

REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

BIG SOCIETY INQUIRY

WHAT IS THE CITY COUNCIL'S ROLE, ALONGSIDE OUR PARTNERS, IN
DELIVERING THE BIG SOCIETY IN SOUTHAMPTON?

July 2011 – FEBRUARY 2012



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Big Society is about helping people to come together to improve their own lives. It's about putting more power in people's hands – a shift of power from central government to local communities. The Committee did not view the Big Society as a new concept, although they recognised the change in emphasis that has been placed on delivery and engaging as locally as possible, following the Localism Bill and many other initiatives launched by the Coalition Government.
2. The Big Society agenda and the Localism Act bring many new powers, flexibilities, freedoms and rights; therefore, Southampton City Council needs to develop a clear strategic policy direction and a coordinated approach towards localism. The Council's role needs to be clarified as an enabler and facilitator in an active rather than a passive role, whilst working with our partners to build capacity for communities to help themselves, particularly in the less affluent parts of the city. If the Council and its partners are going to make a real difference, it requires a fundamental cultural shift.
3. The step change required in the way the Council works in and with communities and with our partners is not likely to happen overnight and cannot happen in isolation. It requires a unified vision and message to ensure that existing building blocks for the Big Society are strengthened, and not undermined. The Committee believes a rebranded message to 'Your Southampton' would avoid any potential confusion of a political agenda or association with budget cuts and allow the focus to remain on the citizens of Southampton.
4. There is much that the Council can actively be doing to support this step change through opening up public services, particularly through simplifying the procurement process and changing the way services are delivered. Senior managers and councillors also have a vital role to play in offering their professional skills and experience to support the voluntary and community sector.
5. Within its community leadership role the Council should be targeting resources to build capacity and support communities to help themselves where it is needed, especially in the less affluent areas of the city. Evidence to the Committee highlighted that the 'civic core' (those who do the most volunteering, giving and participating) operate most strongly in affluent areas. The community organiser role is vital to achieving this success, and building trust in communities. There are currently four community organisers listening to residents in the West and central parts of the City. The Committee believes it is important that the work is expanded to cover all of the priority areas of Southampton.
6. The Committee identified that the building blocks to achieve the Big Society are well underway with nearly 500 member organisations signed up to Southampton Voluntary Services . Many businesses and organisations in Southampton are already working well within their communities but there is more potential to tap into and drive this vital support more strategically across the City.
7. Clearly, the Big Society cannot be achieved in isolation; partnership work and the collective role of Southampton Connect are vital to ensure the best way forward for a strong city with empowered communities and individuals in Southampton are empowered, this is already supported by many of the priority projects in the Southampton Connect Plan.

8. Finally, it is recognised that this cultural change will not happen overnight and given limited resources a blanket approach cannot be taken. It is suggested that, where practical, small measured trials are undertaken, and once lessons are learnt through this pilot approach, steps can be taken to adapt and roll out successful initiatives, based on achievable outcomes and the needs of a particular community or locality.

MAIN ISSUES AND SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

9. Overall the main issues from the Inquiry were:
 - The Council's key role is as a facilitator and enabler of the Big Society, although this should not be a passive one given its role as a community leader and a provider of last resort;
 - Southampton Connect is the main vehicle to drive the Big Society forward through its priority projects in the Southampton Connect Plan and partnerships
 - A significant cultural change and shift in thinking is required to achieve greater localism in public service delivery;
 - A rebranded city wide vision should be agreed to avoid the potential stigma of any political agenda;
 - A strategic approach to localism needs to be taken to ensure the Council takes steps to engage communities fairly;
 - The procurement process, within the EU procurement limits, should be simplified, encourage joint bids and value local knowledge and experience;
 - The limited resources available to develop the Big Society should be targeted to less affluent areas of the city, where capacity and willingness to engage are likely to be lower;
 - Community organisers, who have a vital role in listening and building trust in communities, are only currently operating in the West and central parts of the City. This is leaving gaps in the City that would benefit from the work of the Community Organisers not being covered by this approach;
 - Southampton Placebook has the potential to enable networking and mapping of community projects across the city;
 - The business input into the Big Society should be more coordinated;
 - Funding opportunities to support Big Society activity should be maximised;
 - The potential of the two universities in the City should be harnessed both in terms of research and to encourage student 'street captains';
 - Voluntary organisations are finding it more difficult to secure trustees and professional support services.

10. The eleven recommendations from the Inquiry, outlined in more detail after the introduction (Page 9 onwards) are summarised below:

<p><u>Recommendation 1:</u></p>
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<p>Work with partners and Southampton Connect on the delivery of a city wide vision with a consistent communication/marketing plan based on 'Your Southampton' branding that supports and celebrates the messages and successes of the Big Society and, is included in the refresh of the Southampton Connect Plan.</p>

<p><u>Recommendation 2:</u></p>
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<p>The 2013/14 Council and Directorate plans should identify how this drive towards localism will be implemented across the authority.</p>
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<p><u>Recommendation 3:</u></p>
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<p>Cabinet, Leaders of Political Groups, senior management and Southampton Connect partnership to pledge to lead the community by example, by making transparent decisions to do things differently, shift thinking and encourage the ground swell of cultural change to champion the Big Society and localism in Southampton to:</p>

- Establish locality forums to expand the role of neighbourhood planning, making it easier for communities and residents to access and drive public services where they live, through supporting new links or using existing groups, to ensure increased transparency and a proactive open dialogue.
- Promote and signpost to make better use of web based resources and social media outlets at community level, for example Southampton Placebook and the Volunteer Alliance and other online forums
- Map and assess current community resources and activity via Southampton Placebook, to feed into the single needs assessment
- Increase the use of community centres and voluntary sector premises as a first choice for meetings and hubs for mobile working.

Recommendation 4:

Rationalise Big Society funding to make access to existing funding streams at the council easier and timelier for local organisations and establish new funding sources to support the Big Society agenda to:

- Simplify the council's procurement processes by adopting best practice examples in Hampshire, Bristol and Cardiff, as identified in the report. In particular, contracts under the EU threshold should be proportionate, support local delivery, use a standard contract template, give advance notice/planning to enable joint working and bids, and make best use of e-forms / websites to minimise documentation used and required.
- Investigate opportunities to develop additional community funding sources, for example, through the creation of a Big Society Fund or use of Social Impact Bonds to support the launch of new and innovative community projects

Recommendation 5:

Southampton Connect to organise a city wide discussion around how businesses in Southampton can support Southampton's Big Society in a more joined up and coordinated way, involving Business in the Community, Business Solent and the Chamber of Commerce. This should also include signposting to encourage and support the setting up of mutuals, social enterprises and community interest across the City.

Recommendation 6:

To work alongside RISE and WICT to harness the learning and experiences of the Community Organisers and identify how existing community resources, both within the Council and with key partners such as faith organisations, can be directed so that shared community posts or community organisers are operating within the least affluent areas in the City to ensure equal opportunities exist for engagement and to build capacity.

Recommendation 7:

Celebrate and reward volunteering to:

- Investigate how volunteering could be rewarded, offering discounts for council services or local businesses, as part of the Change Programme to expand the City Card
- Work with Southampton Voluntary Sector and other partners to establish a city wide annual volunteering awards hosted by the Mayor.

Recommendation 8:

Work with Southampton Voluntary Services to

- Establish a volunteering bank to be a one stop shop for volunteering opportunities for businesses, organisations and individuals;
- Develop a simple website which allows basic description of volunteer offer to match with volunteering opportunities and linked with www.do-it.org;
- Work with the business sector to encourage recognition of the skills and experience of volunteering through a City Volunteer Passport.

Recommendation 9:

Harness the energy and potential of students to support a Big Society approach

- As part of the planning for the new Arts Centre in Southampton, Southampton Connect to develop a city-wide cultural programme which includes arts, sports and cultural activities to harness the civic responsibilities and builds a greater sense of pride and place in the city;
- Work with universities to develop street captains in areas with a high student population of students

Recommendation 10:

Develop a Corporate Social Responsibility strategy for the Council,

- Establish a brokerage scheme, in partnership with the Southampton Voluntary Sector, to link council employees and councillors with opportunities to become trustees, provide professional skills or mentor voluntary organisations, particularly those operating in the least affluent areas.
- To encourage and support volunteering, professional skills and mentoring opportunities through staff being given an agreed level of paid leave, starting from senior management.

Recommendation 11:

Work with the University of Southampton Third Sector Research Centre to monitor the development and success of the Big Society in Southampton

Big Society Inquiry - What is the City Council's role, alongside our partners, in delivering the Big Society in Southampton?

INTRODUCTION

11. The Prime Minister, at the 2010 Conservative Party Conference, stated:
“[The] goal of the Big Society is to transfer power from the state to individuals, neighbourhoods or the lowest possible tier of government, in that priority. What remains of state power, will be used galvanising, prompting, encouraging and agitating for community engagement and social renewal.”
12. Society is what happens whenever people work together for the common good. The Big Society aims to go further by helping people to come together to improve their own lives and others in their community. It's about putting more power in people's hands – a shift of power from government, at all levels, to local communities and moving away from any automatic presumption that the state will deliver public services.
13. Southampton has a proud heritage of local activism and volunteering, through the support of many individuals, organisations and business. The Big Society agenda provides an opportunity to build on this to support engaged and active communities across the City, to not only contribute but make things happen.
14. Recognising the Government's increasing emphasis on localism, community empowerment and delivering public services in different ways, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee (OSMC) opted to undertake a Big Society Inquiry to identify the Council's future role and to influence future policy development across the City.
15. The objectives of the Inquiry were:
 - a. To understand the legislative framework for promoting the Big Society
 - b. To understand the potential of the Big Society for Southampton
 - c. To clarify the City Council's role in the Big Society
 - d. To identify how the City Council is currently undertaking its role in the Big Society
 - e. To ensure that the Council's declining resources optimise the delivery of the Big Society
 - f. To identify how the City Council will work with partners and communities to enable the development of the Big Society in the future
16. The Inquiry examined the role of the city council, alongside our partners, in delivering and the potential impact of a Bigger Society in Southampton and did not aim to evaluate the merits of the policy itself.
17. Finally, it was agreed by the Committee that although the Big Society agenda would be considered with limited resources in mind, it was not viewed as simply a cover for spending cuts.

The full terms of reference for the Inquiry, agreed by OSMC, are shown in Appendix 1.

Consultation

18. The Inquiry was undertaken over seven formal inquiry sessions, which took place during scheduled or special OSMC meetings. Other specific Big Society training sessions were held for all members to attend. In addition, the Chair of OSMC attended a number of meetings and events outside of the formal inquiry in order to better understand what Big Society activity is already underway and to discuss with partners how the Big Society can be developed to improve outcomes in the City.
19. The Committee received information from a wide variety of organisations to meet the agreed objectives. A list of witnesses and summary of evidence provided to the Inquiry is detailed in Appendix 2. Members of the Committee wish to express their gratitude for the time and energy given by all those who have participated in the review, and recognise that their enthusiasm is reflected in the work they do at a community level.
20. Consultation on the draft Big Society Strategy was undertaken during the Inquiry but due to resource constraints, was limited to key partners, infrastructure organisations and umbrella bodies. This coincides with the 'Big Society – Better Southampton Conference' held on the 11th November 2011, a partnership event, planned by local agencies including Business Solent, Southampton Voluntary Services, Southampton City Council and Job Centre Plus, aimed at each organisations committing to at least one practical action.

THE NATIONAL AGENDA

21. From the onset of the Coalition Government coming into power in May 2010 there has been a clear emphasis on a radical shift of power to communities and a drive towards localism.
22. There are three key parts to the Big Society agenda:
 - **Community empowerment:** giving local councils and neighbourhoods more power to take decisions and shape their area. It is intended that [planning reforms](#) will lead to real power for neighbourhoods to decide the future of their area.
 - **Opening up public services:** Public service reforms will enable charities, social enterprises, private companies and employee-owned co-operatives to compete to offer people high quality services. The [welfare to work programme](#), lead by the Department for Work and Pensions will enable a wide range of organisations to help get Britain off welfare and into work.
 - **Social action:** encouraging and enabling people to play a more active part in society. National Citizen Service, Community Organisers and Community First will encourage people to get involved in their communities.
23. There have been a number of key policies and initiatives underpinning the development of the Big Society agenda, the key one being the Localism Act, published on the 13th December 2010 and given Royal Assent on 15th November 2011.
24. The Localism Act underpins the Government's drive to shift power both at a local government and community level. It gives freedom and flexibility to local government, new rights and powers to local communities and makes the planning system more transparent and democratic through Neighbourhood Planning.
25. Given the potential resources issues around the Big Society agenda The Giving White Paper, published in May 2011, should be noted for its plans for more than £40million additional support for the voluntary sector through a number of initiatives including the social action fund (£10m); prizes (up to £100k) for solving 'volunteer challenges'; £30m

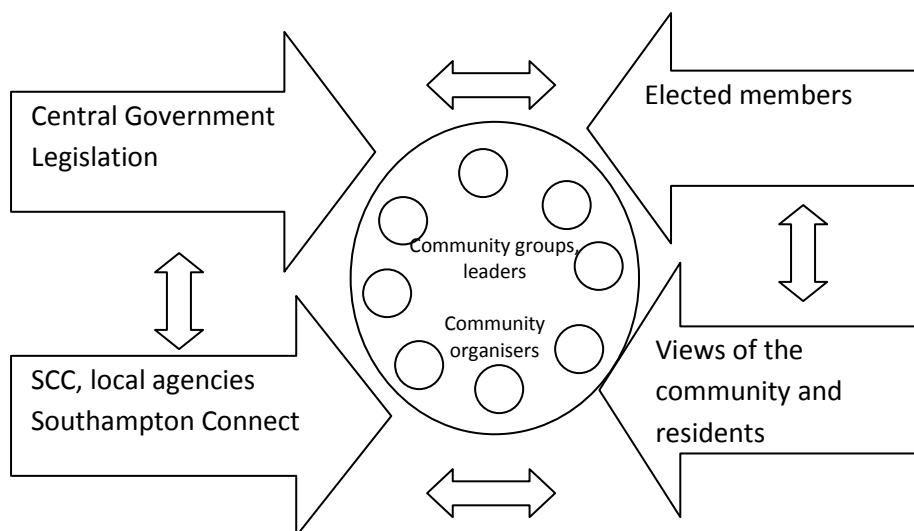
Transforming Local Infrastructure Fund; £1M for Youth net volunteering website and £700k for Philanthropy UK, connecting wealthy donors to charities; £400K to trial the 'Spice' system, offering rewards or discounts for volunteers.

26. The importance of the Community Organisers scheme should also be highlighted as one of the key vehicles with the potential to engage individuals and communities to help themselves more. The proposal is that 4,500 organisers across the country will each recruit 5,000 more people through the Re;generate Listening Matters Programme to be leaders, listeners, clients, volunteers and funders. The crucial element is that this listening and recruiting works in parallel and in support of the local democratic process.
27. There were many other national initiatives, highlighted to the Committee, which will impact and support the delivery of the Big Society. These are outlined in Appendix 3. The key findings in this report highlight those initiatives that the Committee believes can be harnessed to support the development of the Big Society in Southampton.
28. Although it did not form part of the Inquiry, the issues raised in the Social Justice Strategy: transforming lives, published in March 2012, supports the delivery of a socially active families, young people and adults engaged and active in their community, supported by strong partnerships, innovative service delivery and a social economy.

THE LOCAL SOUTHAMPTON PERSPECTIVE

29. The Big Society agenda presents an ideal opportunity for Southampton to build on its long tradition of supporting active communities and celebrating existing work as well as developing new initiatives. Appendix 4 summarises some local initiatives that are related to the Big Society agenda.
30. It is worth emphasizing that there were several local partnership initiatives in place prior to the announcement of the Big Society agenda that contribute to it. These were:
 - **The Volunteering Action Plan and Volunteering Alliance.** The Volunteering Action Plan has resulted in various practical actions including greater promotion of volunteering opportunities on the Do-it.org website; support offered by Southampton Voluntary Sector to local groups to develop volunteering policies; a partnership between Job Centre Plus and SVS to promote volunteering opportunities to job seekers and an event led by SVS to promote business involvement in the community held in February of this year.
 - **The Partnership Improvement Plan** was developed with key partners with the support of IDeA and discussed by Southampton Connect. The Plan has led to initial work on mapping accommodation needs to identify the potential for co-location and a commitment to review council procurement processes under the value of £100,000 to identify whether they can be streamlined in response to concerns raised by the voluntary sector.
31. Southampton has a multitude of voluntary sector organisations well placed to contribute to this agenda. These include infrastructure organisations such as Southampton Voluntary Services (SVS) and Training for Work in Communities (TWICS).

32. Two organisations, the West Itchen Community Trust (WICT) and Rise, have successfully bid to host 4 community organisers, currently working in the West and Central parts of Southampton.
33. There are numerous other community and voluntary groups and organisations active in the city, ranging from those with paid staff to those run entirely by volunteers. All contribute already to a range of services and activities in the city.
34. Other partners such as the City's two universities, Southampton Police and Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service currently contribute to this agenda and could have a greater role to play. Similarly, the private sector locally is already involved in supporting communities through corporate social responsibility initiatives.
35. Businesses play a crucial in supporting, funding and delivering the Big Society. Business Solent, Business in the Community and the Chamber of Commerce are active players in the City.
36. Southampton Connect brings together many key organisations in the City. The Southampton Connect Plan has 10 priority projects, of which one is based specifically on volunteering and many other links closely to the Big Society agenda. The partnership offers an ideal route through which to coordinate local action.
37. Most important to the success of the Big Society are the people – the residents, the families, the volunteers, the communities (of place, interest and identity).
38. We all need to work together to build a better society – the Big Society at a local level needs to operate at the grass roots to engage, enable and encourage activity by and for individuals and communities. Due to limited resources the Inquiry did not engage local residents at this stage; however, the diagram below captures the integration and collaboration needed to deliver the Big Society in Southampton.



THE ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMUNICATION

39. The Committee members, both during the Inquiry and through their own experience have seen much excellent work at community level to improve people's lives. Significant concerns were raised that their potential good work may be undermined by confusion and connotations around the Big Society agenda, becoming associated with budget cuts and as a political agenda. In addition, given the numerous organisations operating at grass roots level there is potential for different messages to confuse the message even more. The Committee applaud the work that has already been undertaken to bring together organisations in the 'Bigger Society – Better Southampton' event held in February this year.
40. Southampton City Council cannot achieve this cultural change on its own; the Council can only do this through continued dialogue and work with our partners. There needs to be sign up across the whole city for a united way forward to change the way we operate to an open, co-ordinated and joined up way, led by Southampton Connect.
41. To enable continuity and linkages across organisations for the future it was felt the time is right for a single co-ordinated vision and message about the Big Society across the city. A rebranded Big Society such as 'Your Southampton' would help to avoid the political implications, enabling continuity with existing projects whilst encouraging and facilitating new initiatives at community level.

Recommendation 1:

Work with partners and Southampton Connect on the delivery of a city wide vision with a consistent communication/marketing plan based on 'Your Southampton' branding that supports and celebrates the messages and successes of the Big Society and, is included in the refresh of the Southampton Connect Plan.

OPENING UP PUBLIC SERVICES

Localism Act

42. The Localism Act brings many new powers, flexibility, freedoms and rights and the Council, with its partners, needs to decide its approach to localism. There are many different activities that may overlap and give wider opportunity for engagement with communities; for example neighbourhood planning, community right to buy and community right to challenge. There needs to be a clear strategic policy direction and coordinated approach to the Localism Act and a drive towards a local approach across all council services. The Council's role needs to be clarified as an enabler and facilitator – although this is an active rather than a passive role.

Recommendation 2:

The 2013/14 Council and Directorate plans should identify how this drive towards localism will be implemented across the authority.

Transparency and Engagement

43. Services should respond to maximise their input into supporting the Big Society both through service delivery and by connecting and engaging at a community level. There is also a need to make accessing the Council and its services easier and provide clear information. It is not always easy for individuals, community groups and residents associations to access council services when groups want to help in their community for example, for street cleans.

44. New ways of working may lead to risks that stem from opening public services – i.e. patchwork service provision or the possibility that public funded services provided by the community could fail. The Council will always have a role to be the provider of last resort. If we are going to deliver localism to any depth and deliver a bigger society, we need a step change and be prepared to work differently, accept risks and adapt to different community needs. This approach needs to be flexible to enable different models of delivery developed through a dialogue with communities. This needs to be a fundamental cultural shift towards thinking and delivering things differently, letting go of some services and being prepared to do things differently.
45. There is a need to balance equality and localism so that smaller groups do not become even more marginalised. There are a number of smaller or ‘below the radar’ groups, many of whom have extra protection under the Equality Act, who do not want to provide public services or seek public funding but still want to have their say. Online media has their part to play in this communication. Southampton Placebook and the Southampton Volunteer Alliance Web Portal both promise to develop into useful and practical resources for voluntary organisations and businesses to connect to communities and aid joint working.
46. The Council should make better use of new forms of media to link to existing community groups and develop new connections where they do not. However, the Council also needs to ensure that clear channels of communication are developed to enable a dialogue with communities, which is not only for, but led by communities. This dialogue should not only shape where they live through neighbourhood planning but enable the wider needs and issues of the community to be considered. The Committee believes that the establishment of locality forums would be the most effective and fair way of achieving a dialogue with communities, ensuring wider engagement than for neighbourhood planning alone.

Recommendation 3:

Cabinet, Leaders of Political Groups, senior management and Southampton Connect partnership to pledge to lead the community by example, by making transparent decisions to do things differently, shift thinking and encourage the ground swell of cultural change to champion the Big Society and localism in Southampton to:

- Establish locality forums to expand the role of neighbourhood planning, making it easier for communities and residents to access and drive public services where they live, through supporting new links or using existing groups, to ensure increased transparency and a proactive open dialogue.
- Promote and signpost to make better use of web based resources and social media outlets at community level, for example Southampton Placebook and the Volunteer Alliance and other online forums
- Map and assess current community resources and activity via Southampton Placebook, to feed into the single needs assessment
- Increase the use of community centres and voluntary sector premises as a first choice for meetings and hubs for mobile working.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

Resources

47. Public sector funding is shrinking alongside the drive to find ways of tapping into the power of communities and supporting them to build their capacity and different ways of working. A review of the grants process was carried out in parallel with this Inquiry, albeit that due to timings of the consultation the key outcomes have been reported separately to this Inquiry. However, the Committee recognised the importance that limited and diminishing resources would have on the Big Society agenda.

48. All voluntary organisations that gave evidence to the Inquiry were unified in the view that existing grants, procurement and commissioning need to be simplified and criteria amended to favour local experience and activity to deliver community outcomes driven by the single needs assessment. Grants and contracts are currently not awarded for a sufficiently long term period for smaller organisations to plan without stifling the potential for innovation. Timescales for the bidding process do not encourage or favour joint bids from voluntary organisations to become more efficient; for example by sharing back office functions.
49. The inquiry recognised that no single authority was getting it completely right, although practices in Hampshire County Council (rewarding local providers through the Pre-Qualifying Questionnaire); Bristol City (using standard templates and eforms); and Cardiff City (matching potential applicants to contracts) were deemed to be examples of good practice.

Recommendation 4:

Rationalise Big Society funding to make access to existing funding streams at the council easier and timelier for local organisations and establish new funding sources to support the Big Society agenda to:

- Simplify the council's procurement processes by adopting best practice examples in Hampshire, Bristol and Cardiff, as identified in the report. In particular, contracts under the EU threshold should be proportionate, support local delivery, use a standard contract template, give advance notice/planning to enable joint working and bids, and make best use of e-forms / websites to minimise documentation used and required.
- Investigate opportunities to develop additional community funding sources, for example, through the creation of a Big Society Fund or use of Social Impact Bonds to support the launch of new and innovative community projects

Local Business

50. Frances Maude highlighted recently that businesses have a huge part to play in the 'shared responsibility and shared investment' to make things work better in communities. There is much work already underway in Southampton to encourage businesses to play their part in building capacity and the strength in the communities they work, through Business in the Community, Business Solent and the Chamber of Commerce. However, some further clarity may be needed on how the business community can function most effectively to support the Big Society.
51. Businesses should be encouraged to recognise and support their employees to get involved in volunteering, to enhance career and personal development whilst gaining a better understanding of local issues and enhancing skills and capacity within the area in which they operate.
52. The Council should support the development of the market place to encourage its own employees and others to set up mutuals, social enterprises and community interest companies, which by their very nature add greater value into the community economy and increase its capacity and empowerment.

Recommendation 5:

Southampton Connect to organise a city wide discussion around how businesses in Southampton can support Southampton's Big Society in a more joined up and coordinated way, involving Business in the Community, Business Solent and the Chamber of Commerce. This should also include signposting to encourage and support the setting up of mutuals, social enterprises and community interest across the City.

Prioritising communities with the greatest need

53. There is significant work underway at community level but although volunteering enquiries have increased the dropout rate is high. The number of people in the 'Civic Core' (those who do the most volunteering, giving and participating) has remained fairly constant over the last decade. There is a need to stimulate the civic core and build a volunteering ethos, a giving economy, philanthropy and reward community activity.
54. Evidence from both the Southampton Voluntary Sector and the Third Sector Research Centre highlighted that the Civic Core operates most strongly in affluent areas and resources should be targeted to redress the balance in areas with less capacity, less formal activity and develop trust that civic action will have an impact.
55. Faith organisations across the city already play an important role in supporting communities, and demonstrate the enthusiasm that exists for community giving and activity. We need to investigate how we can learn from and work with these organisations better.
56. The Communities Team and many other Council services already operate in the effectively in the community and have developed strong relationships with communities which can also be used as a basis for future work, idea sharing and engagement; for example through mentoring groups from neighbouring areas of different affluence can be connected and learn from each other.
57. The Community Organiser role (hosted by WICT and RISE) offers a crucial link to listen to communities but will be concentrated in selected parts of the centre and west of the city. Importantly, it aims to support not undermine the democratic process and will offer a vital link to otherwise hard to reach communities. However, there are some clear pockets of deprivation in the east that are currently not covered at all.

Recommendation 6:

To work alongside RISE and WICT to harness the learning and experiences of the Community Organisers and identify how existing community resources, both within the Council and with key partners such as faith organisations, can be directed so that shared community posts or community organisers are operating within the least affluent areas in the City to ensure equal opportunities exist for engagement and to build capacity.

SOCIAL ACTION

Celebrate Success and encourage social action

58. There are a number of awards and celebrations for enterprise, volunteering and citizenship but these are not currently co-ordinated. The Committee believes the success of volunteering needs to be celebrated more and in a coordinated way. This should not only make people feel appreciated, encourage others to see the value and reward of volunteering but also support the approach of single unified message for 'Your Southampton'.
59. Although not a free resource, volunteers are essentially unpaid. It was highlighted to the Committee that people's motivations for volunteering can be very varied; however, they felt that there should be some recognition or reward for the time and commitment given by all volunteers. As work was already underway to expand the City Card, the Committee felt that consideration should be given to offer some form of reward to volunteers through this scheme.

Recommendation 7:

Celebrate and reward volunteering to:

- Investigate how volunteering could be rewarded, offering discounts for council services or local businesses, as part of the Change Programme to expand the City Card
- Work with Southampton Voluntary Sector and other partners to establish a city wide annual volunteering awards hosted by the Mayor.

Volunteering

60. In the Place Survey 2010 the main ways people could be encouraged to volunteer, apart from having more spare time, was through more information on volunteering opportunities and more activity in their local area. Although there is a great deal of voluntary activity the high number of separate organisations doing similar things and in similar areas can be very confusing both for individuals wishing to volunteer and organisations trying to connect with existing activity.
61. The Council should act as a partner and facilitator to signpost, providing information to organisations in a co-ordinated way, communities and residents on their powers and potential. The Council recognises the work underway by Southampton Voluntary Services (SVS) and Business Solent to develop the Southampton Volunteer Alliance Web Portal will support this.

Recommendation 8:

Work with Southampton Voluntary Services to

- Establish a volunteering bank to be a one stop shop for volunteering opportunities for businesses, organisations and individuals;
- Develop a simple website which allows basic description of volunteer offer to match with volunteering opportunities and linked with www.do-it.org;
- Work with the business sector to encourage recognition of the skills and experience of volunteering through a City Volunteer Passport.

Harnessing and supporting student activity

62. There is a need to harness the civic responsibilities, energy and commitment of students of all ages in the city; working with existing volunteering and activity in universities, colleges and schools there is an opportunity to build the civic society of the future and develop a sense of pride in the city.
63. There are a number of areas in the city with a high student population and this often has a significant impact on the community, for example resulting in unresolved refuse, fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour issues.
64. Discussions with the universities have suggested that student street captains could be established at the beginning of each year to act as a key contact for public services, provide a link for other residents and continue to organise street cleans at the end of each term.

Recommendation 9:

Harness the energy and potential of students to support a Big Society approach

- As part of the planning for the new Arts Centre in Southampton, Southampton Connect to develop a city-wide cultural programme which includes arts, sports and cultural activities to harness the civic responsibilities and builds a greater sense of pride and place in the city;
- Work with universities to develop street captains in areas with a high student population of students

Corporate Social Responsibility

65. The Council does not have a clear Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) approach and does not encourage employees and managers to volunteer in the community. A gap in volunteering in the city, as identified by the Southampton Voluntary Sector, is for trustee members, professional skills and mentoring especially in the least affluent areas.
66. The Council could help reduce this gap by offering staff, starting from senior management, an agreed amount of unpaid leave if they choose to undertake one of these roles. This will not only support the voluntary sector but will also enable employees to develop an understanding of and pride in the city, whilst providing opportunities for career development and building capacity within communities. Payroll giving could also be encouraged.
67. Business in the Community (BITC) highlighted the importance of employees understanding the needs of the communities better. Encouraging employers, starting from senior managers, to work more closely at a grass roots level with voluntary organisations operating in the less affluent areas of the city would give a greater understanding of the issues being faced by residents in Southampton.

Recommendation 10:

Develop a Corporate Social Responsibility strategy for the Council,

- Establish a brokerage scheme, in partnership with the Southampton Voluntary Sector, to link council employees and councillors with opportunities to become trustees, provide professional skills or mentor voluntary organisations, particularly those operating in the least affluent areas.
- To encourage and support volunteering, professional skills and mentoring opportunities through staff being given an agreed level of paid leave, starting from senior management.

MEASURING SUCCESS

There is no clear coherent message from Central Government about what a successful Big Society will look like although there is already significant work underway nationally to measure the changes to civic society through the Third Sector Research Centre at the Southampton University. The opportunity should be taken to shape what is right for the city. It is also important to demonstrate added value where existing and new initiatives have enhanced capacity, community empowerment and social action.

Recommendation 11:

Work with the University of Southampton Third Sector Research Centre to monitor the development and success of the Big Society in Southampton

BIG SOCIETY INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE:

To clarify what the 'Big Society' is and what it means to Southampton, considering what work is already underway by the Council, its partners and nationally, to establish the Council's future role, functions and resourcing for the development of the Big Society across the City.

BACKGROUND

The Prime Minister, at the 2010 Conservative party conference, stated:

"[The] goal of the Big Society is to transfer power from the state to individuals, neighbourhoods or the lowest possible tier of government, in that priority. What remains of state power will be used galvanising, catalysing, prompting, encouraging and agitating for community engagement and social renewal."

The Big Society is what happens whenever people work together for the common good. It is about achieving our collective goals in ways that are more diverse, more local and more personal. There are already many examples of this happening across Southampton.

Officers within the Communities Team are working with communities every day. They have started to develop a Big Society Charter and are working on building the council's guidance and an information resource on Big Society, including 'Placebook' which maps community facilities and groups.

Southampton Volunteering Task Force have developed the Southampton Volunteering Action Plan to progress volunteering schemes in the city, in consultation with Southampton Connect.

The aim of the Big Society is to devolve power, money and knowledge to those best placed to find the best solutions to local needs including Councillors, frontline staff in agencies like the council, police and health service, charities, co-ops, social enterprises, community groups, neighbourhoods and individuals.

A number of key policies underpinning the development of the Big Society within the Localism Bill, published on 13th December 2010, and the Cabinet Office draft Structural Reform Plan have been used to progress this plan.

The Bill calls for a radical shift of power from the centralised state to local communities, and describes six essential actions required to deliver decentralisation down through every layer of government to every citizen.

THE SIX ELEMENTS OF THE **BIG SOCIETY** will:

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

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the legislative framework for promoting the Big Society
- To understand the potential of the Big Society for Southampton
- To clarify the City Council's role in the Big Society
- To identify how the City Council is currently undertaking its role in the Big Society
- To ensure that the Council's declining resources optimise the delivery of the Big Society
- To identify how the City Council will work with partners and communities to enable the development of the Big Society in the future

METHODOLOGY

Outline of current national policy and local activity through:

- Outline of current legislation
- Government representation
- Analysis of potential future impact of the Big Society on the city

Engaging partners through:

- Individual feedback from key partners and events
- Feedback from Southampton Connect

Engaging with residents and communities through

- Questionnaire community leaders and partners
- Invitation to residents to comment on current success stories and barriers to the Big Society in their community through social media e.g. Facebook
- Outline to key community projects in the City

Consideration of best practice and options for future delivery

- National best practice examples
- Local success stories and activity
- Links to council strategies and plans
- Outline of current resourcing and budgets
- Future options for delivery and resourcing

BIG SOCIETY INQUIRY PLAN

- 17 November National picture – National best practice Regenerate/ Renewal/ Bath example
Steven Kearney from Re:generate and Bath CC or Shaftsbury partnership to attend
- 1 December Local Communities – 4 local case study examples
Focus up on Localism Bill if needed
- 15 December Focus on Volunteering – Jo Ash (TBC)
Other voluntary organisations tbc
SVS key data
- Trends in Soton volunteering and VS income strands
 - What are the barriers and motivators for volunteering?
 - What are the measures of success for volunteering?
- 12 January Report on consultation on Big Society Strategy – Vanessa Shahani
Prof Mohan, Soton University Third Sector Research Unit to attend to outline (TBC)
National and Southampton key data
- Trends in Soton volunteering and VS income strands
 - What are the barriers and motivators for the Big Society?
 - What are the measures of success for Big Society?
- 26 January Focus on Big Society resources – grants, commissioning
Vanessa Shahani to outline proposals for SCC grants
- 9 February What could SCC do differently or change in the future to respond to the Big Society/Localism Bill?
Draft Recommendations
- 8 March Final report

External meetings

- 10 October Southampton Connect Plan Launch, City College
- 11 November Big Society – Better Southampton (SVS/Business Solent event @ St Mary's Stadium 830 – 1400)
- 16th November Neil Smith, Cabinet Office – best practice examples and Localism Bill

APPENDIX 2

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

Member training 14th September - on the Big Society principles – Neil Smith,

Meeting 1 - 22nd September 2010

Cllr Baillie outlined the administration's vision for Southampton's Big Society programme.

Aims:

Help people to take action,

Work with others to make it easier and change the way we work to encourage and

Build capacity of communities

Paul Raynes from the LGA

Talked about the role of council's and links to localism Bill, open public services, commissioning and voluntary sector

Barrier to Big Society developing – avoid overregulation & voluntary sector working in a different way

BS issues around training, building capacity & commissioning.

Vanessa Shahani – outline of national agenda and current local setting and Big Society Strategy

Member training 16th November

Localism Bill, Neil Smith, Cabinet Office

Meeting 2 – 17th November 2010

Bringing together national best practice examples of what the Big Society of the future could look like or be achieving Councillors wanted to look further into:

- Swindon Family Life
- Working Families Everywhere - pilots
- East Finchley Shopping Bus
- Sutton Library book donations
- Oxfordshire Big Society Fund

Regenerate, Stephen Kearney

Highlighted the concept of facilitating as a vital element to identify the root causes of problems that exist in every community

It is about engaging the hidden assets and talents through engagement to rebuild the community.

Ask people to promise to vote

Enhances democratic process and highlight early success

Meeting 3 - 1st December 2010

Pete White Life Church, Describing their work in Weston, Ebenezer Gospel Hall

Working hard to build capacity in the Weston area takes time and commitment. Community hubs work very well and good place for people to be active and see the action.

Iane Ames, Coordinator, TWICS

Talking about their work to support the development of community activity

Highlighted key issues around complex/resource intensive procurement processes

WEST ITCHEN COMMUNITY TRUST (WICT)

Working together with RISE to provide community organisers in the city – but focussed on West side of the city. No cover on the East side where half of our most deprived areas

Meeting 4 - 15th December 2010

Liane Shepherd, Capita

Talked the Capita CSR programme and pledges to help in the community

Jo Ash, Chief Executive Southampton Voluntary Sector

Talked about the strengths and reality of volunteering – freely given unpaid help that changes lives

Informal volunteering is reducing, 35-49 age bracket, High activity of students

Step change needed in terms of:

Meeting supply and demand; Being more creative in solutions given funding issues; Increase opportunity for short term volunteering issues

Barriers include

Bureaucracy around procurement and bids

Not to use volunteering as job substitution

High need for trustees and capacity building/support

Meeting 5 - 12th January

Sally Linsky, Business Solent CEO

Talked about current activities, volunteer alliance and Social Action Fund

Issues around funding and resources to achieve everything they want to and Promoting success important. Potential Outcome is more success and investment in the city

Professor John Mohan, University of Southampton

Highlighted key national trends in volunteering, showing a fairly constant trend in volunteering

Highlighted a sub set of civic core, acting in the most prosperous areas of the city

This also reflects the varying ability to tap into existing funding streams

Less activity in the more deprived areas of the city

Meeting 6 - 26th January

Pat Smith, Business in the Community Talking about their role in the more deprived areas of the city highlighted the battle for resources across the sector and confusing levels of voluntary organisations.

Bringing businesses to support the community they work in through responsible business practices ... but resources for CSR being cut. Developing web portal underway called The Link. Need for celebrating success.

SCC needs to play its part as a responsible business in the community with its own employees.

Stepacross, introduced Southampton Placebook and its potential impact on the Big Society. Southampton Placebook offers opportunities to bring together voluntary action and organisations – also measure of activity and success of Big Society. Opportunities exist to break down silos and connect people in the same area or working on the same issues. Barrier – SCC IT security policy!

Meeting 7 – 9th February

John Spiers, Senior Manager, Property, Procurement and Contract management

Highlighting current procurement processes and potential to simplify processes to support voluntary sector and community interest, SMEs etc

APPENDIX 3

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL INITIATIVES

Reform of Public Services

Transparency agenda: being clear with the general public about what the Government spends and how it works. This involves publishing government documents online and making public sector data freely available.

Rationalising Public Sector Assets: map, catalogue and publish every asset owned by the public sector including local authorities as a tool for better property management, co-location of services and a means by which local people can identify important community assets

Path Finder Mutuals: employee led mutuals that ideally, can deliver improved services at less cost. The government is aiming to see one in six public servants being part of a mutual by 2015.

Health and Wellbeing Boards will remove divisions between the NHS and local authorities and give communities greater say in the services needed to provide care for local people.

Healthwatch will be a new independent consumer champion and a statutory part of the Care Quality Commission (CQC), to champion service users and carers across health and social care.

Community Empowerment

The Localism Bill will give freedom and flexibility to local government, new rights and powers to local communities and make the planning system more transparent and democratic.

Directly elected police and crime commissioners will replace the police authorities in England and Wales and ensure that the police force is more engaged with the public it serves and less focused on Whitehall targets.

Community Budgets are intended to change the way services are provided to some of the country's most troubled families. They replace place-based budgeting and involve several local agencies pooling resources and working more closely together.

Free Schools policy gives parents and teachers the right to set up new state-funded schools in response to local needs.

Promoting Social and Philanthropic Action

National Citizens Service is a voluntary eight-week summer programme for 16 year-olds that will give them the chance to learn new skills and get involved in their community.

Community Organisers Scheme is a £15 million government programme which will recruit and train 500 senior community organisers, along with a further 4,500 part-time voluntary organisers, over four years.

Big Society awards recognise individuals, groups or organisations that are demonstrating the Big Society in their work or activities.

Red Tape Challenge is an initiative to challenge the public to help the government cut unnecessary regulations. In a letter to all Government Ministers, the Prime Minister said he wanted to “tackle regulation with vigour”.

Your Square Mile is a government backed initiative which is intended to enable citizens to find and join their local civil society organizations within the area they live.

Community First Programme will encourage new community groups to form, with a particular focus on deprived areas. It will also encourage the building up of local endowments. The Programme will work closely with Locality to ensure the Community First Programme complements the Community Organiser Programme.

Transforming Local Infrastructure Programme is a new £30million Big Society fund to help modernise organisations that supply critical support to front-line charities, voluntary groups and social enterprises.

Big Society Network exists to develop, support and champion new ways of enabling people to give and engage: **giving** in terms of time, expertise and money to good cause and **engagement** in terms of democratic accountability of public institutions, service providers and civic society organisations

Vanguard Councils are local authorities identified as having the potential to spearhead the realization of the Government’s Big Society vision. The local authorities chosen were Liverpool City Council, Eden Valley, Sutton, and Windsor and Maidenhead. Since then, Liverpool City Council has pulled out of this initiative in protest at government funding cuts which it believes seriously undermines the work of voluntary organizations.

The Big Society Bank, now renamed Big Society Capital, will play a critical role in developing the new Social Investment Market that is likely to play a pivotal role in funding voluntary organisations.

APPENDIX 4

Local Southampton Perspective

The council has a long history of working with communities across the city, through generic staff e.g. community development workers and more specialist staff e.g. sports development, play development and tenants' participation initiatives.

The city also has a well established voluntary sector, some of whose activities are supported through council grants and contracts; some are funded from other sources or are self-supporting. Partner agencies such as Southampton Police, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service and both universities also have strong links to the voluntary sector. In the private sector, the city has a local Chamber of Commerce and Business Solent, plus Business in the Community has an active presence.

In addition to this ongoing work, Southampton Connect last year adopted a Volunteering Action Plan, drawn up by a multi-agency task group that seeks to promote and encourage volunteering, including through the involvement of local businesses. Southampton Connect also approved a Partnership Improvement Plan. This Plan has several key actions including working on the Total Place and Big Society initiatives. These Plans were developed prior to the launch of the Big Society agenda but have clear links to, and complement the government's three key themes.

Two internal workshops have been held between January and March of this year – the first for staff, the second for staff and Members. National speakers presented to both workshops. For the second workshop, a draft action plan framework was produced, based on the six key areas of the Localism Bill. This was used to capture contributions towards the plan from participants.

Southampton's Big Society Action Plan

This action plan framework has been drafted by the Communities Team. The intention is to build a local action plan 'from the bottom up', reflecting Big Society principles. The draft framework is currently being consulted on and will be finalised once the Scrutiny Inquiry has concluded, in order to consider any resulting recommendations.

PROJECTS

There are several projects being developed locally in response to this agenda:

Business in the Community Links Project

A joint project (working title Links) with Business in the Community and SVS to improve community group access to support from businesses using the internet has been agreed and the details are currently being discussed. This will provide groups with access to equipment, technical expertise and 'willing amateurs' for one-off projects such as painting a community building.

Big Society – Better Southampton Conference 11th November

This partnership event is being planned by several local agencies including Business Solent, SVS, Southampton City Council and Job Centre Plus. The intention is to hold an event aimed at the public, private and voluntary sectors that will result in participants committing to at least one measurable action that will add to the social capital of the city.

Hosting Community Organisers

Several local organisations (SVS, TWICS and WICT) have bid to host local community organisers.

Local Improvements Grant

This small capital grants scheme is due to be launched shortly by the council. Its aim is to provide an element of match funding (up to 25%), for local community groups seeking to improve their neighbourhoods.

National Citizens Service Pilot

Catch 22, which has a local presence, was one of the successful national organisations to bid for the pilot scheme. This resulted in about 50 places for Southampton young people. Three groups have been set up locally – two have been run by Catch 22 and one by Hampshire and IOW Youth Options.

Parklife Community Interest Company

A group of committed volunteers, the Friends of St James' Park, worked in partnership with the council to successfully secure £1.5M Parks for People Lottery funding to redevelop St James' Park in Shirley. Part of the redevelopment includes a local café and community room. The committee explored various options for the structure of their organisation, and with the national interest in mutuals and social enterprises, decided to set up Parklife as a Community Interest Company. This model ensures that activities are carried out for community benefit.

Safer Communities Volunteering

The Communications Team, in conjunction with the Safer Communities Team, has written and is now implementing campaign plans to support the police's efforts to increase recruitment of Special Constables and increase the number of Neighbourhood Watch schemes by 25% across the city.

This included a range of activities delivered by the Neighbourhood Services Division for National Neighbourhood Watch Week (18 – 26 June) with the aim of increasing membership of existing schemes and encouraging residents to start new ones where none exist. Activities included road shows, tea parties and an annual conference. Links with other council sections such as Tenants Participation, have been improved to help promote Neighbourhood Watch; for example, for the first time members of tenants associations sent representatives to the Neighbourhood Watch Annual Conference. Over 300 contacts were made at the road shows and since the National Neighbourhood Watch week, 12 new schemes have started in the city.

Southampton Placebook

Southampton Placebook aims to map grass roots organisations across the city so that people can find and join local civil society organisations in their area. The initiative seeks to complement the Your Square Mile initiative supported by the government as a way of promoting greater volunteering and community involvement.

The first phase of Southampton Placebook is part of the SIGN (Southampton Intergenerational Network – an EU funded project) exit strategy. This initial phase will map the location of partner organisations and the level of collaboration between younger and older age groups. Mount Pleasant Media Workshop has been commissioned to design the website in which the Placebook map will be embedded.

The intention is to seek further funding to develop a second phase of Southampton Placebook to include Neighbourhood Watch groups, residents associations etc. There is a potentially broader role for Southampton Placebook as a collaborative platform that brings together community groups and service providers in the co-design and delivery of services. Self-help enterprise can complement service provision if it is clear what community

resources are available and how these can be mobilised- a key challenge given cuts to public sector funding and the need to maximise policy interventions in a cost effective way.

STEVE

Southampton Training Education Volunteering and Employment or STEVE is a partnership between local organisations that offer support to homeless and vulnerable adults in Southampton. It aims to make it easier to access training, volunteering, and education that is designed for people who often find it difficult to engage with standard services and support them to find and stay in employment. One aspect of STEVE is the creation of a website - www.traininginsouthampton.org.uk - that lists activities which are suitable for this client group. It has been designed by key workers and service users to ensure that it is easy to use, helpful and relevant.