government announced the first phase of CBs, focusing on families with multiple problems in 16 areas from April 2011. The Government's intention is that all places will be able to operate CBs across all services from 2013-14.

CBs operating at the very local level are known as Small Area Budgets (or sometimes Neighbourhood Budgets). They start in a particular place – an estate, neighbourhood, or small group of wards and form around the services that local people want to protect and improve.

- **Local Integrated Services (LIS):**

A community-led approach to redesigning services where local people determine priorities for service reform and co-produce this change with local partners. There is no new money attached to LIS, but the community is given real control and influence over expenditure and use of resources; a CB is one enabler to realising LIS. Nine areas are developing plans for applying the LIS concept; most have set April 2012 as a target for genuine budget pooling and the establishment of community commissioning boards.

- **Participatory Budgeting (PB):**

PB gives people a direct say in how part of a public budget is spent, often with a very local focus on a neighbourhood, community or even estate. That means giving people a chance to propose, debate on and vote for local spending priorities. PB has mainly been undertaken on discrete ring-fenced grant pots, but the Government is keen for PB to be used more on mainstream services budgets, with the potential to adopt a CB approach.

PB Case Studies

Cornwall : U-Choose

Engaging the villages of Nanpean, Foxhole, and Whitemoor

Background

The most rural U – Choose event focused on three villages within the China Clay region, an area with a rich history and strong sense of place. The three villages are quite isolated both from each other and other communities in the area and have a higher than average population of lone parents and low-income families, with above average rates of teenage pregnancy, obesity and poor health problems. The 1,377 households and 2,479 electorate have historically been hard to reach and engage in new initiatives.

Criteria

A small fund of £5,000 was allocated for projects that would:

- Benefit local communities
- Increase community empowerment and build community spirit
- Be designed and implemented by local people and community groups
- Support the Sustainable Community Strategy's targets



Top score – group voting

Fire and Rescue Services introduce PB

“I am really pleased that Devon and Somerset will be the first fire and rescue service in the country to undertake PB events. As a fire and rescue service it is important that we understand the risks in a local community and can respond to them. What better way to do this than let the community decide how to spend money to reduce their local risk.

As a fire service we are uniquely placed to deliver the localism agenda with our stations based in the heart of the local community. We intend through the use of PB to demonstrate our commitment to these communities and the wider localism agenda.”

Cllr Mark Healey, Chair of Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Services

The steering group

A Steering Group of ward members, parish council chairman, officers from the County Council and the parish plan was created. Its purpose was to ensure everyone understood the process and signed up at an early stage. The Group also helped identify local groups to take part.

Applications

Applicants were invited to apply for between £250 and £1,000 per project. Residents were made aware of the fund by articles in the media, and posters in shops and pubs. Local schools had presentations at assemblies and information was sent home in book bags. Potential projects were given support with the application process.

As the event was held in Nanpean it was anticipated that there would be greater attendance from that village compared to Foxhole and Whitemoor, so to ensure the funds were distributed fairly it was agreed that at least one project from each of the villages would get funded.

Organising the Day

The event was organised as a fun day and village celebration. The fire brigade brought a fire engine, the police one of their vehicles; there was a bike skills course for children, face painting, and a local cake stall.

Voting

Applicants presented their projects with displays outlining their aims and the activities they would spend the money on. Voting slips also had the projects outlined on them. People could vote for as many projects as they wanted to support but they were only allowed one slip. Votes were then posted into a ballot box in the centre of the room.

Attendance

There were 260 returned votes, which was a high turnout, much larger than previous consultations relating to the parish plan and the Clay Futures/Eco-Town development. This was also the highest number of attendees for any participatory budgeting event in Cornwall.

Projects funded included new equipment for the recreation ground, improvements to the village park, a cycle parking area to encourage children and adults to cycle to school, a greenhouse for a community garden, and a day trip for older people.

Outcomes

- Positive feedback from residents who were pleased to have their say
- Good networking between local groups
- The priority setting process was widely acknowledged as a significant change from previous council activity
- Trust and momentum developed between the council and residents
- A match between public service and local priorities
- A bottom-up rather than top-down approach to engagement was promoted

Contact Sarah Sims: ssims@cornwall.gov.uk

Exeter Decides – A PB approach to Community Grants

Exeter City Council made £15,000 available for groups to bid for £500 for community initiatives. A steering group of a councillor, voluntary officer and a resident scrutinised the applications. Bids had to demonstrate consultation with other residents' priorities and then that group was invited to make a presentation at one of the 'Exeter Decides' events. The audience voted for the ten groups who should receive a grant. Over the three events, 31 groups were successful in receiving an award.

Contact Dawn Rivers: dawn.rivers@exeter.gov.uk or 01392 265531

Six successful Opportunity Events

PB in South Somerset

Development teams in South Somerset organised Community Forums aimed at increasing the number of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality.

One area branded the Forums as Opportunity events, using PB to involve people in the democratic process and have a say in how grants are spent in their community.

During 2007-09 six events took place. £30,000 was available for each of the market towns of Ilminster, Chard, Crewkerne and surrounding villages. Community groups and parish and town councils were invited to apply for up to £5,000 for a project that would help improve their community. Projects that met this criterion were invited to give a three-minute presentation to a public meeting explaining how they would spend the money and the benefit it would bring to the community. Display boards supported their applications and the audience voted on who should receive funding.

Even though held in the largest venues, not everyone could be accommodated as the rooms were filled to capacity because the events were so popular.

In the first round of 'Opportunity' events 29 groups received funding totalling £95,840.

Changes made after lessons learnt at the first round:

1. The amount of money available would be based on population: Ilminster £20,000, Crewkerne £30,000, Chard £40,000.
2. Groups were assessed in one of five categories: Community Participation, Children & Young People, Village Life, Improving Services and Healthy Lifestyles. These categories met the District Council's Corporate Aims.
3. Feedback had also highlighted that the villages felt they were disadvantaged against the town groups.
4. A ticket only system was created to ensure all those attending had a seat and could watch all the presentations. Tickets were free, and every event sold out.

“It has been very encouraging to see the ‘buzz’ surrounding the project and micro grants are a superb way to ensure that true community based projects get off the ground.”

Resident

“The Exeter Decides events really were superb. It was wonderful to see community groups meeting together, networking and receiving recognition and funds for their hard work. Small grants, but ones that will go a long way to making a big difference in the lives of people in Exeter.”

City Councillor



Exeter – everyone is involved

In the second round £93,174 was allocated to 40 different projects including: five village halls, play areas, community events, football, martial arts, a young people's drop-in café, skate park, scouts and majorettes.

The community's response

At least 200 people attended each event, many of whom would not normally attend a council meeting or other council event.

	% of people who had not attended a council meeting before
Ilminster 2007	62%
Crewkerne 2008	53%
Chard 2008	67%
Ilminster 2008	65%
Crewkerne 2009	55%
Chard 2009	69%

People liked the networking opportunity, the raised awareness of voluntary groups and organisations in their community, the 'buzz' generated, and how the events brought together a wide range of people.

Lessons learnt

- Involve other agencies from the start. We invited the relevant County Councillor who, after watching all the presentations, used some of his Community Budget to fund groups that had not received Opportunity funds.

What Councillors can do

- Help publicise the process by letting community groups in your ward know about the funds.
- Be involved in assessing applications and make sure they meet the criteria before the public vote.
- Attend the Opportunity events and formally endorse the public vote.

Contact Zoë Harris: zoe.harris@southsomerset.gov.uk

Torbay

In March 2011 the Community Safety team ran an imaginative £15,000 PB event to reduce the risks of young people becoming victims of domestic abuse. Nine proposals, seven from young people, were considered by a packed hall all day Saturday either side of the superb lunch at Torquay Museum. The proposers negotiated how to allocate the budget to ideas for protecting vulnerable young people and those with learning disabilities, and raising the self-esteem of young women, using counselling, drama, DVD and media.

Contact Vicky Booty: Vicky.Booty@torbay.gov.uk

Tips

- Use local press, posters, word of mouth to help get the message out there.
- Ensure that unsuccessful groups are thanked and given details of other grants they can apply for.

Devonport, Plymouth

Devonport Regeneration Community Partnership delivered five imaginative PB projects in Plymouth. Each project targeted a different audience:

- young people
- over 50s
- four primary schools
- businesses
- safer, cleaner and greener initiatives for the whole community.

Between 70 and 604 people were involved in each separate, grant giving event, applying for £265,000 in total.

200 people attended the Safer, Cleaner, Greener event, where nine local groups bid for some of the £185,000 to improve the environment and opportunities for residents to lead more fulfilling lives.

Local people voted to spend money on community halls, a youth centre, animal handling, energy efficiency, landscaping, and business advertising.

Each event employed a different voting procedure – see page 20 for voting examples

Contact: www.drcpartnership.co.uk

Dulverton's 'Sensible Spending' A rural PB pilot

Dulverton in Somerset is a small market town of 1,500 people serving a population of 4,500 on southern Exmoor, the headquarters of the National Park.

Nine publicly financed authorities serve the town, spending £10 million each year – Fire and Rescue, Police, Health, Housing, National Park, County, District, Community, and Town Councils.

Local people own or manage 24 of the public facilities in the town including the Town Hall, the Heritage Centre, sports field, bar and pavilion, cemetery, recreation grounds, churches, and fire station. Localism has been practised here for many years.

PB began in 2009, seeking to influence mainstream budgets as well as offering grants to local groups. Four of the nine authorities contributed £15,000 for people to vote on health, economic, environment, and community priorities. Four other authorities gave support in kind – staff and equipment.

Since then the town has been seeking to influence other budgets and services, coordinate traffic management, save the library, recycling centre, and youth club, negotiate asset transfers from the county and district councils and



Children from four primary schools vote priorities for £15,000 in Devonport, Plymouth



Crewkerne resident votes

exploring how to move towards community budgeting. 430 people attended two public events, in the hard winter of 2011, to vote on local services, facilities, and raising the parish precept 50%. 70 volunteered to join one of four action groups.

A simple problem localism can solve:

There are five different, publicly funded, grass cutting contracts in the town. Machinery is brought from 20 and 30 miles away by different contractors to cut neighbouring areas of grass, all of which could be managed locally.

The town council is exploring how it might take over these and other activities, and save money for the distant district and county councils, while having enough money devolved from them to maintain quality services.

Lessons learnt

The burden on local volunteers and businesses dealing with larger public authorities is debilitating with:

- endless meeting trails, papers, correspondence,
- vague or withheld information,
- custom and practice posing as regulation,
- detailed evaluation required in return for small grants,
- bureaucratic ping-pong, endless energy sapping delays, travel, and time off work.
- Only retired people and those with independent means and great enthusiasm have the time to pursue some of localism's goals, especially in small rural communities.

What Councillors can do

- help local people cut through red tape and access budget information
- put your constituents' aspirations above Party loyalties.

Contact Leslie Silverlock: lesliesilverlock@groupswork.com or 07831 711380

PB and Localism in Wiltshire

Wiltshire became a unitary authority in 2009 encouraging local communities to work with public agencies in new and innovative ways. 18 local area boards were created, each serviced by a community area manager who works with local councillors, partners and the community to increase participation, inclusion and engagement.

Local databases of people who want to be kept informed about the work of the area board, local public services, and the voluntary and community sector have been established. Blogging, Twitter and Facebook are being explored.

We are also focussing on under-represented groups like the partners of military personnel in Tidworth, people with learning difficulties and autism in Calne and older people in Westbury.

Tips

- Keep lobbying, stay visible, ask face-to-face questions, as well as writing short letters with specific questions and proposals.
- Use different champions, ambassadors and envoys, from business and politics.
- Adopt a 'no blame' approach to public services.

Participatory Budgeting

We have identified two different types of participatory budgeting:

1. large events often supported by additional funding,
2. those based on the allocation of existing service budgets.

Although large events are good for raising public awareness, the staff time and resource commitment needed means that these can only be irregular and isolated events. A drive has now begun to embed the ideas of participatory budgeting into allocating mainstream budgets.

Large event - Salisbury

Young people with disabilities and their carers in Salisbury were given the opportunity to vote on £50,000 for local projects. Carers' organisations and the youth service ensured a supportive environment for developing and presenting ideas and participating in the voting. A deliberative voting technique was used to encourage everyone present - including the young people, carers, staff and councillors - to discuss the projects in groups and come to a consensus. Grants went, for example, to a sensory room, and a ramp for the scouts' minibus.

Young people

A young people's transport conference had £100,000 from Cabinet to tackle local problems. £5,000 was channelled through each area board to ensure that young people could influence how the money was spent.

In Malmesbury, Melksham and Bradford on Avon, councillors dedicated specific Area Board meetings to young people, so they could present their ideas for local transport and access. Everyone present voted using electronic hand sets to allocate the funding. The Area Board is working with the secondary school now to help students research their ideas, fill in application forms, and enhance their presentation skills for our next event. This form of participation is so popular with councillors, staff, young people and the general public that Melksham Area Board is using PB techniques annually for youth projects. In Calne and Trowbridge, young people held deliberative sessions before presenting their proposals to the Area Board for approval.

Highways

High level political support from the Cabinet Member for Transport has seen the involvement of local people in highways increase dramatically since 2010. Local people can nominate street lights to be switched off between midnight and 5am to conserve energy and save money. Local residents in Bradford on Avon and Calne have nominated hundreds of street lights for the scheme, including whole villages.

Transport groups have been set up in each area to consider small highways works, the allocation of grit bins and drop kerbs. These groups are formed of 10 local activists including councillors, local campaigners, members of the chamber of commerce, and voluntary and community groups. They recommend priorities for councillors to vote on at the Area Board. In Calne, resident campaigns have led to new cycle stands, cycle paths and drop kerbs. This has helped local people understand the pressures on public budgets.

Contact Abbi Gutierrez: abbi.gutierrez@wiltshire.gov.uk or Jane Vaughan: jane.vaughan@wiltshire.gov.uk



Young people and their carers voting £50,000 priorities in Salisbury

Section 106 Agreements in East Devon

A nationally recognised innovation

Local residents choose their own play areas and sports facilities

Since 2008 play and recreation in East Devon has been improved with Section 106 Agreement (S106) funds. The Council's PB has meant that the design, layout and improvement of play and recreation have been decided by local residents and their children.

These agreements are designed to support the provision of extra services and infrastructure required to support the new development. Every local authority is different but East Devon currently collects an average of £3,699 for every additional dwelling, with roughly 50% allocated to fund sport and 50% for play.

PB encourages people to have a say in how S106 money for play and sport is spent in their area. Asking residents what they want means that they can take ownership of the project. This encourages communities to work together to get the facilities they want and will look after.

PB encourages people to have a say in how S106 money for play and sport is spent in their area. Asking residents what they want means that they can take ownership of the project. This encourages communities to work together to get the facilities they want and will look after.

Why sport and play?

The Council's existing policy asks for contributions to sport and play, but we are working closely with town and parish councils to expand what the Council can ask for.

How do we plan the projects?

The Council's Engagement and Funding Officer, S106 Officer and StreetScene team work alongside residents, Ward Members, Town and Parish Councils, schools and the Police to make sure that everyone is happy with the final results. Each project is individually planned.

1. At Carter Avenue in Exmouth, an old slide had to be removed from a play area for health and safety reasons. £5,000 of S106 was used to replace it. A play event was organised by the Council on a Saturday afternoon including face painting, circus skills, giant games and a chance to vote on the new piece of equipment. The 400 nearest households were leafleted, and press articles invited local people. 100 residents attended and chose one of five designs. The winning equipment received just under half of the votes and is now installed.
2. Millwey Rise play area in Axminster was prioritised by residents for £47,000 S106 funding. Officers and residents then successfully bid for £40,000 of match funding from the Playbuilder Fund. A steering group arranged visits to schools to gather children's opinions, and the children voted on three designs. Well received by the whole community, the play area is now open.
3. Seaton Town Council provided £75,000 S106 money and invited local community groups to submit proposals. The District Council organised two face-to-face voting events with local residents by taking over a market stall on



Section 106 £383,000 - let the people decide



S106 PB gives the community ownership of the park

market days. Children's groups like the Scouts were invited to vote to ensure young people were represented. A total of 500 people voted on the projects, and we are now working with the Town Council to action the two successful projects. Other recent examples include:

Year voted on	Location	Play or sport	Amount
2010/ 2011	Ottery St Mary	Sport- outdoor gym and skate park	£20,000
2010/ 2011	Seaton	Sport- outdoor gym and swimming pool	£75,000
2010/ 2011	Exton and Woodbury	Play area	£6,800
2010/ 2011	Broadhembury	Play area	£1,650
2010/ 2011	Whimble	Play area	£2,750
2010/ 2011	Newton Poppleford	Play area	£5,900
2011/ 2012	The Ham, Sidmouth	Play area	£21,000
2011/ 2012	Exmouth	Sport	£250,000

This PB process has received both regional and national recognition because involving the public in allocating S106 funds is surprisingly innovative.

Lessons learnt

- Always set up a Steering Group with delegated powers involving all partners at the very beginning of each project.
- With sports projects make sure the voters are representative of the population in the area by age and postcode.
- Offer to work with developers on play and recreation projects they are asked to deliver in larger developments.

What Councillors can do

- Start off the project by finding out if there are any S106 funds available in the area.
- Be prominent in the steering group, helping to plan and publicise the projects with in-depth knowledge of the community.
- Attend any voting events, answer queries and help the community to cast their votes.

What about the future?

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is due in 2014 and means developers' contributions can be pooled and used for large infrastructure projects such as schools, roads, hospitals, etc. The CIL will set specific charges for developments across the country. The contribution per property will be the same for 1 or 100 dwellings. Government advice is that a 'meaningful proportion', up to 50%, be spent on 'community aspirations'. The levy must not hinder the viability of the development, and Neighbourhood and Parish Plans must also be taken into consideration.

Contact Jamie Buckley: jbuckley@eastdevon.gov.uk or 01395 517569

Tips

- Use S106 money to lever in other funding.
- When organising voting events make sure there are lots of free attractions and/or join in with an event already taking place.
- Publicise voting events as widely as possible - leaflet drops, posters, press releases, website etc.



Community policing

Policing, Community Safety, and PB

Police and Community Safety Services are involved in delivering PB in the South West in Salisbury, Plymouth, Somerset, and Torbay. They contribute to youth programmes, supervising events, providing money, supporting carers and people with disabilities. In Torbay, for example, the Community Safety team invited local groups to prioritise, at a well attended Saturday event, how £15,000 could be better used to prevent abuse to women and girls.

Police Services elsewhere have benefited from environmental improvements, engaging young people, youth proofing, being visibly involved in PB events (community reassurance), Section 30 feedback, restorative justice, drugs, alcohol and sexual health surveys, removal of abandoned vehicles, and support for neighbourhood policing.

TOOLS for PB

If you are planning a PB event these checklists should help you to be organised

1. Lessons for rural communities
2. Sample Timetable for a short PB event
3. Who You'll Need to Help You
4. Voting Options
5. Mainstreaming PB

1. Lessons learnt from rural PB

Why PB Works well in Rural Areas – and How to Make it Work for You

Where is the money to come from?

Think about existing pots of money that could be used more creatively. For example, elected members have local initiatives budgets, £40,000 each in Devon in 2011/12, which few local people are aware of. There are also other funds, such as Section 106 and underspent year end budgets, which require persistence to uncover. Assets already owned or managed locally make good foundations for matched funding. Parish and Town Councils hold some reserves that could be used to secure matched funding from other sources.

Making it work

Leadership is critical. PB leaders or groups need to live, work or in some way belong to the community engaging in PB, and a PB facilitator needs community development skills. Local organisers also need County, District, Police, Housing, and Health champions. Frontline staff in outlying rural areas, police, health visitors and housing TPOs need authority to proceed without constant reference back on every detail to their senior managers.

Time-scales need careful planning. Elected members, health professionals or police often want quick results, but local people need appropriate time and support to develop ideas. Establishing a new rural PB initiative can take 6 to 12 months, initially, though a full time member of staff absorbing this responsibility into their weekly schedule is able to shorten this. A new initiative is likely to require a minimum of 12 days work spread over this time, for a professional or a volunteer. A county wide scheme may need 50 days to set up, but will be less demanding in the second year. Elections slow the PB process, especially if there is a change in political control.

Local community groups need to be informed as soon as possible that PB is being planned. Large and distant authorities' timescales and response times are longer than local people can understand or anticipate, and these authorities too need to know that a PB initiative is being planned.

Only small budgets are likely to be available in a rural area, but larger budgets can be influenced through a mainstreaming process. Small local groups need their projects funded up front.

Local authorities should take the initiative, because:

PB brings distantly managed public services to rural doorsteps. It should involve Parish Councils, which are the tier of government closest to the community they serve; often they are not driven by party politics, which can be an advantage at grass-roots level.

PB initiatives benefit the local authority more widely by creating fresh relationships between statutory agencies such as police, health and housing which need to cooperate to make PB work. PB also stimulates more straightforward approaches for spending statutory money locally through grant making, rather than by complex and expensive tendering, commissioning and contracting procedures.

By bringing decisions to the community, PB supports the responsibilities of councillors and develops their democratic, representative role. In due course, this leads to more people seeking representative roles as councillors, school governors, parish councillors, and area board members.

Why it is good for the community

Small rural PB projects engage a larger proportion and cross section of a community than most other public service initiatives. They produce real involvement and networking. PB schemes can also include the people often left out of the decision-making and spending which affects them equally - the housebound, elderly, infirm, and their carers.

The availability of small grants stimulates local groups to work together on imaginative and cooperative projects. PB decision-making events stimulate access to other funds, organisations, and networks, for both successful and unsuccessful bidders.

(From PB Unit/CLG and Commission for Rural Communities Research 2008-9).

2. Sample timetable for a simple, grant making PB event

- **3pm** - Prepare venue, making it ready and welcoming so that organisers can talk to and reassure early arrivals, provide rehearsal space for presenters, and time for presenters to check equipment/layout etc
- **5pm** - Doors open one hour before the official start of the event for refreshments and networking
- **6pm** - Expert introduction to the event, why it is being held, what the issues are, the voting procedure and timetable
- **6.10pm** - 3 minute presentations, with seven minutes for questions and deliberation by small groups gathered at tables
- **7.10pm** - First ballot - either by individuals or groups
- Break for light refreshment and networking
- **7.25pm** - Announce results of trial ballot



Participatory voting



Refresh your volunteers...



...while they're voting

- Continue break for deals between groups, and lobbying
- **7.45pm** - Announce any changes and deals
- **7.50pm** - Final vote and counting
- **8pm** - Announcement of results

Refreshments served again for up to an hour after the formal event is concluded to encourage networking, cohesion, further action and ideas.

3. A Checklist of Facilitators, Organisers and Helpers for a PB event

In a perfect world you might need some or all of these:

- **Facilitator** who understands the aims of the event or a pair of facilitators who share the responsibility for keeping the event on track, people understanding and involved, and maintaining cohesion
- **Back-up facilitator** (if only one is booked)
- **Timekeeper**, with sounding gong, whistle, or bell
- **Technician** to ensure microphones, PowerPoint projectors and laptops all work smoothly, if you are using technology
- **Tellers:** people to count votes
- **Board writer** or IT typist for calculations, changes in amounts bid for, or messages during the event
- **Returning officer:** some organisations have used this as an opportunity to involve the police, especially a neighbourhood beat officer where the event is held in a specific community
- **Caterers**, waiters, as needed
- **Meeters and greeters** at the door (young people, community reps, professional partners), briefed to answer questions
- **Chaperone** for senior councillors and officers
- **Media liaison** person
- **Publicist** to gather quotes throughout
- **Evaluator**

It is also possible for three to four people to run the whole process.

4. Voting Options for Grantmaking Events

After hearing the presentations for spending the money, participants are asked to vote using a variety of methods:

1. **Hands up:** open voting with a show of hands for each project for first, second, third etc
2. **Sequential ballot:** everybody votes for their first choice in a secret ballot. Once the first choice has been announced, participants vote for their next choice, and so on until the pot is spent.
3. **Ballot paper:** one ballot paper is distributed, on which all bids are listed for prioritising by each participant.

4. Group voting: small groups, five to eight participants, sitting together are asked to rate each bid against three criteria:

- Is it good value for money?
- Is it workable?
- Are the benefits wide enough?

Each criterion is voted on a scale 1 to 5 enabling bids to achieve a maximum of 15 points. The small groups vote for one another's bids but not their own.

At a closed event only the bidding groups vote. At an open event other attendees are asked to either join bidding groups, or to form fresh voting groups, mixed in order to avoid cartels. Ideally everybody will be involved; no bystanders even among visiting councillors and professionals. Being 'watched' or supervised is not attractive to participants at this kind of event, and undermines the concepts inherent in PB.

5. Trial vote: using any of the above techniques participants cast their votes in a practice run; this is followed by a break, with refreshments, for organisations/groups to negotiate, having seen the trial results, to adjust their bids, amalgamate with others, withdraw, donate to others etc. The results of these negotiations and any changes are announced at the end of the break, and participants move to a Final Vote.

5. Mainstreaming Events

Public services and partnerships can involve communities in prioritising either

- parts of their budgets where they have some flexibility, or
- parts of specific services, with or without budget.

Presentations can be invited from constituent groups, made by the services themselves, or by community groups, for the public to vote on priorities.

Deliberation is also an important part of this process.

For support in planning and delivering PB contact: lesliesilverlock@groupswork.com 07831 711380 or The Participatory Budgeting Unit: <http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/>



Bring people in

Deliberation is important in every PB process. Time needs to be built in for this, either after each presentation or when all the presentations have been heard.

6. Initial planning sheet for a PB event

Participatory Budgeting Project Name: _____

Why/What Is the Project for _____

Who is the Project for?	
Partners - who should we involve?	
Community - what is the catchment area or target audience?	
Planning Group - members?	
Sources of Money?	
Specific subject or general spending?	
Inviting Ideas/Bids/Projects - how and who from?	
Shortlisting/Prioritising - who will manage this?	
Voting - choice of procedure?	
Review & Monitoring - schedule for checking progress?	
Evaluation - how will you know the outcomes and make use of these?	
Timescale. How long will it take and how much of whose time?	

The Participatory Budgeting Unit (PBU)

PBU is managed by Church Action on Poverty and is a centre of expertise providing advice and guidance on all aspects of PB. They promote and support the take-up of PB across England through a range of activities and research including a comprehensive tool kit, training, and facilitation of learning sets to encourage sharing of best practice. Their website <http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/> contains case studies, practical guides, advice on PB, research and contacts.

PBU provide advice to local authorities and public bodies considering PB for the first time. The PBU can provide an expert to work with you to develop a tailor-made PB process.

“My colleagues and I wanted to get our residents involved, and give them some real influence in what council taxpayers money is spent on. We also decided this would replace the traditional budget consultation which, frankly, never gets a great response.

To show how serious we were, we put up 10% of our capital budget – an initial £100,000. We then decided to add to this with another £20,000 from our capacity reserves. This additional money would pay for some smaller projects in the community.”

Cllr Neil Parkin, Leader of Adur District Council

Community Assets

As sustainability becomes more paramount it is useful to consider how land and buildings are used and what potential there is to make better use of community assets. This is vital to meet the economic and social needs of communities who pay for their public services.

The Community Right to Bid requires local authorities to maintain a list of assets of community value. Communities can nominate, for possible inclusion, the assets that are most important to them. When listed assets come up for sale or change of ownership, community groups will have time to develop a bid and raise the money to buy the asset. This will help people keep much-loved assets part of local life and will include buildings essential to the community such as local post-offices, shops and pubs.

The Community Right to Challenge provides for community groups, voluntary bodies, parish councils and public sector employees to bid to take over the running of local authority services.

This is not entirely new; across the South West there are already many examples where local authorities have been working with community groups and parish councils to ensure better use of land and buildings. The models are varied and include the following examples:

- Community groups taking over village shops, community centres, and sports and recreation land.
- Community groups making use of public buildings such as fire stations and empty shops.
- Local authority services being devolved to parish councils and employees.

1. Football Clubs take responsibility for football pitches

Club representatives met with Exeter City Council to look at ways of maintaining five pitches after they were earmarked for closure to save the Council money. The City Council needed to save £2.4 million in 2011/12 and £5 million over the next four years. Some of the clubs offered to take over the sole running of the pitches and changing rooms and others as a shared responsibility. With these partnership arrangements in place the pitches can now stay as a resource for the community and save the money that was originally identified.

The Lead Councillor, Greg Sheldon, said the proposals “herald a new relationship between the Council and the users of the pitches, where the days of ‘one size fits all’ would be replaced with a mixed economy of provision better suited to individual club requirements”. The leagues and clubs see it is an opportunity to move forward in a positive partnership with the Council to deliver better facilities that they have a say in.

2. Exeter Community Centre

Exeter Community Centre has been a major facility for community groups since 1965. The title deeds have recently been transferred to the trustees of the Centre by Devon County Council.

This transfer was made possible by the Communitybuilders Fund for disused and under-used buildings to provide new facilities managed by the community (<http://www.communitybuildersfund.org.uk/>). This transfer is unusual in that it is nationally the first freehold asset transfer made to a community by a local authority – most transfers are by lease, where the ownership of the building is retained by the council.

Devon County Council has worked with the community since 2004 to find a future for this substantial three storey building. The County agreed to ensure it was wind and water tight, provided the trust could secure the money to upgrade and remodel the building. So the Trust secured a grant and loan of £1.2m from the Communitybuilders Fund to bring the building back into full use as a social enterprise, a 'community hub', including a GP surgery and café, and space for community groups and social enterprises.

John Hart, Leader of Devon County said "this is a good example of a local authority cooperating with a local community to safeguard services. The local community has been at the heart of this project, developing a sound business plan and securing the resources needed".

Hannah Reynolds, Chair of the Trust said "Trustees have kept up the spirits of the local community when the project was under threat. We are grateful to all the volunteers who have committed so much energy and time to the detailed work involved."

Contact: <http://www.stdavidsneighbourhood.org.uk/>

3. Belmont Park Scrapstore, Exeter

The Scrapstore collects a variety of recycled materials from businesses and industries. The store provides clean, quality scrap for play, art and creativity, not only increasing opportunities for families and young people but also reducing waste sent to landfill. The store provides materials such as colourful paper, card, plastic pots, netting, fabrics, and buttons.

The Scrapstore was fully funded by the City Council, but budget reductions ended the service in July 2011 and staff became redundant. In response a new charity, Exeter Scrapstore, was set up with a robust business plan and the intention to employ two part time staff who were formerly employed by the Council. This means the Scrapstore is able to continue providing great materials to play schemes, playgroups and schools.

Peter Vance, staff member, said: "Exeter City Council has provided a Scrapstore in Exeter since the mid 1980's. When we heard it might be closed, we decided there was a great opportunity for the store as an independent organisation, and opted for registered charity status. Exeter City Council have been instrumental in enabling this to happen, by way of transfer of assets. The Scrapstore is a really excellent local service for people to use and enjoy."

Contact Dawn Rivers: dawn.rivers@exeter.gov.uk or 01392 265531



Communities can manage their own football pitches



The Scrap Store

4. Chippenham Asset Transfer

Land on the river Avon flood plain was sought by the Chippenham Sailing and Canoeing Club as a community asset transfer to provide a facility for youth organisations and community groups.

River fronting adjacent to the group's existing site provides an opportunity for specialist launching, safer access to the water and supervision during training. This will increase courses, the number of participants, and the quality of instruction.

The land was overgrown with brambles and scrub and had not been used for years. The Club now holds regular working parties for ground maintenance and repairs, and will provide training and meeting rooms, and changing facilities.

Contact: Abbi.Gutierrez@wiltshire.gov.uk

5. Devolving Parking and Traffic Management

This is a localism initiative in negotiation between Councils as the Guide goes to print.

The Town Council in Dulverton manages three car parks leased from its District Council. The parking charges are low. Currently the Town Council pays £20,000 p.a. rent to the District and makes a surplus of £10,000 p.a., which it spends on community facilities. The District, struggling for resources itself, has doubled the rent and wants to take the car parks back into central management in the hope of profiting itself. Local parking charges will go up, which residents are against.

On-street parking may be managed in future, not by the police, but by the County Council, under new Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) arrangements. In keeping with decentralisation and localism, the Town Council wants to manage all traffic so that it flows freely for shoppers, residents, businesses and tourists. That will sustain this small market town, and the outlying villages which depend on it.

Seventy-two local facilities are already owned or managed by local people and organisations. They believe traffic management will not prove a problem for people living daily with local transport issues.

Benefits

Dulverton's complete plan for traffic management will mean:

- parking charges remain unchanged for local people, out of town shoppers, attendees at classes, and tourists;
- reduced district and county management costs, and therefore council tax rises;
- income is retained in the town for maintaining the environment;
- parking enforcement is managed locally, reducing District and County staff and travel costs;
- the Town Council precept will not need to rise in order to cover lost income, as is presently the case;
- local events and street closing orders can be managed locally by people and authorities who understand the local options and parking needs e.g. for major events like the Carnival, Folk Festival, Starlight, and Boxing Day;
- bus routes and fire station emergencies continue to flow freely.

One deal being negotiated with the District is that the Town will take over street cleaning etc. in return for the car parks.

Localism in action

An asset transfer of the car parks to the Town Council, and civil parking enforcement contracted to the Town Council is a solution for the District, County, and Town Councils to keep costs down, efficiently manage public services, and sustain the local community.

Lessons learnt

- Public authorities, once strapped for cash will compete with each other, at public expense, with as much secrecy and trading as if they were rival companies.
- Some larger authorities may advance equal treatment as a reason not to act “If we do it for one we will have to do it for all the other neighbourhoods and parishes”. This is the antithesis of localism. Localism requires different solutions according to different local circumstances and needs.

What Councillors can do

- Use statutory regulations: Section 17 (CDA), S106, The Sustainable Communities Act 2007.
- Obtain budget figures: use Freedom of Information Act if absolutely necessary.
- Advise communities about The Right to Challenge.

Contact: lesliesilverlock@groupswork.com or 07831 711380

6. Calne Community Hub

The community hub is a space developed by the Calne community area partnership (CCAP) for community engagement, discussion and activity. The hub is run from a high street shop owned by Wiltshire Council which had been vacant for a long time; Calne area board arranged for the shop to be provided rent free for a one year trial period. This provides an important face for the Partnership and its eight theme groups, and also a neutral meeting, information and advice point for local agencies including the police, credit union, council and housing associations. Events and courses including personal development workshops, job clubs, internet workshops (BBC First Click), business and voluntary sector ‘Jellies’ (opportunities for home workers to develop support networks) run there, and the hub provides links to volunteering opportunities.

As the pilot year passes its mid-point the project is becoming more and more well known and valued locally and the Partnership is busy developing a business plan to ensure its sustainability.

Contact: jane.vaughan@wiltshire.gov.uk

Tips

- Tackle a problem on as many fronts as possible. Use letters and calls to councillors and MP, work out costs and benefits, attend council meetings and arrange public meetings with speakers and supporters from other authorities and services who can share their experience.
- Press for asset transfer.

7. Using Fire Stations in Devon and Somerset

Boxing Clubs

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) has set up two 'Boxing Clever' clubs in response to local community need.

When Ilfracombe Boxing Club outgrew its original premises, DSFRS suggested the station as a possible new venue. The service was ideally placed to support and build closer ties within the community. The club aims to develop fitness, health, maturity and positive attitudes to life which helps break the link between arson and hoax calls. The club delivers boxing taster sessions and home safety messages through the local schools' Healthy Town scheme, and has doubled its membership.

Taunton fire station also runs a boxing club improving community cohesion and the life chances of young men. The east side of Taunton is a deprived part of town where boys and young men are involved in anti-social behaviour. Parishioners didn't like the boxing club in the church hall, so DSFRS offered part of the fire station, giving local young men a place to get fit, become self-confident, disciplined and train to be Amateur Boxing Association champions.

Firetots

Crediton Fire Station has opened its doors to children's 'Stay and Play' activity sessions every week, working with the local Children's Centre and parents while firefighters can talk to the parents about fire safety and arrange home safety visits.

Totnes Fire Station

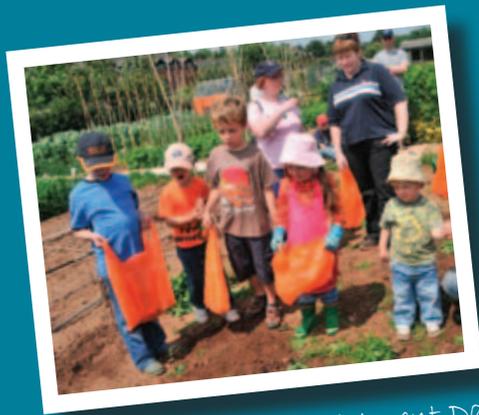
A string quartet rehearses here with bee keeping, swimming, vegetable growing, garden volunteers, traffic, leisure and Christmas festival clubs, groups, and trusts all sharing the premises in a model of asset management – public services using their spare resources to promote community wellbeing and empowerment.

Contact Anne Harrison-Bailey: aharrisonbailey@dsfire.gov.uk or 01392 872392

Transfer of Assets to Community Groups - Learning

Lessons learnt

- The transfer of assets is complicated and enough time needs to be built in to allow the best outcomes to be achieved.
- Open communication at an early stage with groups about proposed changes/cuts to services is vital. Work in partnership to find a solution that meets the needs of all parties. In this way you can avoid bad relationships and negative press.
- The council will need to manage high expectations by developing clear guidelines and processes which ensure communities feel part of the process, and do not simply become recipients.
- The council will usually need to provide ongoing support, particularly legal and technical advice, in the early phases of asset transfer.



*Families, Food and Allotment Day
- Exeter*

- The three month consultation period could be extended to allow communities more time to have their say on available assets and determine how and where services are delivered in their area.
- There are difficulties for community decision making that require legal knowledge and expertise.
- Encourage applicants to undertake robust consultation with local residents.
- Put applicants in touch with the local councillor (Area Board, Town or Parish) to ensure that elected representatives are aware of the request (and hopefully support it).
- Be prepared for a long wait!

What Councillors can do

- Councillors may be able to help with grants from their Locality Budgets (where they exist) plus introductions to senior managers in the local authority and private sector, to explore funding opportunities.
- Help broker agreements between the authority and the community to find constructive and positive ways forward.
- The council needs to promote property eligible for community asset transfer in a way that is more inclusive and accessible to the wider community. Local councillors are particularly well placed to do this.
- Don't let council procedures overcomplicate or stall the process so much that the community loses heart and commitment.

Tips

- Communities are keen to protect resources and services. They have great ideas, energy and stamina to take on responsibility for managing and developing services.
- Fresh funding opportunities are available to groups independent of statutory authorities, so transfer of assets to a community organisation could be the best option for the continuation of a service or resource. Independence from statutory management also gives more flexibility to develop services in line with the wishes of service users and trustees.
- Where changes are being introduced it's important to work with the communities affected to find a solution to avoid losing services altogether.
- Speak to groups who have already gone through the process, both within and outside your area.
- Nominating a dedicated contact person from the council for the asset transfer process will make it easier for community groups to manage the demands of preparing the business case.

chapter 3.

Community Led Planning and Neighbourhood Plans

Local people are experts about their community; they know what works, what needs improving, and which elements and characteristics of their town are important. Community led planning harnesses that local knowledge, committing it to paper, where it is backed up with the relevant official facts, statistics and an action plan. Once written up, the plans are used as a catalyst to persuade relevant organisations and agencies to listen, take the concerns and issues of the community seriously and build them into delivering local services.

Over the years community led planning has been referred to in different ways:

Parish Plans usually take place in a village, are conducted by local residents and are the most local form of community led planning. Parish Plans generally cover issues relating to community spaces such as parks, local amenities like village shops and community halls, transport, affordable housing, and provision for young people and older residents.

Community Plans often evolve in towns or non-parished areas. They are sometimes referred to as Neighbourhood Plans, which may cause confusion with the new Neighbourhood Plans. Unlike the new Neighbourhood Plans, Community Plans cover more than just spatial planning and encompass wider concerns including the local economy, traffic and transport, community safety, health, environment, leisure and culture. Community Plans (or Strategies) can also cover the whole district, borough, county or unitary area.

Neighbourhood Planning is the latest term introduced in the Localism Bill. Neighbourhood Plans focus on spatial planning and give communities the opportunity to decide where new shops, housing and community buildings will be built and which green spaces will be protected. Neighbourhood Plans give local people a greater say in future development growth within their community by working with local authorities, developers and other interested groups.

Once put together, the Neighbourhood Plan can be adopted through a Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO), having been through both an independent examination and public referendum. The NDO gives it statutory status, and will mean that new buildings and developments which meet the criteria within these Orders will not need planning permission.

A number of communities across the country have been chosen to be Neighbourhood Plan 'front runners' including the following communities in the South West .

- Bristol - Bedminster, Redcliffe, Lockleaze
- Cornwall - Carnon Downs, Rame Peninsula, St. Erth, St. Eval, Truro
- Exeter - St James
- Exmoor National Park – Lynton
- Mendip - Frome
- South Gloucestershire - Hanham
- North Somerset – Backwell, Long Ashton

- South Somerset - Queen Camel
- Swindon - South Marston
- Teignbridge - Dawlish
- Torbay - Brixham
- West Dorset - Cerne Abbas, Sherborne
- Wiltshire - Malmesbury, Sherston, Wootton Bassett, Cricklade, Warminster

1. Community Planning in Crewkerne, South Somerset

Crewkerne is an attractive market town, population 8,000, with an historic centre, which two major transport routes pass through. In 2004 a group of volunteer residents known as ABCD (A Better Crewkerne & District) were awarded a grant by the Market & Coastal Town Initiative to carry out a Community Plan. Over a period of six months ABCD consulted residents and businesses in the town via a household survey, focus groups and drop-in workshops. Such extensive community engagement gained people's views, identified what features and characteristics of their town people felt were important and what problems and issues people believed needed addressing.

Like many other market towns, Crewkerne's Community Plan highlighted the concerns residents have with traffic and transport, the local economy, conserving the historic town centre, leisure activities, facilities for young people and community participation.

Since the Plan's publication ABCD has worked closely with the District, County, and Town Councils, businesses and community groups, to progress a variety of projects. By 2011 these included a Conservation Area Appraisal, which resulted in extending the Conservation Area to take in a larger part of the town centre; creating a demarcated walkway linking two shopping centres; a declutter campaign within the town centre to remove redundant poles, damaged litterbins and old defunct signs; discussions between the sports and youth clubs to share premises; a bi-annual Volunteer Fayre showcasing community groups and giving them the opportunity to recruit more volunteers; and a range of leaflets detailing walking routes in the town and surrounding villages.

Without a Community Plan the volunteers in Crewkerne would have found it far more difficult to accomplish everything they have done. ABCD have used their plan to inspire action at the local level and encourage statutory organisations to drive forward proposals for improvement.

The advantages of community planning are:

- **Easier fundraising** – many funders require evidence to show there is a need for a specific project. Community plans are a great way of providing that evidence and making it easier for people to argue their case for funding.
- **Better partnership working** – community plans demonstrate the desires and needs of a town to the relevant agencies, making it easier to get those involved working together.
- **Empowerment** – with support, volunteers involved in community plans can become empowered to deliver a wide range of projects that benefit their community. This empowerment often gives volunteers the confidence to tackle larger projects and become involved in other community related activities.



Before - Pedestrian Shortcut



After - The New Pedestrian Link

Tips

- Gain the views of all sectors of the community; go to them, don't expect them to come to you.
- Keep referring back to the Community Plan; this helps maintain focus.
- Get a good cross section of the community involved; varied skills and experience are essential for successful project delivery.

- **Ownership** – it gives people the opportunity to have a say about where they live and work. As a community plan is created by residents there is a strong sense of ownership which helps drive forward progress with the action plan.

The success of the Community Plan in Crewkerne, and in similar communities across the country, is an example of localism in action and demonstrates what people can collectively achieve when they have a focus and work together for the benefit of their community.

South Somerset District Council employs Community Regeneration Officers who provide support to groups like ABCD. As this case study demonstrates, it is invaluable to have a paid animateur to solve problems and keep up momentum.

Lessons learnt

- Communicate regularly with residents; let them know how projects are progressing.
- Celebrate the achievements – this also helps to get the message out.
- Have some short quick win projects; their success helps build and maintain momentum for the longer, more drawn out projects.

What Councillors can do

- Get actively involved with local community planning groups.
- Act as a champion for particular projects.
- Put volunteers in touch with the relevant local government officers.

For more information about community plans in South Somerset contact: Zoë Harris on zoe.harris@southsomerset.gov.uk

2. Community Empowerment in Martock, Somerset

Martock is a community of 5,000, evolved from villages that have grown and merged, so historically lacks the civic centre and many of the facilities that a market town of the same size would have. It has a large proportion of working-age families with around 30% of the population under 25 years old.

A community-led planning exercise in 2003 involving surveys, public meetings and an action planning workshop produced a Local Community Plan in 2004. Though a number of projects were delivered, it was felt later that this Plan did not sufficiently address Martock's economic sustainability. In 2006, Martock won support under the Market & Coastal Towns Initiative to undertake a Healthcheck, enhanced business engagement and some further consultations, which all informed an updated five-year Local Community Plan published in 2007.

A Community Partnership was formed to monitor progress and coordinate efforts between the various stakeholders. Members of this Partnership include all the tiers of local government, the primary school, the Youth Parish Council, the Business Association and a number of churches. Reporting back to the wider community has been a key feature, with a simple traffic light system used in printed summaries of progress on the Plan.

The achievements of the Partnership include refurbishing the historic Market House to provide a Community Office and Information Centre; improved sports, play and recreational facilities; refurbishment of the Youth Centre; streetscene and architectural improvements.

Martock is one of the first Somerset communities to review its Community Plan, at village events, with a combined progress report at public meetings through focus groups, and a survey to 3,100 homes. These are informing a 2011 update to the Plan.

The 2007 Community Plan and survey results for the 2011 Plan are available at: www.martockonline.co.uk.

Contact Matt Day: www.somersettownsforum.org.uk

3. Parish Plan Exchanges in West Dorset

In West Dorset 39 parish plans have been published covering 62 parishes (some plans were produced for grouped parishes) and a further 9 plans (covering 19 parishes) are being developed.

To help parishes the Dorchester Area Community Partnership, one of five partnerships in the district linked to the West Dorset Partnership, organised a Parish Plan Exchange. Speakers from communities who had developed their plan shared their experiences and gave advice on what had worked and what they would do differently if they did it again.

Parish Plan Exchanges are now being organised across the whole of West Dorset, for each of the five area partnerships.

Contact Maria Clarke: westdorsetpartnership@westdorset-dc.gov.uk or 01305 252305

4. Community Led Planning in West Devon

West Devon Borough Council has worked with agencies across Devon to develop a Sustainable Rural Communities Toolkit to help communities take a lead role in finding out about local issues and development needs, and making decisions on how to address them.

The Council will use this community-led planning approach (known as Plan-It) in its Core Strategy. This approach is in line with the Government's commitment to localism which encourages communities to make their own plans for their area.

Contact: strategicplanning@westdevon.gov.uk



There is talent hidden everywhere in your community

5. Devon Heartlands Community Forum

NOT ONLY



BUT ALSO



Observations

A 'Community Forum':

- Must be inclusive and involve councillors, officers and the agencies, but should remain independent and community led.
- Belongs at the grass-roots, but it must have strategic connectivity with other levels of local governance e.g. Local Authority Committees, LSP's, Area Boards etc.
- Should not be afraid of also being a 'talking shop'. All worthwhile action begins with talking and understanding.

The Barriers

- Slow or limited buy-in of some partners.
- Rapidly changing and developing agendas of strategic partners resulting in missed opportunities.
- Frustrations between top-down approach and opportunities for greater bottom-up influence.
- A lack of effective strategic planning to address the requirements of localism.

The Devon Heartlands Trust recognised that it was essential to keep people involved and ensure their contributions were valued and communicated effectively to the agencies and local authorities.

Other considerations included:

- Marrying the participative components of Community led Planning with the democratic processes.
- Engaging with planners to assist the community with the ongoing delivery of its vision, priorities and projects as articulated within their Community Action Plan.

6. Neighbourhood Planning in a National Park

Exmoor National Park with Lynton & Lynmouth Town Council, two local Development Trusts and the Rural Housing Project has successfully bid to be one of the 'front runners' trialling Neighbourhood Planning.

They are in the process of finalising the Project Plan. The aim is to build on all the local community consultation that the Town Council, through Lyn and Ex Vision, and the Park, have undertaken. The intention is to focus on key sites and to devise an approach with the community that will see the sites developed predominantly for affordable housing.

Provision of affordable housing was the centre of the bid and project leaders will need to see how the community responds and what they wish to see on a range of sites that can be redeveloped in and around Lynton and Lynmouth.

The project is required to keep in close contact with DCLG and it is likely that the community will wish to see economic and community development on some sites, subject to economic appraisal, (because some of the sites are in private ownership).

Contact David Wyborn: DWyborn@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

The Community Infrastructure Levy

It is possible that aspirations identified through Community-led plans and Neighbourhood Plans could be part financed by the forthcoming Community Infrastructure Levy (see page 17 for further information). PB could be used with this funding to engage and empower the community, and put local knowledge to best use, as East Devon has done with Section 106 funding.

chapter 4.

Communities taking the lead

Decentralisation is a central theme of Localism, devolving power to local communities and empowering them to take the lead and do things in a way that is right for that community.

Recognising that traditional council meetings, for example, are not an effective way to engage with residents, various authorities have been putting new structures and partnerships in place to enable their residents to have more influence in decision making for their areas.

1. Buckland Newton Community Land Trust
2. Connecting Communities in Townstal and Teignmouth West
3. Area Boards in Wiltshire
 - Abberd Brook, Calne
 - Lorry parking in Melksham
4. Neighbourhood engagement in Exeter
 - Digby Community Association
5. Thorncombe Village Shop

1. Buckland Newton Community Land Trust

A Community Land Trust was formed in the village of Buckland Newton, in West Dorset in 2007 when a group of villagers recognised that unless some new affordable housing was available to allow locals to stay in the village, it was in danger of losing its age balance, and then losing its school, shop and village hall. The purpose of the Trust was to secure land and build homes to help families with strong links with the village through residency, schooling, family or work. The group, known as the Buckland Newton Property Trust, successfully secured grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), the District Council and the Tudor Trust to build ten homes at Lydden Meadow. The total cost of the scheme is £1.4 million of which just less than 50% is funded by grants.

The development includes a mix of Assured Tenancy (rent) and Shared Ownership (part-equity) properties. First allocations have resulted in five part equity and five tenanted properties with two of the tenants intending to become shared owners. The houses were completed in summer 2011 and have achieved a Code 4 Sustainable Homes certificate. This means they will be highly energy efficient, with rain water harvesting, and air source heat exchangers. These properties will then be a village asset in perpetuity, administered by the Trust. Shared owners can only buy between 25% and 40% initially but have the right to increase their share up to 80%. The remaining share rests with the Trust so at no time can the properties end up on the open market.

Funding proved difficult to source. Despite being a non profit making venture and the land only costing £5,000 per plot, it was impossible to build a high quality house, fit for the future, for less than £115,000 for a 2 bed house and £125,000 for a 3 bed house when all the legal, planning and groundwork fees are taken into account. With rural salaries and rents only supporting a build cost of around £60,000 there will always be a shortfall.

Lessons learnt

- Keep the community informed and updated - the process tends to take a very long time between concept and completion.
- Remember the project has two benefits: both to help the village remain vital into the future, and to help local people on low incomes.
- Be aware that Trustees will have to put in very, very much more time and effort than they ever imagine.
- It is easy to underestimate the amount of time involved, but the upside is that it does create strong relationships, friendships and respect that might never otherwise develop between villagers who are Trustees.
- It is important for the Trust to have at least one Trustee with good financial skills – other skills can be learnt on the way.
- Be aware that potential occupiers may have very limited financial flexibility.
- Be aware that demand will always exceed supply, and there will be disappointed applicants. Warn them and support them, including for the good of village life. A good builder and Employer's Agent are important.
- An open and honest relationship with a wide variety of officers at the local council was crucial.
- The joy of seeing young local families, born and at school together, returning to bring life and vitality back to the village, the playing field and the school in particular, is worth all the hard work.

What Councillors can do

- The District Council was key to the scheme reaching fruition.
- If a Registered Social Landlord is not responsible for the delivery of the Affordable Houses and the Community Land Trust are looking at another method of delivery, such as cross-subsidy, then councillors need to provide active support.
- Support planning initiatives that can be used to assist the cross funding of Community Land Trust houses.
- Support a village's preferred design where they do not always marry up exactly with planning policy and practice.
- A village can often see better into the future of their settlement and its environmental as well as human needs.
- Where a councillor has an emerging Community Land Trust in their Ward, give them all the help you can in linking into what councils and other Community Land Trusts such as Buckland Newton can offer in terms of advice and assistance.

Contact: myhome@lyddenmeadow.co.uk <http://lyddenmeadow.co.uk/>

Tip

The key issues are finding good trustees; finding land; keeping the village community updated; finding funding to bridge the development gap; finding a good builder; and finding a sympathetic long-term lender.



Community Land Trust



2. Connecting communities in Devon – Townstal and Teignmouth West

It is possible to produce better physical and mental health outcomes by improving communities' aspirations and living environments. This pilot shows how Transformative Community Development (TCD) can bring about change.

Townstal Community Partnership (TCP)

Through liaison meetings with the public, the police found that the issues raised would be better addressed in a multi-agency partnership. The local police inspector asked the Connecting Communities programme to bring together service providers and residents to work as equals. Local professionals listened to residents and worked with them to address the main issues affecting their everyday life. Participants reported that the opportunity for exchange visits to other projects who had been through a similar experience was important.

A community consultation in April 2009, 'Listening to Townstal', asked residents what was 'good' and 'not so good' about living there. This led to TCP being set up to address the issues raised.

So far:

- a new NHS dentist now serves the area as a result of the 'Listening to Townstal' report.
- the police get more information on crime and anti-social behaviour and work closely with the Social Landlord.
- Tor Homes and Guinness Heritage, housing providers, have started to work together.
- TCP work with the schools on citizenship, asking their views on Townstal and activities they would like to see.
- TCP plan to organise activities with young people and partner organisations.

Other achievements include: £95,000 for refurbishing the local park with school children and the local council; Townstal festival; a free legal and benefits advice surgery for all residents; citizenship lessons at Dartmouth Community College; and a community hub.

The partnership continues to be led and managed by residents with multi-agency participation.

Contact Julie Deane: info@townstalcommunitypartnership.org.uk , <http://www.townstalcommunitypartnership.org.uk/index.asp>

Teignmouth West

Following Townstal's success the same model is being used in Teignmouth West.

Westbank Healthy Living Centre has reopened the Teignmouth Community Association building which had gone into administration. Partners have funded a community development worker, working with the residents and agencies to encourage resident-led partnerships.

A 'Listening to Teignmouth West' event for young families through to senior citizens was planned by a group of residents. Voluntary and statutory organisations gathered the views of local residents and set up a partnership of residents and agencies.

Residents' issues are: lack of provision for children and young people; security; lack of local facilities - shop, job centre, post office; clean streets and litter; parks and green spaces; anti-social behaviour; stereotyping; bus shelters; poor service response; health and social care; leisure facilities; transport and traffic; and housing.

The agencies and residents have developed an action list to work on these together to find solutions.

Contact Susanne Hughes: susanne.hughes@pcmd.ac.uk
<http://www.healthempowermentgroup.org.uk/>

3. Area Boards in Wiltshire

Wiltshire became a unitary authority in 2009 with a vision of creating stronger, more resilient communities. The Council is committed to encouraging local communities to get involved and to work with public agencies to deal with local challenges in new and innovative ways. After a year long pilot scheme, Wiltshire Council established 18 local Area Boards based on the market towns. Area Boards can evolve in response to local needs, new initiatives, creativity and innovation. Eighteen area managers work with their councillors, partners and the community to encourage local participation, inclusion and engagement.

Abberd Brook, Calne

Residents approached Calne Area Board complaining about overgrown vegetation and fly tipping along the Abberd Brook, a stream that runs through the town. Residents who had raised the complaints were invited to join a working group to find potential solutions. Wiltshire Councillors and officers, Town Councillors, and representatives of the Calne Community Area Partnership were part of the group which also sought advice from other Council departments and Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. The group's work led to the establishment of an independent community group, 'Friends of Abberd Brook'.

The attitude of local people is starting to change, with more residents involved in fund-raising and community litter picks along the brook. The group is working with organisations such as Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and local primary schools. They aim to educate local people about the wildlife habitat in and around the brook, and help create pride in the local area. There are also longer-term aspirations for a cycle path along the route and working with Sustrans.

Lorry parking in Melksham

Residents complained to the Area Board about disturbance from overnight lorry parking in King Street car park with the aim of getting the Council to close the car park to HGVs. A study was undertaken into the impact of shutting down the lorry parking facilities and the possibility of moving the 24 hour HGV parking to an alternative site. One was found to be suitable.

A special Area Board was arranged to discuss the future of lorry parking in Melksham. The meeting was highly interactive with lively debate and participation from the residents. Towards the end of the meeting residents were asked to vote on three questions. 90% of attendees voted to close King Street car park to lorries, 96% did not consider the alternative site to be suitable and 88% said no alternative lorry parking facilities should be provided in Melksham. A motion was passed to close King Street car park to all commercial vehicles and not to provide alternative HGV parking within the town.

Since the new signs were installed, no commercial vehicles have been reported to be using the car park.

Contact Jane Vaughan: jane.vaughan@wiltshire.gov.uk



Wilts tidies up

4. Neighbourhood engagement in Exeter

Officers and Councillors in Exeter have built partnerships to encourage residents and community groups to work with the local authority and other local agencies to find solutions to issues affecting their areas. These partnerships have enabled residents to have a better understanding about the roles and powers of local councillors and how they can have a stronger collective voice in influencing decision making. The partnerships also enable councillors and agencies to meet and hear from residents about their experiences and together work out ways of addressing problems.

Digby Community Association

Kings Heath (Digby) is a new residential development of 1,400 private and social houses on the outskirts of the city. There's a new Primary School, Tesco Extra and other big chain stores, but initially few community facilities. Families found themselves in their new homes with no provision for children's play or meeting people.

The Digby Community Association (DCA) was formed to represent the interests of local residents as part of the 'My Neighbourhood' project led by Exeter City Council. DCA now has an elected committee and represents the interests of the different parts of the community. The committee includes representatives from the local housing associations, neighbourhood police, councillors, primary school, church, businesses and the developers. DCA look for every opportunity to engage all residents and strengthen community cohesion.

Community notice boards, Neighbourhood Watch coordinators, Facebook and the newsletter, Respect, let people know what is happening. 30 volunteers deliver the newsletter and invitations to the public meetings to every house. 200 residents attended the last public meeting.

Residents' community fundraising has included planting £2,100 worth of bulbs and trees, clearing rubbish and erecting new fences with the help of Community Payback and the Woodland Trust.

Having the unadopted roads adopted has been a huge challenge. Five years of technical and legal advice, MP and Council Leader involvement, and seven years of volunteer litter picking will hopefully resolve this situation. Exeter Panthers young people recently did a litter sweep, inspired others, and residents provided refreshments, giving the event a real community spirit.

Examples of what the residents have achieved in the last three years include: Council litter and dog waste bins on adopted land; KFC and Environmental Health agreeing permissible levels of odour (smell of cooking fat) affecting local residents; the Council developing open spaces, paths, lighting and cycle ways, weekly coffee mornings, community choir, scouts, freecycle / swapshop; and community and Young Citizen awards sponsored by the Housing Association.

Contact: Dawn Rivers: dawn.rivers@exeter.gov.uk or 01392 265531

Lessons learnt

- Ensure representation from different groups in the community – youth, older people, women, men, from all parts of the neighbourhood. We had to learn pretty quickly how to deal with conflict when a well attended public meeting voted to use a piece of open space for a football field. Residents living around the space were very angry and felt they hadn't been consulted. They are involved now and ensure their voice is heard when changes are planned.



Digby Community Association

- Involving local people in designing and planning from the outset was important in gaining buy-in from local residents and stimulating interest from the wider community.

What Councillors can do

- City and county councillors welcomed the opportunity to meet with residents and other agencies. In new developments like Digby councillors felt the neighbourhood forum saved years making contact and hearing residents' concerns. Wider consultation was important as the 'enthusiastic residents who turn up to meetings don't necessarily represent the views of all residents'.
- Councillors play a lead role in prioritising issues and working with the community to find and implement solutions.

These case studies show how partnership working through the tiers of public services can be painstakingly slow, and why recent legislation is necessary in order to speed progress, keep residents engaged, and save money on endless meetings, officer, Councillor, and community time. It is a great help, too, to have the facilitation skills of officers experienced in community development techniques who can help broker relationships.

5. Thorncombe Village Shop

The village of Thorncombe in West Dorset has a population of 650 in 330 homes. The owners of the Village Stores wanted to retire and the shop was on the market for nearly two years. Without a purchaser it was likely the shop would close and the village lose an important amenity, so a small team of residents, with their councillor and MP explored ways to run it as a community enterprise. The best funding option was the District Council's Community Lending Policy. The Parish Council requested a loan of £127,000 to buy the freehold of the shop and flat above (retained by the owner).

The loan was approved subject to two thirds community support and repayment from the income generated. If the community and shop could not repay the loan, the Parish Council would increase the precept and repay it that way. Residents voted to support the scheme and agreed that the Parish Council could increase the precept if income was insufficient.

The Parish voted twice, once to apply for a loan and to accept the conditions – 77% were in favour. The second ballot on the business plan agreed the Parish Council should buy the shop with 87% in favour.

The Shop was officially re-opened in October 2009 run by a Management Committee including 30 volunteers, a paid manager and assistant. Local businesses and farms supply the locally produced food while the shop gathers community feedback to update services. It is well supported and turnover is above target.

Contact: info@thorncombe-stores.co.uk or <http://www.thorncombe-stores.co.uk>

Tips

- Make initial contact with residents through community events, school fetes, and local groups. Identify support for a 'neighbourhood forum'.
- Engage residents in getting the word out, delivering leaflets, setting agendas and being the organisers from the start.
- Establish local council boards that enable residents, parish councils and community groups to access decision makers easily.
- Work with other voluntary and community groups.



chapter 5.

Making it happen

If localism is to work it is essential that people from all walks of life get involved and have their say. The traditional methods of council meetings and letter writing are not conducive to open conversations that stimulate creative solutions. Formal and structured council meetings can also leave individuals with the impression that they are not being listened to. Communities need to see that representatives from local authorities are listening and taking on board what local people are saying. There are tried and tested ways of achieving that and below we give details of some tools and case studies that encourage people to open up and take part.

- Participative Methods for Delivering Localism
- Local Assemblies
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Take Part
- Community Hubs
- CHAMPS

Participative Methods for Delivering Localism

Interest in public participation in decision-making, service delivery, and public policy has dramatically increased over the last fifteen years. Its importance will still further increase with the development of localism. 'Participation is everything that enables people to influence the decisions and get involved in the actions that affect their lives.' (People and Participation, Involve, 2006).

Participation can revitalise democracy, strengthen local government accountability, energise active citizenship, and help to build more relevant services. People become motivated and committed if they believe they can achieve something.

Different participative methods deliver different levels of participation. For in-depth information, including when to use what, the cost, strengths and weaknesses see People and Participation (2006, Involve). Some choices include Open Space, Conversation Café, Future Search, Participatory Appraisal, Local Assemblies, Appreciative Inquiry, Take Part, and Community Hubs. Good practice in all of these is based on:

- Reaching all relevant groups and promoting inclusivity
- Starting early, focusing on what **can** be changed and following through to completion.
- Framing a skillful question that shapes what people talk about and optimises creativity.
- Making complex issues accessible.
- Promoting co-operation rather than confrontation. Where there is disagreement, inquire into difference rather than escalating into conflict.

Open Space

Open space grew from the realisation that the highlight of meetings and conferences was often the conversations over coffee, rather than the formal agenda. Open Space combines that energy with the best of good meetings.

Participants create the agenda in response to questions like: 'How can this city, with our limited funds, embrace localism and provide better services for more people?' or 'What are the opportunities for the young people in this small, rural town?'

There is only one rule – the rule of two feet – this states 'If at any time you are not learning or contributing, use your two feet and go somewhere where you will be'.

Examples in the South West include Devon and Cornwall Police who have used open space following a complex murder investigation, and a terrorist explosion in Exeter; and Transition Towns regularly use open space to explore new initiatives.

The benefits:

- Effective with complex and urgent issues with minimal planning when leaders recognise they do not have the answers.
- Diverse people and groups are brought together so differences can lead to creativity. Existing and potential conflict can be minimised.
- People's interest and passion motivates the self-organisation and learning.
- Consensus-like recommendations, decisions, and actions can be achieved.

World and Conversation Cafés

These relatively straightforward and innovative processes enable people to have creative conversations using café table layout, recording ideas and solutions on the paper tablecloths, changing tables, sharing diverse perspectives and from these building new insights. Examples in the South West include the Environmental Research Group at Bristol University who held several 'sustainability cafes', attended by over 300 people. These led to the formation of the Bristol Sustainability Network for community groups, academics, local government, and entrepreneurs, facilitating Bristol's transition to sustainability. Within the NHS, four World Cafe events focused on the question 'What would leaders' practice be if their best experiences became every day occurrences?'

A major benefit is the sharing of ideas between people and organisations that do not normally meet and developing more in depth understanding of underlying patterns. What results is an ownership of outcomes and increased motivation for implementation.

Future Search is a structured and task-focused planning group, which addresses complex issues, by seeking diverse perspectives to create shared visions. Examples used in the Borough of Rushmoor, Farnborough, and the London Borough of Sutton to develop Local Agenda 21, and in Devon's Agricultural Economics Unit on the way forward for Rural Communities

Participatory Appraisal helps communities to conduct their own research, evaluation and community mapping. Meetings are held where the community naturally gathers. It has been used by Devon Learning Disability Service tackling bullying of people with learning disabilities, and Greater Easterhouse Community Health on health care for young people.



Planning for real

“The positive impact of Speaking Up and Take Part pathfinder has been truly incredible. I have never come across a programme that has had so much transformative power. For many people I have spoken to it has literally turned round their and often their family’s lives. What a great example of a low cost but extremely high value social programme!”

Ben Bradshaw, MP for Exeter

The benefits have included: everybody contributes their skills or knowledge; opinions and concerns of local people are central and inform what happens next; it is attractive to local people because it is held in places they naturally meet; and visual and interactive techniques help people to convey their opinions and concerns.

Contact Gill Wyatt: gillwyatt@creatingsynergies.com or 07806 623311

Local Assemblies

Are a relatively new way of involving all the residents who wish to be, in managing and improving their area, helping public services to be delivered most efficiently and effectively. Open meetings are called, perhaps quarterly, for all the residents to attend, explore local issues, identify problems, and propose solutions. Assemblies are usually conducted at ward or neighbourhood level.

A template for planning a local assembly is available from Leslie Silverlock who can also help you deliver Open Space, community proofing and mapping.

Contact Leslie Silverlock: lesliesilverlock@groupswork.com or 07831 711380

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Appreciative Inquiry is an easy, powerful and positive way to enable change by looking at what works and how to make this better. AI starts with the belief that every organisation or community has positive aspects that can be built upon. It asks questions like ‘What’s working?’ or ‘What’s good about what you are currently doing?’

There is an underlying belief that solutions to problems exist within all systems; we do not need to rely on experts from outside to tell us what to do.

Appreciative Inquiry is used in schools, for whole cities and smoking and alcohol health programmes.

Chesterfield Council used AI to engage local people about what was working rather than conversations about problems and deficits. The participative methods drew out the community’s assets and issues for a shared commitment to working together.

For more information on Appreciative Inquiry see : A glass half full: how an asset approach can improve community health and well-being (IDeA 2010) <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/18410498>. www.aipractitioner.com

Take Part

For the last two years Exeter’s ‘Take Part’ project has offered simple ‘How To’ guides for Exeter citizens to get active and make a difference. People gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to make an active contribution to their communities and influence public policies and services. 500 people attended 60 activities including: How Your City Works, Taking a Lead in your Community, How to become a School Governor, ‘Speaking Up, Your Values, Your Voice’.

See www.takepartexeter.org.

Community Hubs

The 'Community Hubs' project in Exeter supports groups from across the city to manage buildings and centres for their community. The project builds stronger community associations to represent local people's interests, using personalised support for groups, joint training, forums on legal responsibilities and shared experiences of managing facilities for their local communities.

See www.eci.org.uk/Community-Hubs

CHAMPS - Eyes, Ears and Voices for Communities in Cheltenham

Cheltenham Ambassadors for People and Services – CHAMPS – are trained volunteers who act as communication links between their communities and local service providers. CHAMPS are the eyes, ears and voice for communities that may not otherwise engage. They identify communities of geography, interest or need and, without being representatives, articulate their understanding of that community.

CHAMPS live, work or study locally. A twenty hour training programme provides knowledge about how Cheltenham, its service providers and communities work. Communication skills are central to the role, and they have to understand how their needs fit in with those of others.

The project works because CHAMPS, after they are trained, become part of a supported network, with a worker providing a single point of contact to feed through issues they identify - the worker has contacts in each of the service providers. The CHAMPS meet as a network every two months to share ideas, receive further training, and meet service providers. This enables service providers to have contact with 'real' people and for the CHAMPS to see that service providers are real people too.

Contact Bernice Thomson: bernice.thomson@cwep.co.uk



Active Citizens Take Part

chapter 6.

Partners – Who to Involve and Why

Whatever a community is setting out to achieve they are more likely to attain their goal by working in partnership with other organisations. In this section we explain:

- Who to include in a partnership
- Fire & Rescue Services: partnership in action
- Young Advisors

Who to include in a partnership

Local people

- Projects where people have a sense of ownership are more likely to succeed.
- Residents are aware of the issues within their community and have good ideas to help address them.
- Local communities have a wide range of people with the skills and expertise to drive forward a project.

Town/Parish Councils represent the local community, have statutory duties, provide community and environmental services, can raise income, and are vital to delivering and sustaining localism.

District, County, and Unitary Councils

- Members – Local councillors will champion good projects and know which officers within their authority can provide support.
- Officers – bring specialist expertise to a project. Most local authorities have dedicated officers whose role is to facilitate community projects and localism.

Voluntary Organisations

- Local community groups provide an invaluable source of information about their locality and the needs of their members / users. If the group has charitable status they have greater access to funds and are eligible for grants that public bodies cannot access. Smaller groups can use local charities.
- Infrastructure organisations like Community Foundations, Councils for Voluntary Service, Voluntary Action and Rural Community Councils employ staff who will give free advice on funding, organisational development and project planning.

Community/Parish Planning Groups

Many towns and villages across the south-west have already identified the requirements of their local community through consultation and community planning. These groups are generally local partnerships made up of residents as well as representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Businesses

For projects with an economic and community service slant it is essential that the local business community is involved. Approach Chambers of Commerce and the main employers in your community to get their perspective and establish what their needs are and how they want to be involved.

Schools

Approach your local schools. Ask if they can help with engagement, consultation and youth proofing. Schools will also promote a cause or project. What you want to achieve is likely to fit their citizenship, community responsibility, and environmental curricula. Children and young people are naturally inventive and will produce imaginative solutions.

Police

Issues and projects relating to community reassurance, security and safety need the involvement of the police. Talk to your local Neighbourhood Beat Manager, Neighbourhood Sergeant, and Inspector to find out how the police would like to be involved. They will also have a neighbourhood policing website which you can use.

Health Authorities have a very broad range of interests. If a project has any sort of health element approach the local PCT, Hospital Trust or GP surgery as there may be ways they can help, as they will want to achieve some of their ambitions too, and will offer expertise and funding to do so.

Housing Associations are increasingly involving their residents in decision-making and budget priorities. They have a statutory duty to do so and employ tenant participation officers and community development workers to achieve this. Make sure you involve them.

Fire and Rescue Services are localism in action

A partner you might not have thought to be a significant contributor to PB and localism developments in the South West are the Fire and Rescue Services. They will get involved in community projects in imaginative ways, as well as promoting community safety and preventing accidents. In Devon & Somerset the Service encourages community groups to make use of their premises, is supporting a national PB pilot, and delivering four PB projects of their own in Torbay, Plymouth, Minehead, and Exeter.

They are uniquely placed to deliver the localism agenda and assist partners in doing the same. They are often based in the heart of the community not only physically, through the location of fire stations, but personally through their full-time and retained workforces.

They attract interest from the private sector through a good reputation and positive image. For example, **The Honest Truth** uses driving instructors to deliver safety messages to student drivers and their parents. That campaign highlights the dangers of anti-social driving, and the number of young drivers who are killed or seriously injured. The police, Teignbridge Council and local driving instructors work together on this and Learn2Live presentations.

FRSs also bring innovative solutions to problems in the community. 'Community Speed Watch' is a scheme in South Somerset, South Devon and elsewhere with local police and primary schools. In locations close to primary

Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organisational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.

Andrew Carnegie

schools, drivers exceeding the speed limit are stopped by the Police and given the opportunity to either answer questions posed by children or receive a fine. If they opt for the former, the speeding driver is taken to a nearby FRS education vehicle and asked questions by local primary school children such as 'How would you feel if you knocked me or my friends over?' The approach has often had a far bigger impact than a standard fine.

Watcombe School Bonfire

After excessive 999 calls to unattended bonfires on Guy Fawkes Night, the local school became partners in holding a community bonfire and fireworks night.

The Community Partnership arranged insurance, the school and the fire service organised risk assessments and training for parents to be stewards, and Safer Communities Torbay donated £1,000 for fireworks. The local Council prevented bonfires on the estate's open spaces, which supported the school event and reduced small fire 999 calls.

DSFRS arranged a Guy-building competition for local children, with the lucky winners enjoying a visit to Torquay Fire Station. The money raised from 1,000 people at the barbeque and gates was enough to pay for the following year, when over 1,700 people came.

As well as reducing calls to small fires, this initiative has cut anti-social behaviour and youth crime:

- November 2007 - 25 incidents of anti-social behaviour (including attacks on police and firefighters)
- November 2008 - 0 incidents
- November 2009 - 0 incidents

This event is now a fundamental part of the community, contributing to neighbourhood renewal and community cohesion.

Street Football Teams

Parents in Torquay wanted to form and coach street football teams to address anti-social behaviour in their area. DSFRS supplied staff and expertise to help the parents with a funding bid to McDonalds. The bid, which specifically sought funding for football coaches in partnership with the Devon County Football Association, was successful and street football teams, aimed at local young people and which use the coaching skills of local parents, are now thriving.

Martock Youth Centre

After the Martock fire crew freed members of the Youth Parish Council trapped in their vehicle in a serious car accident, the Fire Station and Youth Centre worked together to improve youth services in the community.

Local partners staged a traffic collision event to educate young drivers and arranged a visit to a young offender's institution to reduce rates of reoffending and help young people take responsibility; good behaviour is rewarded with outings. Martock Youth Centre relies on the kindness of volunteers, donations and grants. The connection with the Fire Station is therefore invaluable to the centre.

Contact Anne Harrison-Bailey: aharrisonbailey@dsfire.gov.uk

Young Advisors

Young people are often an overlooked partner in improving community life and the delivery of public services. They see more of what is going on in neighbourhoods and towns, and also see it differently. They produce novel, quicker, and fresh solutions to problems.

Young Advisors is not a youth programme. They are young people, specially recruited and trained for their insights and skills in engaging communities and improving public services.

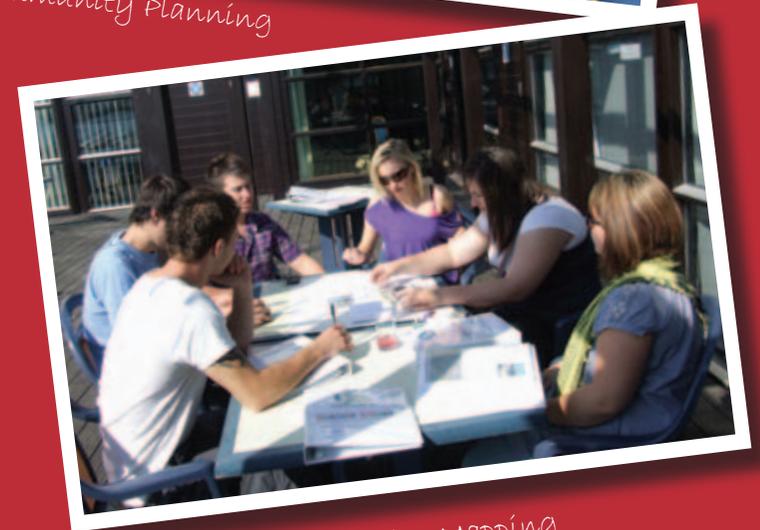
You can find out more about them at <http://www.youngadvisors.org.uk/> including examples of local authority, health, housing, police, fire and rescue, community and youth engagement services they have delivered.

In the West Country there are teams of Young Advisors in West Somerset, Plymouth, Ilfracombe, and Bristol. They will travel to work for you on community mapping, youth proofing, conducting surveys, organising events, reducing antisocial behaviour and vandalism.

Organisers' and YAs' contact details are on the website: www.youngadvisors.org.uk.



Community Planning



Young People Community Mapping

chapter 7.

Resources and websites

ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) - www.acre.org.uk

Umbrella group for the Rural Community Action Network which supports rural communities at the national, regional and local level. The site provides useful information on community assets and community led planning.

Action for Market Towns - www.towns.org.uk

This website contains lots of information relating to the viability of towns across the UK. Lots of resources and case studies including info on community led planning and regular updates on the Localism Bill.

Creating Excellence - www.creatingexcellence.org.uk and Empowerment Works - <http://empowermentworks.blogspot.com/>

Related websites with information and news on localism and empowerment in the South West.

Department for Communities and Local Government - www.communities.gov.uk

Design Council CABE - <http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/CABE/Localism-and-planning/Neighbourhood-planning1/Neighbourhood-planning-toolkits-and-guidance/>
Neighbourhood planning toolkits and guidance.

Involve - <http://www.involve.org.uk/>

Useful information on public engagement, participation and dialogue.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation - www.jrf.org.uk/publications/community-organisations-controlling-assets

Publication - Community organisations controlling assets: a better understanding.

Locality - www.locality.org.uk/assets

This website provides a wide range of useful information and resources.
Locality also run the Asset Transfer Unit – www.atu.org.uk

Participatory Budgeting Unit - <http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/>

A comprehensive Toolkit for PB, case studies, research, and advisory services.

Planning Advisory Service - www.pas.gov.uk

Useful resource for Neighbourhood Planning and Community Infrastructure Levy.

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Afterword

Have you enjoyed this Guide? Is it useful? It is the collected wisdom and experience of its contributors, a group of community empowerment and local authority professionals who wish to share their knowledge of PB and localism with a wider community; people who, while writing about their own experience, readily acknowledge the wealth of expertise that has been developed elsewhere in the region. They have given generously of their time. Their contact details are listed after their contributions, and above, with an invitation to ask their advice. Our intention is to develop links between practitioners, particularly in the South West of England. Do take up the invitation.

With grateful thanks to the 29 members from local authorities and public services who have contributed to this South West Development Group, and special thanks to the Editorial Group for their work on this publication:

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