

North Yorkshire County Council

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

12 September 2011

Covering Report of the Access to Services Task Group:

'Building the Big Society locally'

1 Purpose of the Report

This report asks the Corporate and Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee to:

- Discuss and note the information in the draft final report on ***Building the Big Society locally*** (attached at Annex A)
- Consider the recommendations to the Executive set out on page 28 of the report.

2 Introduction

In November 2010 the Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to appoint a Task Group to look at access to services focusing on community managed resources, building community capacity, sustainable broadband-led transformation and the aspirations of the Big Society.

The rationale for conducting the review was prompted by:

1. An overall recognition that access to services is a significant theme for the county council and its communities at a time of financial uncertainty and service change through budgetary pressures.
2. The Coalition Government's plans regarding Big Society.
3. The rollout of Broadband to communities, particularly those in "not spot" areas and the recent successful bid by NYnet to participate in a major new Government backed scheme to transform access in rural communities in North Yorkshire.
4. Concerns from the Richmondshire Area Committee regarding a number of Post Offices in the upper dales areas and local community initiatives to bring Post Office services in local villages with the assistance of Post Offices Ltd.

3 The Task Group

The Task Group was chaired by County Councillor Liz Casling, working with County Councillor Val Arnold, County Councillor John McCartney and County Councillor Geoff Webber.

4 Objectives of the Review

- a) To review and report upon community managed services in the county, focussing in particular on building community capacity, and the aspirations of the Big Society: the commitment to shift power away from the state and towards people and communities.
- b) To identify issues, challenges and any improvements that may be recommended to the Executive and/or Portfolio Holder.

5 Process

The group visited three community run enterprises: Stillington Village Shop and Post Office, the George and Dragon Pub and Village Shop in Hudswell and the Vale of Mowbray Community Broadband project.

We also held a meeting with managers of voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations and NYNet to hear about their experiences and also to discuss how local authorities and the voluntary and community sector could work together to support community run services.

Drawing upon our findings we used the concept of 'building blocks' to establish the ingredients required for community groups to run and manage services. This enabled us to produce findings and recommendations that would be of relevance to all areas of the county, including for projects of varying size and scope.

6 Financial & Legal Implications

The scrutiny review did not undertake any detailed financial assessments or legal implications.

7 Recommendation

The Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee is recommended to agree the final report of the Access to Services Task Group including the recommendations to be presented to the Executive.

Bryon Hunter Scrutiny Team Leader

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Presenter of Report: County Councillor Liz Casling

Date: 8 August 2011

Background Documents: none

Annexes: Annex A
'Building the Big Society locally' - final report of the Access to Services Task Group

Corporate and Partnerships Overview & Scrutiny Committee



Building the Big Society locally

**Report of the Task Group
July 2011**

Chairman's Introduction



I am pleased to present to you the Task Group's Report on 'Building the Big Society locally'.

In many ways, the Big Society is not a new concept for this county. From school governors, to village hall committees, to parish councils, to youth leaders etc., Big Society is alive in our county and has been for generations. Our rural communities in particular already have a strong culture of self-reliance and can come together to try to find ways to deliver services that the public or private sectors can no longer provide. There are in fact over 3,000 voluntary and community sector organisations in North Yorkshire and York and around half of these are very small organisations.

What is new, however, is the drive from government to devolve responsibility for delivering public services to charities, social enterprises, voluntary and community bodies and private companies. And legislation will enable this to happen.

The County Council itself is seeking to involve communities more in the delivery of public services locally; the most recent example being the library service. But the County Council also needs to be able to respond positively to reasonable requests from communities who want go further, for example, by utilising the 'right to challenge' envisaged in the Localism Bill.

During our work, it became clear that there are a number of 'building blocks' that all communities need to have in place if they are to successfully deliver any local service.

The County Council has a strategic part to play in ensuring that all these 'building blocks' are in place wherever needed in North Yorkshire.

*County Councillor Liz Casling
Task Group Chairman*

Review Process

The Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee set up a task group to conduct the review.

The members were County Councillors:

Liz Casling (Task Group Chairman)

Val Arnold

David Jeffels

John McCartney

Geoff Webber

The group visited three community run enterprises: Stillington Village Shop and Post Office, the George and Dragon Pub and Village Shop in Hudswell and the Vale of Mowbray Community Broadband project. All three were examples of communities responding to the withdrawal of an existing service or lack of service provision. The background to these projects can be found in **Appendix 1**.

We also held a meeting with managers of voluntary and community sector organisations working in the field of community engagement to hear about their experiences. Representatives included Rural Action Yorkshire, the Plunkett Foundation, North Yorkshire Volunteer Centres, North Yorkshire and York Forum, and NYnet (to discuss the Newton Rawcliffe and Gilamoor broadband pilots). We also discussed how local authorities and the voluntary and community sector could work together to ensure that all communities know where to access advice and support, and when a need arises e.g. due to a withdrawal of a service all communities are provided with the capacity to respond. **Appendix 2** contains a list of some of the local and nationally based organisations providing support, advice and guidance to community groups to run services that the County Council could work with to take forward some of the recommendations in this report.

Executive Summary:

The Big Society is the driving political vision of the coalition government. One of its aims is to support co-operatives, mutuals, charities and social enterprises to have more involvement in the running of public services.

North Yorkshire already contains successful examples of where communities have come together to respond to a gap in service provision. This was demonstrated by our visits to the community run shop and post office in Stillington, the community owned pub in Hudswell and the Vale of Mowbray community broadband project. However demand for such projects is likely to increase with the withdrawal of publicly run services and the implementation of enabling legislation.

Drawing upon our findings from our visits, and discussions with voluntary sector support and development organisations, we used the concept of 'building blocks' to establish the ingredients required for community groups to run and manage services. These are detailed below.

1) Local leadership acts as the foundation stone to any community run project. More effort is required in some areas than others to bring people together. Typically this can be done through the brokerage support offered by voluntary and community sector organisations.

Even in areas with a strong sense of community such support may be required to shape ideas and raise awareness of what is possible. The whole process takes time particularly in relation to where communities are being asked to step in following the withdrawal of a publicly run service. We need to bear this in mind when producing a timescale for implementing our own service changes.

There is scope for more joint working between the County Council, voluntary and community sector support organisations, social enterprises and other specialists that have demonstrated their value to local organisations as well as to the public sector. Partnership working and how we collaborate together on Big Society developments will become more, not less, important. Councillors as part of their community leadership role can, with the right information to hand, help lead and encourage those who are interested in running a service. They can also raise awareness of new possibilities for local service delivery.

2) The right skills set. Wherever possible the diversity of skills and experience within a community should be utilised. But very few communities will be able to implement a project without access to some form of external professional advice. There will be gaps in knowledge or expertise in most communities and so people need to know who can provide this from outside the community. Access to legal and business advice is commonly required. This is available through a range of organisations, including local voluntary sector support and development organisations, providing advice on

appropriate governance arrangements as part of their core offer to new voluntary and community groups. Formal legal advice in particular is expensive, and where this is needed pro-bono support is the ideal because it frees up funding to meet the rest of the project's funding requirements. Learning from the experiences of similar projects through peer support and mentoring can also prove to be invaluable and aids the learning process.

3) Governance: Having clear recognised governance structures in place is a pre-requisite in order to attract funding and to ensure accountability. There are several commonly used governance structures to choose from which symbolise community effort, provide legal status and allow the organisation to attract grant aid; some also provide limited liability. The most appropriate one in each case will depend on the kinds of activities that the group intends to undertake and the kinds of risks and liabilities that it may be exposed to. Again, it is important that community groups have access to advice to ensure that they choose the right structure.

4) Finance: Our visits showed that start-up and long term funding is required to deliver services – rarely can it be done for free. Depending upon the type of project there may be a need to pay for start-up professional support, equipment, insurance, incorporation costs, premises and paid staff.

Nationally and locally, grant funding schemes that were available to community groups less than two years ago are now no longer available.

In North Yorkshire funding streams are available for new community projects but some of these are short term. There could however be scope to work more closely with charitable trusts, with a view to exploring the potential for more strategic pots of funding to be made available in the county.

Because the number of national and regional grant funding opportunities has declined in recent years the financing of community enterprise projects locally through shares, bonds or other forms of finance such as capital borrowing will become more important. This will pose a greater challenge for less affluent areas or areas with a weaker sense of community. It will also pose a challenge for those community-led services where these funding models are not appropriate, for example services which do not have a capital base or do not involve substantial trading.

It remains to be seen how and to what extent funding will be made available from government around the Big Society initiative but recent policy announcements include creating a Big Society bank ('Big Society Capital'). Also a number of measures were announced in the *Giving White Paper*, including providing funding to support improvements in voluntary sector infrastructure.

Philanthropy from local businesses could be another possible source of funding for community projects, as could payroll giving – though the challenge will be to encourage payroll contributions to go towards local and not just national causes.

5) Access to reliable and fast broadband: Access to good quality broadband provides the platform for other projects to develop. Currently 25% of North Yorkshire's residents suffer from connections below the Universal Service Commitment of 2Mbps and 95% of the land area has poor or no broadband.

Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) has been formed to tackle the 'final third' of areas that do not have such access. North Yorkshire is one of four BDUK pilots in the county, enabling digital hubs to be installed in different parts of the county. The County Council has also set aside funding for community broadband projects in the 'not spot areas' of North Yorkshire.

Community broadband projects rely upon the NYnet connected sites in the county, in particular schools, to beam a broadband connection into the community. It will be important therefore to ensure that our broadband charging policy for schools remains competitive in the future.

6) Volunteering strategies: Management of volunteers is crucial to keep them motivated and to ensure their skills fit with the volunteering opportunity. Having a paid member of staff responsible to manage volunteers can provide a greater sense of control, organisation and stability to the business.

Being able to recruit and retain a large pool of volunteers' is key. This is because it means that no one individual is heavily relied upon. The challenge for community run projects is to retain volunteers in light of individuals' priorities changing over time and to keep morale high. An issue in communities with an ageing population is replacing the present generation of volunteers with younger people.

There are support organisations available to provide help and advice to community groups wishing to take on volunteers, such as the Volunteer Centres run by the voluntary sector local support and development organisations.

The government in its *Giving White Paper* has announced various initiatives aimed at promoting volunteering opportunities and is considering how online peer review systems could be used to help volunteers build up personal reputations and testimonials to create 'giving CVs'. These schemes might have limited impact in rural areas where volunteers tend to live nearby but will have greater relevance for urban areas or larger scale projects requiring a greater number of volunteers.

7) Sustainable business planning: Running community services continues to be demanding beyond the initial start-up of the project. There is a need for those managing the project to continue to invest time and utilise their skills because ultimately external support alone is not sufficient to ensure projects become sustainable.

For the kinds of community enterprises that we visited, raising the necessary finance to purchase an asset in a good location is a prerequisite for growing a sustainable business. However it is important to bear in mind that other community run services do not require capital assets.

Community run services, in particular those that have adopted a social enterprise model, need to balance social objectives with the need to generate income. For them to be successful over the longer term they need to minimise business risk, decrease their liabilities and build up capital to reinvest back into the enterprise. As with any business they also need to respond to customer expectations. Developing a wider vision for the service can also aid its overall sustainability.

The long term sustainability and growth of community broadband projects in the county will depend upon retaining a critical mass of subscribers and either increasing the number of Community Internet Service Providers, or encouraging existing ones to cover wider geographic areas. In addition, projects need to be assured of the continued support of the local school etc. being used to 'piggyback' the wireless connections into the community.

Recommendations:

- **That the public sector in North Yorkshire involves the voluntary and community sector at an early stage when planning service changes, in particular with local support organisations that have a track record of success in working with communities and the public sector. By providing an early 'heads up' it will allow voluntary and community sector organisations to plan where their resources will be needed the most – be it in terms of geographic area or by client group.**
- **That the County Council works with voluntary sector support and development organisations to ensure that accessible information is available, including an on-line directory of contacts for community run projects, including links to toolkits, existing community run enterprises, mentoring schemes and pro-bono support, as well as signposting to face to face support.**
- **That the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership be invited to explore how businesses could help provide professional support and mentoring to further the entrepreneurial skills of community groups running local services.**
- **That the County Council makes available a small grants fund for community groups to apply to for funding towards initial start up costs for community run services.**
- **That the County Council engages with relevant charitable trusts and other funders regarding the potential for a more strategic approach to funding 'Big Society' developments in the county.**

1 Purpose

- To review and report upon community managed services in the county, focussing in particular on building community capacity, and the aspirations of the Big Society: the commitment to shift power away from the state and towards people and communities.
- To identify issues, challenges and any improvements that may be recommended to the Executive and/or Portfolio Holder.

2 Background

Access to services is a significant theme for the County Council and its communities at a time of financial uncertainty and service change through budgetary pressures. 'Improving Accessibility for All and Supporting Active Communities' is one of the priorities in the Council Plan 2011/14. The draft North Yorkshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2011/14 also contains a priority about improving accessibility for all, in particular about building capacity within communities to help them to play a bigger role in shaping and delivering local services.

The Big Society is the driving political vision of the coalition government. The intention is to put more power and opportunity into people's hands: "We want to give citizens, communities and local government the power and information they need to come together, solve the problems they face and build the Britain they want." (*Building the Big Society*: The Cabinet Office, (2010).)

The key aims of the Big Society agenda in relation to community managed services are to:

- Give communities more power: reforming the planning system and introducing new powers to help communities save local facilities and services threatened with closure, and give communities the right to take over local state-run services.
- Encourage people to take an active role in their communities: measures include encouraging volunteering, charitable giving, philanthropy and the creation of a National Citizen Service.
- Support co-operatives, mutuals, charities and social enterprises¹ to have more involvement in the running of public services.

¹ The government defines social enterprises as businesses with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.

The government intends to devolve responsibility for delivering public services to charities, social enterprises, voluntary and community bodies and private companies.

The Open Public Services White Paper sets out the government's direction of travel for public service modernisation, including measures to increase choice and open up public services to a range of providers. To this end a number of bills are making their way through Parliament concerned with procurement, local planning and getting citizens involved in delivering services. These include the Localism Bill (in particular the 'assets of community value' and the 'right to challenge' proposals²) and the Public Services (Social Enterprise and Social Value) Bill³.

The Postal Services Act 2011, which has just recently received royal assent, allows for the possibility for the network to become mutualised⁴.

The Academies Act 2010 paves the way for parents, teachers, charities, businesses, religious and voluntary groups etc. to set up free schools⁵ in England.

Demand for community run services could well increase with the withdrawal of publicly run services. There will be new opportunities for communities to grasp but there will also be a need to ensure that all have the capacity to respond – urban or rural, affluent and less affluent communities. This will be especially important when commercially run or publicly run services are withdrawn, or where a local group has expressed an interest in running a local service because it feels that it can run it better.

Most community led projects are reliant upon support from voluntary sector infrastructure organisations to provide support and advice. In North Yorkshire such practical support is available. However in light of funding pressures and capacity issues faced by both the voluntary sector and the County Council there is a need more than ever to work together in partnership on this agenda.

² The 'assets of community value' proposal would allow a community to express an interest and delay the immediate disposal of an asset that had been included in the 'list of assets of community value' drawn up by the local authority. The 'right to challenge' would allow local groups to express an interest in running a local state-run service.

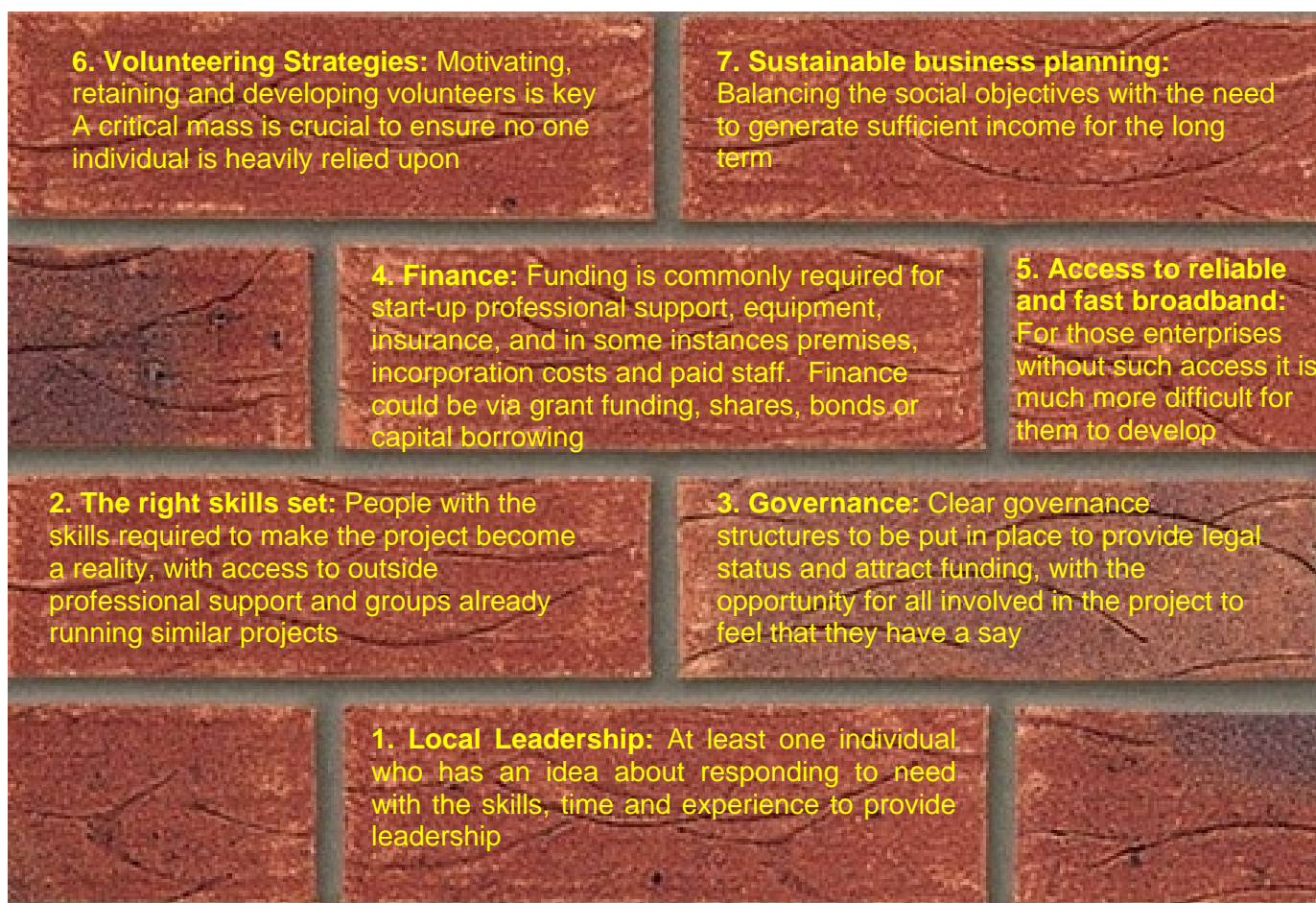
³ The Public Services (Social Enterprise and Social Value) Bill, if passed, will alter the way in which public sector services and contracts are commissioned and delivered. The legislation would require all public sector contracts to deliver added social value in our communities.

⁴ This would allow the local owners of Post Office branches together with employees, charities, customers and local communities, a much greater say in how the network was run. (In advance of the Act, the first charity run post office in the country opened last year in Darnall, Sheffield. All profits from the Post Office go back into the area's other community projects such as employment and training initiatives.)

⁵ Free Schools are non-profit making, independent, state-funded schools set up in response to what local people say they want and need in order to improve education for children in their community (Department for Education).

3 The 'building blocks' that allow communities to successfully run services, and how these can be translated to other areas

We used the concept of 'building blocks' to establish the ingredients needed for community groups to run and manage services. We used this method to carry out a high level review able to produce findings and recommendations that would be of relevance to all areas of the county, including for projects of varying size and scope. We wanted to see how it was that some communities had been able to come together to set up and run a service and how in light of the Big Society agenda, the County Council could support similar community led projects in the future. The building blocks that we have identified are shown below. Our findings and recommendations are set out on the next pages.





1) Local leadership

Issues and findings:

All three visits demonstrated that critical to the success of community run projects is to have at least one individual within a community who has an idea about responding to a need, with the skills, time and experience to provide local leadership. An individual, a group or a Parish Council could provide this local leadership.

- Rural areas:

Many of our rural communities are at an advantage as they already have a strong sense of community identity, able to come together with relative ease to form a group to take forward their projects. Those in particular with Parish Plans have already identified their local priorities and so know what they value most, allowing them to build upon the services that they have or risk losing. The Stillington and Hudswell projects – both located in rural, relatively affluent areas – show that there was a strong sense of community identity beforehand, which individuals interested in taking on the project were able to tap into. Both communities contained people with the right skills set to lead and motivate a group to take forwards a project.

- Urban areas:

Urban areas can be more of a challenge as there is often not the same sense of community identity. There is almost a need to build a community first there before projects can develop. More effort is required to help people to ascertain what their priorities are. This is especially so when services are at risk of being lost.

- Community capacity building and the role of voluntary and community sector support organisations:

Big Society has and will happen more naturally in some areas than others therefore. The extent to which time and resources (if any) needs to be spent in initially bringing people together to create local leadership to take forward projects varies from community to community.

Even in areas where there is a strong sense of community identity, people might have a bright idea but do not always know how to take it forward, and they might not be aware of the full range of possibilities. It takes time for communities to respond: generally they are not organised. People start off with one idea and then grow in confidence and so the idea develops over time as they become organised as a group.

The Vale of Mowbray project bears this out. The project arose from the frustration of a local business owner in the area experiencing slow, intermittent broadband. She investigated a number of alternatives before hearing about NYnet (the County Council's broadband company) and the work that had been done elsewhere in the county. The project broadened from being confined to an individual seeking to have reliable broadband for their own business to a community led project encompassing neighbouring villages north of Thirsk. This then developed further by linking up with people who were trying to do the same for their communities to the north of Northallerton.

The recent consultation on the future of library services in North Yorkshire shows that even in areas where there is a strong sense of community, if a public service provider intends to withdraw a service it is more challenging to encourage new community activity to fill the gap than say if a commercially run service had been withdrawn such as a pub or village shop. Community effort is channelled initially into opposing proposals to withdraw a service. It takes time before those same communities organise to provide alternative provision and those that are not able to do this face a permanent loss of service provision. We need to bear this in mind when producing a timescale for implementing service changes, as we did latterly with our proposals for library services.

There is practical support and expertise available to individuals and groups wishing to set up or run community groups. We learnt that capacity building and awareness-raising is the 'bread and butter' work of local voluntary and community sector support organisations. These include Rural Action Yorkshire, the North Yorkshire and York Forum, the voluntary sector local support and development organisations (Councils for Voluntary Service and Voluntary Actions, and the Volunteer Centres which they run) and national organisations such as the Plunkett Foundation. These organisations help act as 'honest broker' - providing independent support - to bring individuals together even in areas where there might not be a strong sense of community. The Plunkett Foundation, for example, has experience of working with urban communities in deprived areas such as Sheffield and Warrington. These organisations are then able to work with groups to take forward and implement a community run project or put them in contact with organisations that can.

Nationally and locally voluntary and community sector support organisations report that their resources are already overstretched at a time that they are seeing reductions in public sector funding. This is occurring at the same time that the Big Society policy agenda is emphasising a greater role for charities,

social enterprises, voluntary and community bodies in public service ownership and delivery⁶.

The Task Group has not looked into the ways in which we fund the voluntary sector or what our future funding and commissioning strategy should be in light of the funding constraints placed upon the public sector. This would need to form a separate piece of work. Much previous partnership working between the public sector and the voluntary and community sector has grown up around specific Government funding streams. But now that funding is much rarer, partnership working and how we collaborate together will become even more important if we are going to make the best use of the resources that we do have. A recent report produced by the Local Government Group stresses the importance of Councils involving the voluntary and community at an early stage; entering into equal partnerships so that both sectors can work together more effectively to bring about the best results for local people⁷.

There is scope for more joint working with voluntary and community sector support organisations, social enterprises and other specialists that have demonstrated their value to local organisations as well as to the public sector. The County Council, as a commissioner of services, has an overview of the needs of communities across North Yorkshire, and voluntary sector organisations contribute to this by bringing knowledge and understanding gained through their day to day community engagement work.

The 'Active Communities' project, to be funded from the North Yorkshire Local Area Agreement Performance Reward Grant provides a good example of collaboration between the public sector and the voluntary and community sector. The focus will be on supporting communities where public service withdrawal will have most impact and where communities have the least capacity to develop their own solutions. It will provide targeted community development support and small grants to support access to appropriate professional support during 2011 to 2013.

The government is intending to provide a country-wide workforce of voluntary 'community organisers' to work with communities to help them meet their own needs. The initiative is currently being piloted in 10 areas. It remains to be seen how community organisers will work with national and local voluntary and community sector support organisations and the public sector to utilise local knowledge and avoid duplication. This initiative may also come too late to help some communities respond to the withdrawal of public services.

- A role for councillors:

As community representatives, County, district and parish councillors have an important role to play in leading and encouraging those who are interested in running a service to be ambitious and to put them in contact with organisations able to provide further help. They can also help raise

⁶ *Supporting a Stronger Civil Society: An Office for Civil Society consultation on improving support for frontline civil society organisations* (2010)

⁷ *Doing something Big: Building a better society together*, Local Government Group (2011)

awareness of new possibilities for communities to take control of local services, as well as provide the means through which communities hold their local public services to account: “Councillors lead conversations on residents’ behalf with the council and local partners, providing a vital link between the two. Councillors also act as brokers: bringing together people and groups who share a common interest to act in the best interests of their place.”⁸ To aid this, councillors need to have reliable and up-to-date information to hand, including the range of organisations out there able to provide assistance and support to community activists.



2) The right skills set (including diverse range of skills), time and access to external professional support and advice/peer support.

Issues and findings:

- Utilising the diversity of skills and experience within a community:

In both Stillington and Hudswell those championing the running of a community service had many of the skills required to make the idea become a reality. These included business/financial planning, personnel management, project management, regeneration, experience of running licensed premises, organisational and facilitation skills to bring people together who would not normally meet, and know-how of where to secure resources through grants, loans and mortgages. If they did not have the knowledge or expertise in a particular area they knew who to go to provide this. Both projects required a lot of ‘home grown’ time input and utilisation of the diverse skills set of individual board members, and will continue to do so in terms of managing volunteers and protecting the investment.

- Peer support and mentoring:

Stillington and Hudswell were able to learn from the experiences of other similar projects. Indeed we learnt that one of the most valuable forms of support for people wishing to embark on a community project is to be put in

⁸ *Doing something Big: Building a better society together*, Local Government Group (2011)

contact with groups already running similar projects to 'see how it's done'/'seeing is believing'. Such visits, ongoing advice and guidance from peers helps give new people that extra bit of confidence to begin a project and to know the potential pitfalls from those who have gone before them.

Examples of recent mentoring initiatives are:

- The Plunkett Foundation in partnership with the Soil Association has been offering mentoring through Making Local Food Work - peer-to-peer mentoring for community shops and food enterprises. In North Yorkshire this has included mentoring 19 village shops in North Yorkshire. This support will end in March 2012 and the Plunkett Foundation although able to offer support to the community shops, is reliant upon financial support and assistance to keep this free advisory service going.
- Social enterprises in Yorkshire and the Humber have benefited from a peer mentoring scheme funded by the Office for Civil Society and delivered by Business Link Yorkshire. The scheme formally ended in March 2011. Some social enterprises may, however, continue to be involved on an individual basis.
- Access to external professional support including pro-bono support:

Practically all community projects benefit from having outside support, including face to face support in the early stages. Voluntary sector infrastructure organisations in particular can help people through the initial issues involved in establishing a new organisation. And the government reports that those groups that do receive support from infrastructure organisations are more likely to be successful in grant applications or bidding for contracts⁹.

For the Stillington and Hudswell projects less 'hand holding' was required from outside organisations than would be required elsewhere but even here there was a reliance upon outside support for technical advice (legal/governance issues) and financial and business planning advice (e.g. how to raise capital through community shares or bonds etc.). The Vale of Mowbray project benefited from advice from NYnet and particularly CLANNET (the Community Internet Service Provider) for technical know-how.

We learnt about the importance of having access to professional advice. Legal and business advice prior to a project going live was particularly important; helping people find a way through 'the red tape'. Such advice is available through a range of organisations, including local voluntary sector and development organisations, which provide advice on appropriate governance arrangements as part of their core offer to new voluntary and community groups. Also Co-operatives UK (the trade association for co-operative enterprise) has produced some useful free guides on legal and

⁹ *Supporting a Stronger Civil Society: An Office for Civil Society consultation on improving support for frontline civil society organisations* (2010)

governance processes (*'Simply Legal'* and *'Simply Governance'*) and the different options for financing a community enterprise (*'Simply Finance'*). The 'Village SOS' website, accompanying the recent BBC documentary series, has start-up guides for different kinds of enterprises and template documents to help people write business plans or market their enterprise.

Obviously not all community run services require the services of a solicitor but where formal legal advice is required, due to the technical or specialist nature of a community project, the ideal is for a community group to be able to have pro-bono support. This is because it frees up funding to meet the rest of the project's funding requirements. Not all community groups have access to such support though. Whilst a law firm provided the Hudswell project with free legal advice and other pro-bono support legal fees, Stillington had to raise local funds to pay for the legal fees required to establish the shop. One of the Government's Big Society Vanguard schemes, Crosby Ravensworth in the Eden Valley, has reportedly had to find £3,000 for legal fees in order to complete various pieces of paperwork. This gap in support, in particular assistance with legal fees, could act as a barrier for other community groups wishing to take forward a project.

At our meeting with voluntary and community sector infrastructure organisations we learnt that there are national schemes brokering support from professionals working in the private sector to provide expertise to local charities. 'ProHelp' and 'LawWorks' provide two such examples. The North Yorkshire and York Forum reports that these are not widely used but there could be scope for promoting such schemes by better co-ordination with the county's voluntary and community sector support organisations. The York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership may also be able to assist by identifying businesses that could provide pro-bono support to community run projects, for example around business/financial planning and marketing.

Relying exclusively upon the corporate social responsibility of individual companies to start or continue to provide professional support free of charge is not sufficient however. If there is an increased demand from communities to have access to such advice there will be more pressure on companies providing pro-bono support to rationalise this, especially when set against the difficult economic conditions that many businesses are now trading in. Plus, in those instances where the public sector is withdrawing a service, private sector companies (and the community group proposing to run the service) may well see it as the public sector's responsibility to provide funding for professional advice.



3) Governance

Issues and findings:

- Models

Having clear recognised governance structures in place is a pre-requisite in order to attract funding and to demonstrate accountability. There are several commonly used governance structures to choose from which symbolise community effort, provide legal status and allow the organisation to attract grant aid; some also provide limited liability. The most appropriate one in each case will depend on the kinds of activities which the group intends to undertake, and the kinds of risks and liabilities that it may be exposed to. The co-operative model is typically used for the kind of trading organisations that we visited – village shops and pubs¹⁰.

For many other community-led services, particularly those taking on formerly publicly-run services, companies limited by guarantee or shares¹¹ and community interest companies (CIC)¹² are common. Very small community groups are most likely to be an unincorporated association¹³, although the members of these do carry a significant personal liability.

What a lot of these governance models have in common is that they are democratically controlled by their members and ensure that those leading the project have clearly identified responsibilities - Treasurer, Secretary, Chair etc.

¹⁰ The Stillington and Hudswell projects have both adopted the co-operative Industrial and Provident Model. An industrial and provident society is an organisation conducting an industry, business or trade, either as a co-operative or for the benefit of the community, and is registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965.

¹¹ Companies limited by guarantee or shares are the most common legal structure for businesses. While they can ensure they have a social mission written into their Memorandum and Articles of Association, this is not regulated (Social Enterprises Coalition).

¹² A CIC is a legal form created specifically for social enterprises. It has a social objective that is 'regulated' to ensure that the organisation does not deviate from its social mission and that its assets are protected (Social Enterprises Coalition).

¹³ Unincorporated associations devise their own rules and set these down in a democratic constitution. They have no separate legal identity, which means that their members have to sign loans and contracts as individuals and carry the risk of personal liability.

Clearly, it is important that those wishing to take over a commercial or publicly run service, choose the right legal structure and are able to obtain advice on this. If groups choose the wrong structure it could hamper their activities, or involve a time-consuming exercise to put right. Local voluntary sector support and development organisations can provide initial advice and will recommend whether more specialist advice is needed from a solicitor.

- External advice:

Having external advice on governance arrangements was important to both the Stillington and Hudswell projects. In addition to local voluntary and community sector support organisations, nationally-based organisations such as the Plunkett Foundation, Co-operative and Mutual Solutions (CMS) and Co-operatives UK have a good track record of success in providing professional advice on governance.



4) Finance

Issues and findings:

Our visits showed that Big Society cannot be done for free, at least in the context of community run enterprises, which require a capital base or involve trading.

Ongoing and long term funding as well as professional support is still needed to carry on delivering services. There may be a need to pay for start-up professional support, equipment, insurance, incorporation costs, premises and in some instances a paid member of staff.

Nationally and locally, grant funding schemes that were available to community groups less than two years ago are now no longer available.

- Grant funding:

Although Stillington, Hudswell and Vale of Mowbray projects are self-sustaining they were reliant, to a degree, upon grant funding, including state aid in the case of the Vale of Mowbray project. Hudswell and Stillington

managed to secure just under 30% in grant funding from various funding streams. But due in large part to the economic climate these funding streams are now no longer available to community groups wishing to take forward similar projects. Indeed, one of the Big Society's Vanguard Schemes, Crosby Ravensworth in the Eden Valley, was aided by a large grant from the Homes and Communities Agency to build an affordable housing scheme. Significantly this grant was approved before the agency's budget was substantially reduced this year.

Voluntary sector support and development organisations in North Yorkshire employ a network of Funding Advisers who can help community organisations identify relevant sources of funding, and provide advice on writing a good application.

In North Yorkshire some of the sources of available funding for new community projects include:

- The North Yorkshire Reward Grant Fund managed by the Two Ridings Community Foundation. This has been established using Performance Reward Grant funding from the North Yorkshire Local Area Agreement. Grants are currently available up to a maximum of £5,000 for projects to help voluntary and community organisations with an income of less than £50,000 to meet the North Yorkshire Sustainable Community Strategy's priorities. The Fund comprises £620k: £200k for immediate distribution and £420k to create an endowment fund to provide support in perpetuity.
- The Innovation Fund, managed by NYCC Health and Adult Services, to help voluntary sector organisations change and adjust and, at the same time, help transform how adult social care services are delivered. £1,578m is available in three annual tranches of £500k, £578k and £500k respectively, from April 2011. This scheme is also funded from the North Yorkshire Local Area Agreement Performance Reward Grant.
- National and local grant making trusts and foundations. Some of these have been supporting community run projects for years and so have built up a wealth of knowledge on how projects can develop and grow, what works well etc. There could be scope to work more closely with charitable trusts, in particular local ones, to see how we could work together better to build an understanding of ours and other public sector organisations' future priorities – e.g. what our strategy is for devolving/transferring services. This could then create the potential for more strategic pots of funding to be made available in the county.
- Big Lottery Awards for All, a grants scheme funding small, local community-based projects in the UK.

Despite the new funding sources outlined above, the ending of the North Yorkshire Community Fund and the NYCC Area Committee Grants have left a significant hole in the availability of small grants locally. This gap should be

filled, perhaps with a smaller and more focused small grants fund for initial start up costs for community run services.

- Raising finance through other means:

As the number of national and regional grant funding opportunities has declined in recent years, the financing of community projects through community shares, bonds or other forms of finance such as capital borrowing will become more important. The sense of community identity in Hudswell and Stillington ensured that a substantial level of donations, community shares and bond issues could be raised. Stillington was also successful in applying for a mortgage, helped by the fact that it could demonstrate to the lender other forms of finance at its disposal. There has to be a question-mark though over the ability of less affluent areas or areas with a weaker sense of community to raise sufficient finance from local people. Also not all community run services may be able to raise finance in this way due to the service not having a capital base or containing a trading element.

- Government initiatives:

It remains to be seen how and to what extent funding will be made available from government around the Big Society initiative to benefit communities in North Yorkshire. To date though the Government has announced a number of initiatives which include:

- Creating a Big Society Bank ('Big Society Capital': a wholesale bank to provide loan finance for social enterprises).
- A raft of measures announced in the *Giving White Paper*, including: £30m to support voluntary sector infrastructure (to develop new services/redesign existing ones etc.); moves to enable cashpoint donations; a year-long campaign to promote payroll giving; a 'giving summit' to be held in the autumn aimed at generating new fundraising ideas; and £700k for Philanthropy UK, which offers advice on effective giving to aspiring philanthropists.

- Philanthropy and payroll giving:

Philanthropy from local businesses could be another possible source of funding for community projects. The government has announced that measures to promote philanthropy could appear in future Budgets to improve the effectiveness of payroll giving, including developing a method of allowing donors to take their regular payment from job to job. The challenge will be to encourage payroll contributions to go towards local and not just national causes.



5) Access to reliable and fast broadband

Issues and findings:

- A tool for sustainable development:

We learnt from our discussions with NYnet and our visit to the Vale of Mowbray project that broadband provision provides the tool for sustainable development: it aids the social inclusion and economic development of an area. Without access to reliable broadband it is much more difficult for social enterprises and businesses to develop in those areas. For instance, dial-up cannot be relied upon sufficiently to set up on-line bookings and secure payment on a website, open emails with attachments etc.

- The picture in North Yorkshire:

The Digital Britain Report produced in 2009 recognised that broadband should be recognised as the 4th utility, and set a Universal Service Commitment of no less than 2 Mbps. This has resulted in the creation of Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) to tackle the 'final third' areas that do not have such access. These are areas where traditional telecommunications are unlikely to reach with fibre technology. Currently 25% of North Yorkshire's residents suffer from connections below the Universal Service Commitment of 2Mbps - about 150,000 households. 95% of the land area has poor or no broadband. 'Not-spots' can be anywhere in North Yorkshire, from rings of villages further than 3km around market towns throughout the Vale of York, to most of the Dales, Wolds, and the Moors.

BDUK has been given the job of putting a digital hub into every community in the 'final third' areas by 2015. North Yorkshire is one of four BDUK pilots and will receive up to £16.4m from BDUK, with the possibility of taking this up to £30m through match-funding from the European Regional Development Fund. £750,000 has been set aside from the North Yorkshire Local Area Agreement Performance Reward Grant funding for community broadband projects in the 'not spot areas' of North Yorkshire, with an additional £215,000 already provided through the Rural Development Programme for England. Following a conference held earlier this year district-based champions are being recruited throughout the county to work with those communities expressing an interest in running a community broadband project.

- Reliance upon public sector infrastructure:

Community broadband projects rely upon the NYnet connected sites in the county, in particular schools, to beam a broadband connection into the community. The Vale of Mowbray project provides one such example. This year the County Council had to reintroduce broadband charges to schools following the end of grant funding. A number of schools made representations to the Authority about the weighting of the formula that was introduced, involving a higher fixed fee for all schools against a smaller fee per pupil. The subsequent introduction of the 'small schools subsidy' aimed at schools with less than 100 pupils will hopefully address these concerns by providing a subsidy of up to 50%. But it will remain important that our broadband charging policy for schools remains competitive in the future. The risk otherwise is that those schools that are able to transfer to another provider will do so.



6) Volunteering strategies

Issues and findings:

Stillington and Hudswell recognised that they would need a critical mass of volunteers to ensure that the 'burden' of running the service would be spread. Both projects are not wholly volunteer run. Post Office Ltd. requested that paid staff be appointed to run Stillington Post Office and tenants run the Hudswell pub, with volunteers only running the shop, which is run at cost.

- Having a critical mass of volunteers:

Having a large pool of volunteers' means that no one individual is heavily relied upon. The age profile of a community can make a big difference in terms of being able to successfully recruit and retain a pool of volunteers. Stillington's population contains a high percentage of retired people. This has meant that it has been easier to recruit the 70 or so volunteers needed to run the shop than would have been the case if the shop had been located in an area where more people were out at work during the day-time. Turnover tends not to be high, with volunteers serving between four to six years. A pool of substitute volunteers fills in the gaps when regular volunteers are not able

to serve in the shop at their allocated time. Similarly Hudswell has a 'buddy' volunteer system.

- Management and supervision:

Motivating and retaining volunteers is key and people management skills are required. Management of volunteers is crucial to keep them motivated and to ensure their skills fit with the volunteering opportunity. The Volunteer Centres for York and North Yorkshire report that people interested in volunteering start off with a narrow view about what they are able to do: they tend to underestimate their own existing skills. Over time, though, a volunteer's role should be expanded in order to retain their enthusiasm.

Regular communication is also of key importance, making volunteers feel part of the business. So in Stillington for example volunteers are able to put forward ideas to the board of directors for discussion.

The Plunkett Foundation reports that over half of all community shops have a paid manager with either paid or volunteer assistants. The Plunkett Foundation advises that this mix provides the best model as it provides a greater sense of control, organisation and stability to the business. Whilst volunteers will be at the heart of most community shops, especially in the day to day running of the shop, a paid manager will be able to provide overall continuity and ensure the shop is meeting the performance targets set by the board of directors.

- Retaining and developing volunteers:

The challenge for the Stillington and Hudswell projects will continue to be to retain volunteers in light of individuals' priorities changing over time and to keep morale high. An issue in communities with an ageing population, such as Stillington is replacing the present generation of volunteers with younger people. One of the volunteers who we met posed the question: "Will the younger generation be able to volunteer especially as they are likely to have to work longer in paid employment due to the increase in the retirement age?". There is a succession planning issue. The Volunteer Centres in York and North Yorkshire report that there has been recent interest in volunteering by unemployed people and young people wanting career-related experience. It remains to be seen whether this will continue to be the case once the economy picks up.

- External advice and support:

There are support organisations available to provide help and advice to community groups wishing to take on volunteers. The Volunteer Centres in York and North Yorkshire for example offer advice and support to all organisations on the recruitment, management and support of volunteers. They also provide a brokerage service for individuals wanting to get involved with existing voluntary sector organisations as volunteers or trustees. They

report, however, that their capacity is already overstretched within the current funding constraints.

The government in its *Giving White Paper* has announced that £1m will be given to the youth charity YouthNet to support its 'Do it' website, which links people to volunteering opportunities. Community organisations that register their volunteering vacancies with a Volunteer Centre can have their vacancies advertised on Do-It (www.do-it.org.uk). Funding will also be provided to support new models that incentivise people to give, such as 'complementary currencies' that offer people credit for volunteering. The government is also considering how online peer review systems such as the holiday review website *TripAdvisor* could be used to help volunteers build up personal reputations and testimonials to create 'giving CVs'. However, our visits showed that the volunteers were 'home-grown': they lived in the locality. This is likely to be the case in more remote rural areas where lengthy travelling distances are involved. Government initiatives in this regard might have limited impact in these areas and instead be more relevant for urban areas or larger scale projects.



7) Sustainable business planning

Issues and findings:

Our visits to Stillington and Hudswell showed that running community services continues to be demanding beyond the initial start-up of the project. There is a need for those managing the project to continue to invest time and utilise their skills. Their skills might need to develop and expand over time. So projects might need to have ongoing support and advice. This is where peer mentoring can help once again plus some continuing support from voluntary and community sector support organisations and trade associations. Ultimately though external support alone is not sufficient to ensure projects become sustainable; professionals cannot dictate the development of community projects, only help the process along.

- Location, location, location:

It is important to bear in mind that not all community run services require capital assets - a local volunteer sitting service for carers for example does

not require a building. However for the kinds of community enterprises that we visited, raising the necessary finance to purchase an asset in a good location is a prerequisite for growing a sustainable business. Both Stillington and Hudswell have been fortunate in that they bought the premises at opportune times. Stillington was able to buy the shop at the start of the property boom and Hudswell bought the pub as the result of a re-possession arising from the credit crunch, buying it below 'market value'. Both properties are located in the heart of the village and have increased substantially in value, providing equity if the businesses folded. Other communities may not have such opportunities. There could be scope for the County Council to use its public buildings more creatively to support such ventures.

- Balancing social objectives with the need to generate income:

The management teams of the Stillington and Hudswell projects have consciously put in place strategies to balance the social objectives of the business with the need to generate sufficient income for the initiative in the long term.

For community led projects to be successful over the longer term, in particular those with a capital base and a trading function, they need to minimise business risk, decrease their liabilities and build up capital to reinvest back into the business. Stillington is decreasing its liabilities by ploughing back some of the shop's profits into making overpayments on the mortgage. The Hudswell project is minimising business risk by having appointed tenants to run the pub. The tenants buy the stock and run the pub, avoiding the need to rely on volunteers. A below market rate has been set for the tenants, rising each year as the business grows. The rationale for this is it provides an incentive for the tenants to build a profitable business for themselves and also ensures that the project receives a benefit (through increased rent) as the business becomes more profitable. Strategies to mitigate the risks of share holder withdrawal have also been put into place.

- Responding to customer needs:

As with all enterprises, community run projects need to ensure that they are continuously meeting customer expectations. Stillington does this by producing an annual customer survey.

Linked to customer expectations, a community led project can aid its own long term sustainability if it can provide a service that no longer requires people to pay an outsider provider to deliver. This is known as 'plugging the leaks', whereby a local service is developed to ensure that money is recycled in the local economy rather than being lost to an outside provider. Our visit to the Vale of Mowbray community broadband project provided a good example of this.

- Developing a wider vision for the service:

Hudswell recognised from the start the need to consider a wider vision for the pub, diversifying in order to increase its income by encouraging more people to use the premises. In effect the pub has been turned into a community hub. It contains a small library and recent initiatives include free internet access, a guide on walks from the pub, and allotments on the adjoining land to grow and sell produce. There are also future plans to develop B&B accommodation on site.

- Key requirements for sustaining community broadband projects:

The long term sustainability and growth of community broadband projects in the county will depend upon retaining a critical mass of subscribers and growing the number of Community Internet Service Providers to install, maintain and manage the wireless network, or encourage existing ones to cover wider geographic areas.

The challenge in retaining community broadband subscribers is that the monthly fees are higher compared to commercial providers and so only tend to appeal to very frequent internet users. Normal take-up rates within a village can be low unless more incentives are given. Whilst an effective campaign at the start of a project from grass roots and parish council level can boost rates, there is a need for such initiatives to be ongoing to encourage new subscribers. This is particularly so if existing subscribers leave. Expanding to larger geographic areas as the Vale of Mowbray project is doing is one way to tackle these difficulties. Other factors are to ensure that subscribers to the service make their payments on time and that the project has the continued support of the local school etc. being used to piggyback the wireless connections into the community.

Conclusions and recommendations of the Task Group

Our findings have established the 'building blocks' that communities need to have in place in order to take control of a service and to run it successfully. But what they have also shown is that in order for these building blocks to be put in place communities cannot do this all on their own. Big Society has and will happen more naturally in some areas than others. In some towns and even in some villages more time will need to be spent on capacity building to shape ideas and to raise awareness of what the possibilities are. Even in communities where many of the resources required to run a service are already in place, some outside support is still required, particularly for technical advice.

Organisations exist, chiefly in the voluntary sector, able to offer practical support and professional expertise to individuals and groups wishing to set up or run community groups. The County Council should work closely with those that have a good track record of success, being open from an early stage about our plans for service changes. Linked to this is the way in which we fund the voluntary sector and what our future funding and commissioning strategy should be in light of our own funding constraints. This is clearly an important issue if projects are going to be provided with relevant support and we are to avoid duplication of effort. There is also scope to explore the potential to lever in more private sector support for community run enterprises.

The County Council, when drawing up its own plans for involving communities more in the delivery of public services locally, should not underestimate the time that community run services take to develop. This is particularly so where we intend to withdraw from running a service and are seeking to encourage new community activity to fill the gap. In other instances where a community pro-actively comes forward to run a local state-run service (by utilising the 'right to challenge' in the Localism Bill) we will need to respond positively to reasonable requests to do so.

Big Society is unlikely to be able to be done entirely for free, at least in the context of a community run service previously provided by the private or public sectors. All three projects that we visited were reliant to a degree on grant funding but the reductions in grant funding could mean that other community led projects struggle to get off the ground. Funding streams are available for new community projects in the county but some of these are short term. A longer term small grants fund for community groups to apply to for funding towards initial start up costs would be of great asset. We also need to work closely with charitable trusts to see if more strategic pots of funding could be made available.

Recommendations:

- **That the public sector in North Yorkshire involves the voluntary and community sector at an early stage when planning service changes, in particular with local support organisations that have a track record of success in working with communities and the public sector. By providing an early ‘heads up’ it will allow voluntary and community sector organisations to plan where their resources will be needed the most – be it in terms of geographic area or by client group.**
- **That the County Council works with voluntary sector support and development organisations to ensure that accessible information is available, including an on-line directory of contacts for community run projects, including links to toolkits, existing community run enterprises, mentoring schemes and pro-bono support, as well as signposting to face to face support.**
- **That the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership be invited to explore how businesses could help provide professional support and mentoring to further the entrepreneurial skills of community groups running local services.**
- **That the County Council makes available a small grants fund for community groups to apply to for funding towards initial start up costs for community run services.**
- **That the County Council engages with relevant charitable trusts and other funders regarding the potential for a more strategic approach to funding ‘Big Society’ developments in the county.**

Stillington Village Shop and Post Office

In 2003 the village Post Office and Shop were due to close. Previous work done around parish planning helped act as the mandate for the community to buy and run the business when it came up for sale. This is because one of the priorities in the Parish Plan was to retain the village shop/post office. Previous experience of running a community led project had been gained through setting up a consortium to buy domestic heating oil.

The Parish Council called a public meeting to explore the possibility of keeping the facility. Ten people volunteered to form a committee to see if it would be feasible to buy the premises and run the business as a community venture.

As a result the Stillington Community Association Ltd was formed. Through this company the committee were able to attract share holders and apply for grants, loans and other forms of financing.

A business plan was put together and funding possibilities explored. Through these efforts the purchase price of the building was raised with grants, donations, shareholders, bond holders and a mortgage from HSBC Bank. Just under 30% in grant funding was secured towards the total costs of buying, refurbishing and running the premises. This comprised just under £50,000 in grant funding from DEFRA through the Rural Enterprise Scheme: a funding stream that is now no longer available. At the time DEFRA was offering between 50 to 80 per cent of any appropriate project for purchase and refurbishment aid for community led projects. North Yorkshire County Council also provided £5,000.

The enterprise is run by the Committee of the Stillington Community Association Ltd. – all are volunteers. Part-time paid employees work in the Post Office; newspaper deliverers are also paid. All other staffing and administration is carried out completely by volunteers. This includes sorting early morning papers at 6.30am (and delivering them when they arrive too late for the schoolchildren to deliver), manning the shop, stacking shelves, purchasing, cleaning, gardening, rubbish removal, accounting, product sourcing, managing newspaper deliveries, decorating, publicity, stock control etc.

In order to keep the motivation of volunteers and their morale high Stillington holds various events for volunteers (Christmas party etc.) and provides 'thank you' gifts to volunteers.

Stillington has over 200 shareholders each with a £10 share. No dividend is paid to shareholders. Shareholders receive a copy of the professionally audited accounts annually and have the right to attend the annual general meeting. A number of people have also invested in bonds (£500 each) in

order to meet the £35,000 shortfall the Stillington Community Association had in funding.

Our visit took place on Wednesday 9th March 2011.

George and Dragon Pub and Village Shop, Hudswell

Featured recently in ITV's 'The Dales' programme, the George and Dragon in Hudswell was the first community run pub to open in Yorkshire and the third in the country. It became a community run pub in 2010 after closing its doors as a commercially run pub in 2008. It re-opened due to the efforts of 80 villagers and 90 other friends and supporters who joined Hudswell Community Pub Limited (HCP Ltd) - the co-operative that bought and renovated the George and Dragon.

The members of HCP Ltd have invested over £240,000 in the enterprise and together with grant aid of almost £65,000 these funds have been used to purchase and fully renovate the George and Dragon. HCP Ltd. secured just under 30% in grant funding towards the total costs of buying the premises (some of the funding streams such as the Rural Access to Opportunities Grant are no longer available).

The pub sells ales from local brewers, food from local suppliers and provides a venue for traditional pub sports and pastimes, local events and celebrations, music and culture. The land at the rear of the pub has been developed as community allotments; there is a village library in the pub and free internet access.

With the help of grant aid from the York and North Yorkshire Community Foundation and the Big Lottery "Awards for All", HCP Ltd. opened an adjacent village shop staffed by volunteers. Customers can access the shop whilst the pub is open. It sells local produce including groceries, bread, cakes, pies, milk, newspapers, frozen food, wine, beer, cigarettes, fruit and vegetables. The hope is that the shop will generate enough business to eventually pay for someone to manage it. The shop also provides a prescription collection service, a dry cleaning service and a parcel drop off service.

Shareholders have agreed not to withdraw funds for the first 12 months of the operation to allow the business to establish itself. After that all shareholders are required to give three months notice when wishing to withdraw shares. In addition a reserve fund has been created to ensure that there is enough capital if a number of shareholders wished to cash in their shares at the same time. There is a reserve list of people wanting to buy shares which means that new shareholders will be able to be found to replace existing ones should they chose to withdraw their investment.

Through having raised all the capital necessary to buy the pub HCP Ltd. could in the last resort sell the building and have no further liabilities.

Our visit took place on Thursday 24th March 2011.

Vale of Mowbray Community Broadband

The Vale of Mowbray Community Broadband project developed from August 2010, arising from the frustration of a local business in the area experiencing slow, intermittent broadband. The local business-owner realised that neighbouring villages were having the same problems with slow, intermittent broadband. She then led an effective local campaign to raise awareness through the community, creating the will to do something about it.

This level of interest for installing community broadband was gauged by writing to residents living in South Otterington, Newby Wiske, Thornton-le-Beans, Thornton-le-Street and Thornton-le-Moor.

A public meeting was then held to gather serious expressions of interest from local residents, so that these could be used to form a business case for when funding streams became available to apply for.

In November 2010 the government announced that it would be allocating £350m to improving Broadband in North Yorkshire.

With 100 serious expressions of interest the Vale of Mowbray project was approved to go ahead as one of the next batch of five after the two North Yorkshire pilot schemes. This was in part due to funding for the project having been obtained from the Rural Development Programme for England. (up to £31,400) to subsidise the capital equipment costs.

The project is taking next generation broadband into South Otterington, Newby Wiske, Thornton-le-Moor, Thornton-le-Beans, Thornton-le-Street and Appleton Wiske via Landmoth and Mount Grace. The feasibility of connecting up with High Worsall, Deighton, Picton, Cotcliffe, Crosby, Nether Siltan, Over Siltan and Kepwick is now being considered as well.

Vale of Mowbray has linked up with CLANNET, a Community Internet Provider, formed to deliver broadband to the rural areas of Yorkshire, so that installation can begin.

The project uses wireless broadband. The Vale of Mowbray Project has been able to make use of the NYnet fibre network already in place at a local primary school to piggyback wireless connections into the community. This has entailed a small upgrade to the equipment in the school and CLANNET installing its connection and antenna on the school building. From here a network of pole mounted receivers and transmitters on buildings are used which have direct line of site with each other. A signal is bounced from one property to another, travelling over a total distance of 29km, currently serving 50 customers. Broadband speeds at the start of the line are the same as at the end. Upload and download speeds are also similar.

Our visit took place on Thursday 26th May 2011.

List of some of the local and nationally based organisations providing support, advice and guidance to community groups to run services.

N.B. This is not a definitive list and there is further work to be done, including establishing if there are other organisations that we would wish to work with with regards to 'Big Society' developments in the county.

Local:

1) The North Yorkshire and York Forum: a registered charity formed and run by voluntary and community organisations in North Yorkshire and York to provide the county-wide infrastructure for the voluntary and community sector. It works closely with a network of **local support and development organisations (Councils for Voluntary Service and Voluntary Actions)** which provide a range of face to face support and practical services to the voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations in their district. This includes advice on governance, organisational development, business planning, running community buildings, operational policies etc. Specialist services available through the support and development organisations include:

- **Funding Advisers:** provide free advice and guidance on funding issues to voluntary and community sector organisations (and work together as the York and North Yorkshire Funding Advice Network).
- **Volunteer Centres:** provide a contact point for community and voluntary groups looking for volunteers in their area, and support people wanting to volunteer; taking them through the process of finding and applying for a volunteering opportunity.
- **Community Accountants:** provide free advice on accountancy, book-keeping, role of Treasurer; also low cost independent examination service
- **Rural Voice workers:** help rural community organisations influence local decision making

An **Employment Advice Service** is available through the North Yorkshire and York Forum.

2) Rural Action Yorkshire (RAY): works to ensure that rural issues and 'the rural voice' are heard, acknowledged and addressed by the decision and policy makers at all levels of government. Coverage includes North, West and South Yorkshire. RAY works with local communities to give local people the confidence, skills etc. for them to have an input into how their local area and services are best managed.)

3) Social Enterprise and Co-operative Development Ltd (SECOD): a social enterprise helping and supporting social enterprises and co-operatives across the North of England.

4) Social Enterprise Yorkshire and the Humber (SEYH): represents, promotes and connects social enterprise in the region.

SEYH exists to:

- Develop a Regional Network of social enterprises
- Provide a single information portal for social enterprise
- Represent the sector
- Lobby on behalf of the sector
- Undertake research on the needs and nature of the sector
- Help create new markets for social enterprise
- Raise public and institutional understanding of social enterprise
- Mainstream social enterprise within society

5) Key Fund Yorkshire: provides grants, loans and equity packages to voluntary and community organisations, charities, co-operatives, social entrepreneurs and social enterprises. Key Fund Yorkshire can only provide lending support to incorporated bodies.

6) Local charitable trusts

National:

1) Co-operatives UK: the trade association for co-operative enterprises.

2) Co-operative and Mutual Solutions (CMS): a leading UK consultancy providing business advice to co-operatives and social enterprises)

3) CAMRA (the Campaign for Real Ale): an independent, voluntary organisation promoting good-quality real ale and pubs, as well as acting as the consumer's champion in relation to the UK and European beer and drinks industry. One of its aims is to support the public house as a focus of community life)

4) The Development Trust Association: a network of community 'anchor' organisations, delivering services and facilities, finding solutions to local problems, and helping other organisations and initiatives succeed. They are independent, but work with the public sector, private businesses, and with other community groups.)

5) LawWorks: a charity which provides free legal advice to small charities, not for profit, voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises in England and Wales using volunteer lawyers. Areas include company law, employment law, intellectual property law, property law, charity law; tax/VAT law; insolvency and help in drafting contingency plans; insurance law; health and safety law; general contractual / commercial matters etc.

6) Plunkett Foundation: helps rural communities take on community-ownership of assets. The focus of its work is:

- Helping rural communities to set up and run community-owned shops with a range of partner organisations
- Supporting rural communities to establish a wide range of other community-owned rural services (e.g. local food community enterprises and rural community transport)
- Promoting and supporting the development of community food and farming enterprises across England through leading the Making Local Food Work programme and other community food and farming enterprises
- Advocating and raising awareness amongst policy makers, support organisations and rural communities themselves of the ability of rural communities to take control through community-ownership of the issues affecting them.

7) ProHelp: a national network for professional firms to volunteer their expertise in support of community investment initiatives.

8) Pub is the Hub: a 'not for profit' advisory organisation, encouraging local authorities, local communities, licensees, pub owners and breweries to work together to retain and locate services within rural pubs. Pub is the Hub assists with guidance on availability of project funding, and having a comprehensive understanding of the pub business, is able to advise on the best way to progress with each individual project.

9) The Social Enterprise Coalition: the national body for social enterprise. It represents social enterprises, umbrella bodies and networks to provide a platform for showcasing the benefits of social enterprise while supporting and representing the work of its members - influencing national policy and promoting best practice.

10) Timebanking UK: the national umbrella charity linking and supporting time banks across the country by providing guidance and help. Time banks link people locally to share their time and skills.

11) Village SOS Advice Line/website: running until July 2012, this provides signposting advice to community groups interested in setting up or running a community business in the UK. The advice line and website has been set up in connection with the Village SOS BBC documentary series shown in summer 2011. The partners include the Big Lottery, the BBC and the Plunkett Foundation.

12) A range of other national charitable trusts: Funding Advisers belonging to the York and North Yorkshire Funding Advice Network can help groups search for ones relevant to their work.