



Communities in control
Real people, real power

What can I do?

- **Information is power**
Go to your council website, find out about your local services. If information is not there demand an explanation!
- **Get your voice heard**
Petition your local council – it will soon have to respond and debate the issue in public if communities are unhappy with the answer.
- **Gear up your group**
Take your community group to the next level. Set up a neighbourhood council. Apply for a grassroots grant or 'Communitybuilders' funding.
- **Vote on spending**
You'll be able to petition your council to have more say about spending decisions.
- **Take a stand**
Find out about being a local councillor, a Young Advisor, school governor or housing association representative. Your council should help you find out more.
- **Donate some time**
Become a volunteer for a good cause; mentor or read to children in a local school. Join a youth council.





Communities in control: real people, real power

Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State
for Communities and Local Government
by Command of Her Majesty
9 July 2008

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Communities in control: real people, real power

Foreword



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

In the modern world there are many challenges that cannot be met by central government acting alone – and to address those challenges effectively, we need to harness the energy and innovation of front-line professionals, local government, citizens and communities.

Among my first priorities when I became Prime Minister were the *Governance of Britain* proposals to enhance the rights of citizens and to make our institutions more accountable. But we need to build on this by empowering communities and citizens and ensuring that power is more fairly distributed across the whole of our society.

Over the last ten years local councils have improved the quality of the services they offer local people, and as a result we have freed them up from central government control, with fewer targets and greater trust.

Now with this White Paper we want to move to the next stage in that process – enhancing the power of communities and helping people up and down the country to set and meet their own priorities. In this way we strengthen local democracy by increasing participation.

This is not about making people sit in meetings on wet Tuesday nights, it is about helping citizens to get involved when they want to on their own terms – paving the way for a new style of active politics that not only gives people a greater say but ensures that their voices are heard and that their views will make a difference.

And it is an agenda for empowerment that reaches right across the board, from supporting people who want to take an active role in their communities to giving them better access to information and the chance to get more involved in key local public services. These themes lie at the heart of our public service reform agenda – the transfer of power both to front-line professionals and to users, who we want to be able to play a far greater role in shaping the services they use.

Communities in control: real people, real power

To help achieve those goals, this White Paper sets out concrete proposals for areas where both central and local government can devolve more power to citizens – giving local communities the power to drive real improvements in everything from the way their neighbourhoods are policed to the way that community assets are used. I believe it will help to build the vibrant local democracies on which our society and our public services depend.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gordon Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown MP, Prime Minister

Introduction



My 30 years in politics, as a community activist, councillor, Member of Parliament and Minister have convinced me that there are few issues so complex, few problems so knotty, that they cannot be tackled and solved by the innate common sense and genius of local people. With the right support, guidance and advice, community groups and organisations have a huge, largely latent, capacity for self-government and self-organisation. This should be the hallmark of the modern state: devolved, decentralised, with power diffused throughout our society.

That people should have the maximum influence, control and ownership over the decisions, forces and agencies which shape their lives and environments is the essence of democracy. There are few ideas more powerful, or more challenging. People with power are seldom willing to give it up readily; people without power are seldom content to remain enslaved. We can see this truth being played out with terrible violence in a country such as Zimbabwe.

Our history is punctuated by great struggles for democracy, from the soldiers who debated with generals at Putney during the English Civil War, to the Rochdale families who took control over the food they bought by creating the first cooperative, from the families who gathered at St Peter's Field in Manchester to demand parliamentary reform, to the Chartists who marched in their thousands at Kersal Moor in Salford, from the women who chained themselves to railings and went to prison to win the vote, to our grandparents' generation who defeated fascism.

Ours is a government committed to greater democracy, devolution and control for communities. We want to see stronger local councils, more co-operatives and social enterprises, more people becoming active in their communities as volunteers, advocates, and elected representatives. We want to see public services and public servants in tune with, and accountable to, the people they serve. Democracy is not about a cross in a box every five years, but about a way of life. It should flow around us like oxygen.

Communities in control: real people, real power

We've taken some important steps forward in recent years, with devolution for Scotland, Wales and London, reforming the Lords, more investment and powers for local councils, and encouragement for innovative ways to get people involved such as participatory budgeting, citizens' juries and petitions. But there is so much more to be done.

This White Paper takes us further on the journey, but this is not the last word. We are changing here the terms of the debate. We will continue to strive for greater reform, devolution and accountability, because that is what people will increasingly want and demand. And because it is the right thing to do.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Hazel Blears". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears MP

Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Executive Summary

1. *Communities in control: real people, real power* aims to pass power into the hands of local communities. We want to generate vibrant local democracy in every part of the country, and to give real control over local decisions and services to a wider pool of active citizens.
2. We want to shift power, influence and responsibility away from existing centres of power into the hands of communities and individual citizens. This is because we believe that they can take difficult decisions and solve complex problems for themselves. The state's role should be to set national priorities and minimum standards, while providing support and a fair distribution of resources.
3. A vibrant participatory democracy should strengthen our representative democracy. The third sector – through charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises – has much to offer from its traditions of purposeful altruism and selfless volunteering. Equally, we believe that political activity is a worthwhile and essential part of British life, and we want to restore people's faith in politics.
4. In the White Paper, we address seven key issues which we treat from the perspective of individual citizens: being active in your community; access to information; having an influence; challenge; redress; standing for office; and ownership and control.

We have done a lot so far...

5. Over the last decade, the Government has modernised the democratic system with devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; a London assembly and directly-elected mayors in England; electoral reform for European Parliament elections; and an end to the hereditary principle in the House of Lords.
6. There have been equally important changes in our participatory democracy, with communities helping to shape regeneration programmes through New Deal for Communities, local elections to NHS Foundation Trusts and a stronger role for petitions. Local councils have become more visible and accountable, with greater devolution of power to local neighbourhoods. New partnerships and agreements have helped to strengthen accountability.

... but we need more reform

7. Yet power still remains too centralised and too concentrated in government. The division between what should be decided at the centre and what is best decided locally remains blurred.
8. There has been a growing disenchantment with formal political mechanisms. Turnout at elections has been declining. Political parties that once had 3.5 million members now have barely half a million between them. People locally don't feel they have an adequate say in the running of local services. And a majority don't think councillors represent their views.
9. But while people want to have a greater say, they need also to be convinced that their involvement will make a difference. If they speak up, they want to know that their voices will be heard. This is what **empowerment** is all about – passing more and more political power to more and more people through every practical means.
10. And the evidence suggests the quality of decision-making is improved as government actions more closely match the wishes of their citizens. In this way, empowerment can revive civic society and drive improvements in the NHS, police, justice system and local councils.

Local councils remain crucial

11. Councils remain at the heart of local democracy. The Government has given them a 45 per cent increase in real-terms funding since 1997, and has cut central targets. At the same time, accountability through the Audit Commission has seen a big improvement in quality, with only a handful of councils now in the Commission's weakest categories.
12. But many councils should do more to promote participation. So, we will introduce a new **'duty to promote democracy'** to help councils promote involvement through clearer information, better trained staff and more visible councillors in the community. We will also extend the existing **'duty to involve'** local people in key decisions, which will come into effect in April 2009, and will cover police authorities and key arts, sporting, cultural and environmental organisations. We will **support frontline staff** in responding to individual needs with a new task

force. We will also set up an **Empowerment Fund** of at least **£7.5m** to support national third sector organisations turn key empowerment proposals into practical action.

Supporting you in becoming a more active citizen or volunteer

13. Britain has a rich tradition of voluntary activity. Three-quarters of British people volunteer in some way. The government has supported volunteering, particularly for young people and the socially excluded, for example, through the v charity, Volunteering for All and Goldstar. The Department for Work and Pensions are exploring how **those on benefits can be supported** in taking up volunteering opportunities and the Office of the Third Sector will invest **£2m in opportunities for people with disabilities** to volunteer. We are working closely with the Prime Minister's Council on Social Action on **extending mentoring and befriending**.
14. Learning about citizenship helps to develop skills in young people and adults. The **citizenship curriculum** is important in schools and we will also be supporting a **pathfinder programme (Take Part)** for adults which will offer training and information about how to be an active citizen. We will encourage and **support innovative programmes to help young people from diverse backgrounds to become effective leaders**.
15. Community development workers can help citizens to shape their own areas. We are keen to encourage other frontline workers to do community building. Independent multi purpose community led organisations can also play a vital role in empowering local people and we are establishing a **£70m Communitybuilders** scheme to help them become more sustainable. Grassroots Grants, developed by the Office of the Third Sector, offer small sums of money from an £80m fund – in addition there is a £50m community endowment fund – to help locally-based groups to survive and thrive.
16. Many tens of thousands of people are motivated by their faith to provide services to local communities. But their contribution hasn't always been fully appreciated. We intend to **remove the barriers to commissioning services from faith-based groups** and carry out a national survey of third sector organisations, including faith based organisations, to understand the difficulties they face.

17. We will support community effort in tackling **climate change**. A 'Green Neighbourhood' scheme has been launched which will demonstrate how communities can take action to adopt low carbon lifestyles.
18. Local events provide a great way for communities to come together and encourage people to get involved in local activities. We will **support local communities in developing local events** such as litter picks, painting community centres, street parties or fairs in local parks.

Providing you with more access to information

19. Citizens often feel powerless because of a lack of information. Too much jargon can alienate, confuse and frustrate. More accessible and open information is a pre-requisite to community empowerment. Despite freedom of information and more 'Plain English', people feel less well-informed about their local council today than they did a few years ago.
20. The Internet offers huge opportunities and we want to encourage public bodies to authorise the re-use of information. We are **improving the information available to local citizens** and service-users. But there is a correlation between social and digital exclusion. We will ensure all sections of society can enjoy the benefits of the Internet, and other methods of communication.
21. Local authorities, public service providers and websites set up by citizens are helping us to ensure that more widespread up-to-date local data is published. NHS hospital data will help patients make more informed choices about their care. Parents will soon know more about their children's progress, behaviour and homework.
22. We want people to have access to information on what is happening in their own areas. We will **increase access to information available** at a local level and explore new and innovative approaches to sharing information both with citizens and with third parties. We will open up further elements of the Places Database.
23. A strong independent media is a vital part of any democracy. We will continue to support a range of media outlets and support innovation in community and social media. We will pilot a mentoring scheme in deprived areas on using the Internet.

Making sure your petitions are heard – and acted upon

24. Petitions have become easier through the Internet, with more than 8 million people signing petitions on the No 10 Downing Street petitions website to date.
25. To make it easier to influence the agenda at a local level we will introduce a **new duty for councils to respond to petitions**, ensuring that those with significant local support are properly debated. Local authorities should respond clearly to petitions, for example those dealing with empty properties, transferring the ownership of a building to the community, or participatory budgeting. If people are not satisfied with a response to a petition, they could ask for it to be debated in full council. Councils will also act as **community advocates for petitions related to the Primary Care Trust**.
26. Petitions should be taken into account in decision making in public services. We will work with key inspectorates to encourage them to ensure **petitions are important pieces of evidence to determine when inspections should be triggered**.

Increasing your chance to influence council budgets and policies

27. Citizens should have a greater say in how local budgets are spent. **Participatory budgeting** – where citizens help to set local priorities for spending – is already operating in 22 local authorities. We want to encourage every local authority to use such schemes in some form by 2012.
28. Local authorities should do more to **promote voting** in elections, including working with young people through citizenship lessons. We will give councils the power to provide modest **incentives for voting** – perhaps an entry into a prize draw – as a way of engaging people.

Giving you more say in your neighbourhood

29. We want to encourage **more neighbourhood councils**. So we will build on the existing 8,900 parish and town councils by encouraging new village, neighbourhood and community councils, particularly in urban areas. We will introduce a right of appeal where a community's proposal for a local council is denied by the local authority.

30. A quarter of local councils use **neighbourhood management** to join up local services including health and transport and help tackle problems in deprived communities. The recent Flanagan review of policing recommended that neighbourhood policing should be part of this process. The third sector also has a unique ability to articulate the views of citizens and drive change, and we will work with them to develop principles for their participation in Local Strategic Partnerships.
31. Local authorities must engage more people in **commissioning local goods and services**. Citizens should have a say in how services are delivered, to improve decision-making and value-for-money.
32. We want witnesses and the victims of crime to feel that the system is on their side. We support the use of **'community justice'** giving local people the chance to decide, for example, what tasks offenders on work orders should undertake. The Ministry of Justice will work with the Local Government Association and the Association of Chief Police Officers to agree **pilot projects for citizens to discuss 'community payback'** and local community safety priorities.
33. Equally, we want local people to have more of a say in the planning system so we will provide more funding to support **community engagement in planning** and we will ensure planners develop stronger skills in working with communities.
34. Up to 750,000 people are on a **tenants'** group or committee, making decisions about their homes and estates. Subject to Parliamentary approval, a new body, the Tenant Services Authority will soon be responsible for protecting all social housing tenants. We are giving tenants a greater say through local compacts, choice-based lettings and tenant co-operatives.

Giving older and young people a stronger voice

35. It is important that older people can shape local services and in June 2008 the Government launched a **review of older people's engagement with government**.
36. Most young people don't vote and many seem disaffected with traditional politics. Yet 67 per cent of 18-24 year olds say they are interested in local issues – and young people are often willing to volunteer. So we must do more to engage them.

37. Young people need genuine influence over local services and decision making. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has established a Youth Sector Development Fund to support good third sector organisations expand their capacity to deliver good quality provision to young people. **250 trained young advisors** are already helping public bodies to develop policies and plans in ways that meet the needs of young people. Some areas also have a youth mayor elected by young people locally. We will establish **direct access for young advisors to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and set up a programme for young people to 'shadow' government ministers and elected mayors**. DCSF are establishing a £6m national institute for youth leadership which will work with us to develop **internships for young people with councillors**.

Enabling you to hold those with power to account

38. We will **raise the visibility of the overview and scrutiny function** in local government, which is similar to Select Committees in Parliament. **Public officials will become more visible**. A key part of the role of a chair or chief executive of a public body should be that they face a regular public hearing. We will consult on a new right to petition to hold local officers to account at public meetings.
39. We are increasing the **accountability of local police and health services**. Through consultation on the NHS Constitution Primary Care Trusts are being asked to consider how they can strengthen their direct engagement with the public. The forthcoming Policing Green Paper will set out how police forces will be made more accountable, including through direct elections.
40. We want more visible and accountable local leaders. We support the directly-elected mayor model, already in operation in 12 towns in addition to the high-profile London Mayor. We want to see more **mayors directly elected** and will consult on making it easier for local people to demand a referendum and on reducing restrictions on the frequency of referendums.
41. New independent assessments of services in local areas are being introduced from April 2009. This **Comprehensive Area Assessment** will include evaluation of the quality of public engagement.

Providing you with redress when things go wrong

42. When public services fall short of the highest standards, citizens should be able to **complain and seek redress**.
43. One in five adults complains to their local council each year and a larger proportion is dissatisfied about the quality of local services. People who want to complain often don't know how to go about it. Nearly two-thirds of those who do complain to the council are dissatisfied with how their complaint is handled. Even so, there is also a growing belief that the quality of local services is improving.
44. Public services are becoming more accessible through services such as Directgov and Consumer Direct. The Audit Commission and the Local Government Ombudsman both provide advice on how to complain about poor services. We are **reviewing the Local Ombudsman's jurisdiction** to make sure all matters are covered.
45. However, it is important that every local authority has **a system of accessible, interactive contact** for citizens to raise concerns. Such systems should be developed with clear principles and a proper understanding of what redress or compensation may be available where that is appropriate. Where people just want things put right, they should be kept informed of what has been done following their complaint.
46. Rights and powers should be balanced by responsibilities and duties. We will extend pilot **Community Contracts** which agree priorities between councils, police or the NHS with local residents, who in turn agree to play their part. We would like to hear from local areas interested in running a **community pledgebank** where individuals pledge a small amount of resource if others do the same.
47. We will commission a **review into extending redress for citizens**. The review will report in early 2009.

Making it easier for you to stand for office

48. The proportion of councillors who are women, under-25 or from black and minority ethnic backgrounds is far lower than their proportion of the population. We want to see **a wider range of people standing for election** to their local council. A taskforce chaired by Baroness Uddin is working to help more black and minority ethnic women become councillors. Programmes such as Operation Black Vote are using a shadowing scheme to encourage more black people to become councillors, magistrates and school governors. We will **amend the Widdicombe rules** which forbid council workers above a certain salary band from being active in party politics.
49. We will give **backbench councillors more powers** to make changes in their ward with discretionary localised budgets that they can target on ward priorities. We will support authorities in enabling councillors with caring responsibilities and others to participate in meetings and vote remotely.
50. We want people to serve in a range of civic roles. Councillors, magistrates, school governors and others are already entitled to request reasonable **time off work for their public duties**. Working with employers, we will consult on extending that right to people serving on a range of other important public boards such as members of court boards or boards of housing associations.
51. People may be prevented from standing for public office because they are afraid of losing their job if they are elected. Employers often overestimate the time involved and underestimate the skills acquired in a civic role. So we are working with employer organisations on an **employers' information pack**.
52. Many councillors would like to see **a formal qualification** that recognised their work. We will review existing qualifications and modules to develop a system of formal accreditation at different skill levels. We will encourage councils to use their existing powers **to create Aldermen from experienced former councillors and enable the use of the new title of 'Aldерwoman'**.

53. We want to make it easier for people wishing to serve on local committees, boards or school governing bodies to know what the role involves and how to go about applying for vacancies. We will make it easier for people to find information on the range of ways they could be active in civic roles in their communities. This will involve directing people to further information, and also allow those running community websites to present relevant information to their local community.

Ownership and control

54. We want to see an increase in the number of people helping to run or own local services and assets, and to transfer more of these assets into community ownership. These assets might include community centres, street markets, swimming pools, parks or a disused school, shop or pub. A new **Asset Transfer Unit** will provide information, research and good practice.
55. Local authorities should ensure that information on the assets they own or manage is clearly up to date.
56. Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are independent organisations which own or control land for the benefit of the local community. We will **consult on a national framework for Community Land Trusts**. We are supporting fourteen pilot CLTs.
57. We want to see more people involved in starting and running social enterprises, where the profits are ploughed back into the community or reinvested in the business. A new Social Enterprise Unit is being set up in Communities and Local Government to recognise the social enterprise contribution to the department's objectives. We will also **encourage local authorities to ensure social enterprises are able to compete fairly for contracts**.

Conclusion

58. Unless we give citizens similar choices in our democratic system to those they have in their everyday lives – and the same rights to demand the best – we will see a further erosion of trust and participation in democracy. There are no limits to the capacity of the British people for self-government, given the right platforms, mechanisms and incentives. Empowering citizens and communities is an urgent task for us all.



Chapter 1

The case for people and communities having more power

If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost.

Aristotle (384–322 BC)

Chapter 1

The case for people and communities having more power

Passing power to the people

- 1.1 *Communities in control: real people, real power* has a simple aim: to pass power into the hands of local communities so as to generate vibrant local democracy in every part of the country and give real control over local decisions and services to a wider pool of active citizens.
- 1.2 This is a Government, not just a Communities and Local Government White Paper. The key themes are power, influence and control: who has power, on whose behalf it is exercised, how it is held to account, and how it can be diffused throughout the communities in which we live. It is about democracy, and how democratic practices and ideals can be applied to our complex, modern society.

The principles of empowerment

- 1.3 The principles which underpin this White Paper are:
 - democratic reforms must be focused on the **role of the citizen**, acting alone or with others, to influence decisions, hold politicians and officials to account, seek redress or take control of local services. We are approaching this White Paper from the perspective of the citizen, not the system. Therefore this document is structured around the ways in which citizens may wish to be engaged in society and the political process
 - our reforms are designed to **shift power, influence and responsibility** away from existing centres of power and into the hands of communities and citizens. These are the people who ultimately must hold power in a mature democracy. Our reforms are neither about tweaking the system nor about redistributing political power from one group of politicians to another
 - the **challenge and debate** that arises from this shift of power is a good thing, however uncomfortable this may be for politicians and service providers. The people, as the ultimate holders of power, have the right to ask difficult questions, demand answers and take action themselves to improve their communities

The case for people and communities having more power

- we believe that **citizens and communities are capable of taking difficult decisions**, balancing competing demands and solving complex problems themselves, given the right support and resources. We do not think that only an enlightened and altruistic class of political leaders and administrators can deliver what is good for people. We trust people to have the common sense and ingenuity to run their own affairs and to be the authors of their own destiny
- **local authorities have a vital role**. There are many excellent examples of councils being at the heart of local democracy and this should be the case everywhere. **Representative democracy** remains central to local democracy but we believe it can be reinforced, not undermined, by direct participation of citizens – each requires the other
- the role of **central government** is to provide support, resources, legislation and the framework of national priorities. The state should be a platform under people's feet, not a weight holding them down
- we particularly value the role of the **third sector** in social and democratic renewal, by which we mean groups, campaigns, co-operatives, mutuals and social enterprises owned and run by their own members, investing their profits in the local community. These types of organisations are where people learn the skills of democracy and where democracy can flourish
- within the third sector, **we recognise and celebrate the role of individual active citizens**, social entrepreneurs, campaigners, volunteers and political activists. Our civil society is defined and energised by hundreds of thousands of decent people, performing acts of altruism and selflessness, and these people deserve the support and recognition of government
- the contributions, experiences and perspectives of **all citizens**, regardless of race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation and religion should be recognised and valued
- lastly, the assumption running throughout this White Paper is that **political activity is valuable and worthwhile**, should be recognised and rewarded, and is an essential part of Britain's national life. We want to challenge the stereotypes of politics and take on the cynicism which corrodes our political system. We aim to show that by engaging in politics people can enact beneficial change, serve their communities, develop their own skills and experience and contribute to a strong society and nation

- 1.4 Our modern definition of democracy is a system of government whereby, political power is exercised by citizens through elected representatives, or directly through petitions, referendums or active participation. This operates within a framework of free elections, checks and balances on power, an independent judiciary and media and guaranteed civil liberties and human rights. Political parties are an essential component of democracy, because they have a vital role in aggregating opinion and giving citizens a platform for their views. They also have a local role in recruiting members, providing political education and organisational experience to individuals and running election campaigns.

Democracy in Britain

- 1.5 Britain's democracy is the product of ten centuries of change. At times the change has come rapidly, catalysed by social and economic developments, by revolution and war, or by the election of governments with a firm mandate to reform the system. At times the change has been steady and slow, often resulting from the practice of democracy itself.
- 1.6 British history is punctuated by debates about the nature of democracy and the struggles for political power to be extended to greater numbers of the population – from the Putney Debates during the English Civil War which paved the way for our civil liberties, to the Chartists' campaign in the nineteenth century to extend the vote to working people and from the demands of the Suffragettes for votes for women, to the campaigns in the 1960s and 1970s for more involvement by industrial workers, students, council house tenants and users of social services. More recently the mass campaign mobilising people in the call to 'Make Poverty History' reminds us that the way our democracy works has always been subject to pressure from below.
- 1.7 In 1948 article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights set out rights to equal access to public service, to vote in free elections and to take part in government "directly or through freely chosen representatives".¹
- 1.8 This part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognises that democracy can be exercised by electing representatives as part of a representative democratic system. It also makes clear that direct democracy can be part of a democratic system. The principle is that the will of the people is the basis for the authority of government.

¹ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 1948.*

The case for people and communities having more power

- 1.9 This White Paper views political participation and democratic control in this light – not as a privilege grudgingly bequeathed to the citizenry by those with power, but as an activity fundamental to the definition of ‘citizen’, to be claimed as a right.
- 1.10 The past ten years have been a period of political change and reform. Since 1997, the democratic system has been modernised by creating a Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly and a London Mayor and Assembly, introducing the first directly-elected mayors in England, ending the hereditary principle in the House of Lords and reforming the system of elections for the European Parliament.
- 1.11 Alongside these major reforms to our representative democratic structures, the Government, since 1997, has pioneered methods of participatory democracy. For example: the ten-year *New Deal for Communities* programme included direct elections to local boards, which set priorities and direct investment in deprived areas; the new NHS Foundation Trusts have a local membership which elects representatives; the Scottish Parliament has a petitioning system which allows citizens to propose debates; and Downing Street has encouraged on-line petitions. The Government has also used participatory methods to devise policy, for example the ambitious *Your Health, Your Care, Your Say* programme to engage people in making health policy, and recent citizens’ juries run on children’s services and immigration. The Ministry of Justice is publishing, alongside this White Paper, a discussion paper setting out a proposed framework for the greater use of engagement techniques at the national level.
- 1.12 Since 1997 there have been dramatic changes in how people use and share information. In 1997 less than 10 per cent of the population had used the Internet. In 2007 67 per cent accessed the Internet everyday.² In 1997 there was no domestic broadband but now more than half of households have broadband.

² Office of National Statistics (2007) *Internet Access 2007: Households and Individuals*. London: Office of National Statistics.

- 1.13 Public services in 1997 were in need of investment and modernisation. Over the last ten years most services have undergone two major stages of reform. The first stage used national standards and targets to drive up performance whilst increasing investment. In the second stage, top-down targets and standards were complemented with improvement driven by clearer incentives within the public services themselves, rather than imposed from Whitehall.
- 1.14 As part of the agenda for public service reform the publication of *Strong and Prosperous Communities: the Local Government White Paper* in October 2006 signalled a devolution of power from Whitehall to town halls and from local authorities to local communities in England.³ Progress has been made in increasing visibility and accountability of local councils and their scope to develop innovative local solutions.
- 1.15 The main elements of this new relationship between central and local government and between local government and people are set out in detail in statutory guidance that we are publishing alongside this White Paper.⁴ The key components are:
- **Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs):** these partnerships between local councils and other local agencies provide the forum to create a shared vision and a shared sense of priorities for a place. Third sector organisations are full and equal partners in Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)
 - **the duty to involve**, placed on a series of individual partners, will ensure that people have greater opportunities to influence decision-making and get involved
 - new **Local Area Agreements (LAAs)** set out the priorities for the local area. New LAAs are agreements between central government, local authorities and their partners, through the LSP, to improve services and the quality of life in a place. Government Offices in the regions work with local authorities and their partners to ensure targets set in LAAs are met

³ Communities and Local Government (2006) *Strong and Prosperous Communities: The Local Government White Paper*. London: Communities and Local Government.

⁴ This statutory guidance, Communities and Local Government (2008) *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities Statutory Guidance*, covers Local Strategic Partnerships, Sustainable Community Strategies, Local Area Agreements, the duty to consult, inform and involve, achieving Best Value and strategic commissioning. See www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communitiesincontrol

- **National Indicators:** the performance framework for local government includes a set of 198 National Indicators. These indicators cover all the national priority outcomes which local authorities and their partners will be responsible for delivering. Each LAA has up to 35 of these indicators agreed as priorities. Performance against all the national indicators will be assessed through the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)
- **Independent Comprehensive Area Assessments** will be reported annually for each local area and will consist of:
 - an area assessment that looks at how well local public services are delivering better outcomes for people and how likely they are to improve in the future. This will be delivered jointly by the Audit Commission and other inspectorates
 - organisational assessments of individual public bodies

1.16 We have also taken significant steps to strengthen civil society and build our capacity for voluntary action. The Third Sector Review which reported in July 2007 committed £515m in third sector programmes to support thousands of community organisations across the country to build their capacity, to become more effective, to help them transform public services and to give them, and those they work for, a greater voice.⁵ Both central and local government are committed to working with the third sector in line with the Compact – a framework for partnership working set out in 1998.⁶ The third sector has a unique ability to articulate and drive change through advocacy and action.

The need for further reform

1.17 But despite progress being made over the past decade, as we survey our political system at the end of the first decade of the new millennium, it is clear that it needs to adapt to the pressures placed upon it by the sweeping changes of globalisation, new challenges such as tackling climate change, new technology and rising expectations from citizens. While we can be proud that many of the new systems are working well and that Britain's political system remains free from the instability and the taint of corruption or systematic cheating that mars some others, we need to be honest about the ways in which our system is failing. There is unfinished business here; we need to make this new architecture work for people and move to the next stage of public sector reform, where citizens are empowered to play their part.

⁵ Cabinet Office (2007) *The Future Role of the Third Sector in Social and Economic Regeneration: Final Report*. London: Cabinet Office.

⁶ See www.thecomact.org.uk

1.18 The *Governance of Britain* Green Paper, presented to Parliament in July 2007, highlighted these challenges.⁷ It said that:

- power remains too centralised and too concentrated in government hands
- clarity is needed over what power government should and should not have
- increasing cynicism and disengagement from the political process is reflected in falling election turnouts

1.19 At the 2001 general election, turnout across the UK was just 59 per cent. It went up slightly to 61 per cent in 2005, although 17 million registered voters stayed at home. This compares to the historic high turnout in the 1950 election of 84 per cent, and turnout for all other general elections since the war of above 70 per cent.⁸

1.20 In the May 2008 council elections, turnout was just 35 per cent.⁹

1.21 Even the London Mayoral election in May 2008, with significant media attention and high-profile campaigns, attracted only 45 per cent of London's electors to the polling stations.¹⁰

1.22 There is evidence that social class is an important factor in deciding whether people vote or not.¹¹ The parliamentary constituencies and council areas with the lowest turnouts correlate closely with areas where the poorest people live.¹²

1.23 In 2005, the highest turnouts were in West Dorset, Winchester, Richmond Park in south-west London and Northavon, a seat comprising small towns and Bristol suburbs. Some of the lowest turnouts were in inner-city seats in Liverpool, Salford, Manchester and Glasgow.¹³

⁷ Ministry of Justice (2007) *The Governance of Britain*. London: Ministry of Justice.

⁸ Rallings, C. and Thrasher, M. (2000) *British Electoral Facts: 1832-1999*; The Electoral Commission (2005) *Election 2005: turnout*, London: The Electoral Commission.

⁹ See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7378788.stm. To note, these figures have not been verified.

¹⁰ See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7378788.stm. To note, these figures have not been verified.

¹¹ Hansard Society (2008) *An Audit of Political Engagement 5* London: Hansard Society.

¹² Electoral Commission (2005) *Election 2005: Turnout – How Many, Who and Why?* London: The Electoral Commission.

¹³ Ibid.

The case for people and communities having more power

- 1.24 Seventy per cent of people in social class AB (for instance managers and professionals) voted in 2005, but only 54 per cent of people classified as DE (for instance semi-and unskilled workers and manual workers).¹⁴
- 1.25 The most recent *Audit of Political Engagement* finds that less than a quarter of 18-24 year olds (23 per cent) are absolutely certain to vote, compared with almost eight in ten of the 65-74 age group (78 per cent).¹⁵
- 1.26 There is evidence that young people's rejection of mainstream politics is a habit which sticks, depressing turnouts in future elections and making it harder for political parties to recruit activists.¹⁶
- 1.27 The danger is that political parties skew their policy platforms towards the people more likely to vote (older, more affluent), instead of the people most in need of engagement and support. In effect, it might mean that the people for whom politics has the most to offer (the poorest and most disadvantaged) are the people least likely to play an active political role, or even vote.
- 1.28 But the failings of our political system run much deeper than the obvious manifestation of non-voting. There is also a growing sense that politics is a pursuit conducted by 'someone else' and that politicians are in it for what they can get out of it, not what they can contribute. The idea of public service through politics is increasingly viewed as old-fashioned and eccentric. Whereas only 40 years ago politics was seen as a respectable way of serving your community, today it is viewed, albeit unfairly, as a way of serving yourself. Commentators such as Peter Riddell in *Honest Opportunism – the rise of the career politician* have written about the rise of a stratum of professional politicians, distinct and distant from the people they are elected to serve.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Hansard Society (2008) *An Audit of Political Engagement 5* London: Hansard Society.

¹⁶ Electoral Commission (2005) *Election 2005: Turnout – How Many, Who and Why?* London: The Electoral Commission.

¹⁷ Riddell, P (1993) *Honest Opportunism: the rise of the career politician*. Hamish Hamilton.

- 1.29 In Britain, membership of political parties is at a record low. In the 1950s, over 3.5 million Britons belonged to the Labour, Conservative or Liberal Parties. Today, that figure is only half a million.¹⁸ All political parties struggle to recruit members, to encourage activism and to stand candidates in every area.
- 1.30 At a local level, evidence suggests that people feel alienated from local democracy. An opinion poll conducted for Communities and Local Government in February 2008 showed that:
- six out of ten people do not feel that they are given an adequate say in how local council services are run
 - more than nine out of ten believe that councils could be more accountable
 - nearly four out of ten people do not feel that councillors are representative of their communities
 - six out of ten people do not believe that councillors adequately reflect their views
 - only one in three people feel that they can influence decisions in their local area and even fewer young people feel that they can have an influence. But four in five people agree it is important to influence local decisions¹⁹
- 1.31 So what are the causes of political disengagement? The Government's view is that people feel they lack power.
- 1.32 Lack of basic information about how and where to vote, ignorance of the political system, alienation from mainstream parties, lack of time, and the impact of a cynical media all play a part in depressing turnout. Our current democratic structures are largely the product of the Victorian era. But we now live in a century when people access vast amounts of information instantly, create online communities across continents, develop personal relationships with their banks, insurers, and retailers and expect and demand high standards from the people supplying them with services. Our democratic structures have not kept pace with this progress.

¹⁸ Page, B. (2005) *The Future of Political Parties* Prospect Magazine, September 2005.

¹⁹ see www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/xls/712801.xls

- 1.33 We believe that the causes of political disengagement, while complex, can be distilled to a dominant factor: a sense of powerlessness on the part of most citizens that their voices are not being heard, their views not listened to, their participation unwelcomed or their activity unrewarded. People want to know that if they expend their valuable time and effort, there will be tangible, practical and positive results.
- 1.34 Yet people are not naturally apathetic. Sixty-nine per cent of respondents to the 2007 *Audit of Political Engagement* said they wanted a say in how the country is run.²⁰ Likewise, research undertaken for the Lyons Inquiry found that 73 per cent of respondents felt that people should be able to influence how their council tax is spent, with nearly half wanting to be personally involved.²¹ People want to be involved and have their say, but the structure and culture of politics alienates and deters them.
- 1.35 The answer lies in **empowerment**: passing more and more political power to more and more people, using every practical means available, from the most modern social networking websites, to the most ancient methods of petitioning, public debates and citizens' juries. In this way, democracy becomes, not a system of occasional voting or an imperfect method of selecting who governs us, but something that infuses our way of life.

Influence, power and well-being

- 1.36 There is a body of evidence that the familiar, often mundane everyday meetings between neighbours in the street or at the school gate, are very important in generating well-being.²² Strong social networks, good community spirit and a local sense of belonging and place, are foundations for confident and healthy communities.²³

²⁰ Hansard Society/Electoral Commission (2007) *An Audit of Political Engagement 4*, London: Hansard Society.

²¹ BMG Research (2007) *Lyons Inquiry Survey*. Norwich: HMSO.

²² Robertson, D, Smyth, J, and McIntosh, I (2008) *Neighbourhood identity, people, time and place*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

²³ Hothi, M (2008) *Neighbourliness + Empowerment = Wellbeing*. The Young Foundation.

- 1.37 UK evidence shows that those who participate in community activities have been shown to gain from a sense of achievement, increased confidence, and enhanced skills and self-esteem.²⁴
- 1.38 When a citizen feels that they can have an influence over local decisions and that their voice will be heard and respected, this can improve their general sense of well-being and even levels of happiness. While social and economic factors play a central role in determining whether someone feels happy or not, research from Switzerland (which has a well-developed system of direct democracy) shows that citizens are happier when there are greater levels of local democracy.²⁵ Two reasons are given for this: first, that participatory democracy leads to better decision-making, so that people feel the Government's actions more closely match the people's wishes; and second, because people value being directly involved in democracy.

Further benefits

- 1.39 As well as the feelings of satisfaction, fulfilment and personal growth that active citizenship brings, community empowerment can also have wider benefits for society. It can:
- support more cohesive and integrated communities. As individuals engage with their neighbours, with community groups and local decision makers on how to tackle shared concerns, there is more interaction between people of different backgrounds and more emphasis on shared goals. Greater openness about decision making and greater involvement in those decisions can remove perceptions of injustice that can fuel extremism
 - help revive civic society and local democracy as more people become directly involved in the things that affect them – whether it is their local

²⁴ Popay, J, Attree, P, Hornby, D, Milton, B, Whitehead, M, French, B, Kowarzik, U, Simpson, N and Povall, S (2007) *Community Engagement in Initiatives Addressing the Wider Social Determinants of Health: A Rapid Review of Evidence on Impact, Experience and Process*, London: Department of Health. SQW (2008) *Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders: Final Evaluation Report*, London: Communities and Local Government.

Barnes, M. and Bennet, G. (1997) *Frail Bodies, Courageous Voices: Older People Influencing Community Care*, Health and Social Care in the Community, Vol.6(2), pp.102-111.

²⁵ Frey, B and Stutzer, A (2000) *Happiness, Economy and Institutions*, The Economic Journal, Vol.110, No.446, pp.918-938.

neighbourhoods, schools, things to do for young people, or practical steps in tackling big problems like climate change

- create mechanisms of citizen participation (for example systems of accountability, redress and compensation) which help drive forward continuous improvements in the quality and efficiency of public services such as the NHS, police, criminal justice system and local council services, and engage people in delivering successful outcomes
- it can build a strong civil society where committed individuals, community groups, voluntary organisations and social enterprises seek solutions to some of the difficult problems facing contemporary society, strengthening public debate and building support for change

1.40 A more detailed review of the benefits of empowerment is in the Evidence Annex of this document.²⁶

The importance of councils

1.41 The Government has demonstrated its commitment to local authorities by increasing the financial resources available to councils (a 45 per cent increase in real terms in England by 2011) and by cutting the number of centrally-imposed performance indicators from 1200 to 198, giving councillors greater freedom to establish their own local priorities in line with the wishes of their residents.²⁷

1.42 The Government and the Local Government Association (LGA) have also signed the *Central-Local Concordat* (see annex) which enshrines the principle of devolution at the heart of the Government's relationship with local councils in England.

1.43 The standard of services that councils deliver has been improving in recent years. Local authority performance, as measured by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) conducted by the Audit Commission, has improved. In 2002 there were 34 local authorities in the bottom two categories, by 2007 there were only two, with none in the bottom category.²⁸

²⁶ see www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities

²⁷ For more information see *Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities* (HMG, July 2008 (footnote 4)).

²⁸ www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Products/NATIONAL-REPORT/8906AF89-014B-4462-9094-5DE69A5D5C8F/CPATheHarderTest.pdf

1.44 But local democracy does not stop at the door of the council. We want to see devolution of power extending beyond the town hall and to the doorstep of every citizen. As central government devolves power to councils, so councils should devolve to citizens.

A new duty to promote democracy

1.45 As a first step to recognising the principle that political activity is valuable, **we will place a duty to promote democracy on local authorities**. This builds on the work carried out by the Councillors Commission²⁹ and complements the 'duty to involve' that we introduced in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

1.46 This means that local authorities should no longer be seen as just units of local administration, but as vibrant hubs of local democracy, with a statutory duty to promote democratic understanding and participation. We will empower local councils to present themselves as democratic centres, with a new culture which sees democratic politics as respected, recognised and valued.

1.47 Drawing on the best examples which already exist in councils, we will encourage local authorities to take a range of actions that, together, will achieve this. These could include:

- **better information:** council publications and websites should provide clear information about political control, council meetings, councillors' surgeries and how to contact both councillors and local political parties
- **a two-way process:** using local radio, blogs, podcasts and interactive websites to improve dialogue between councillors and local people
- **empowering young people** with a more positive experience of voting through young mayors, the UK Youth Parliament, mock elections and school councils
- **getting people involved:** explaining to all communities how to be a councillor or take up other civic roles – including school governorships or health board membership – through websites and newsletters

²⁹ Communities and Local Government (2007), *Representing the Future: The Report of the Councillors Commission*, London: Communities and Local Government.

The case for people and communities having more power

- **practical support for councillors**, including allowing councillors to hold surgeries on council premises, and allowing all political parties to hire council premises for meetings and events
- **training front-line staff** so that they can answer simple questions from the public about the local democratic system. People like call centre staff, council tax, housing and planning officers should know which political party controls the council, the date of the next elections, how to register and where to vote
- **promoting democracy**: councils could involve staff or former councillors in promoting local democracy through programmes such as 'Civic Champions' or 'Democracy Advocates'. This could include:
 - ex-councillors becoming mentors for serving councillors
 - councillors working with local schools, including initiating visits to explain their role and to support active citizenship education
 - making a positive presentation to local volunteer groups or boards about governance roles and how to apply
 - promoting the role of the council and councillor to community and voluntary groups
 - developing links with town and parish councils and supporting democracy activities
- **targeting**: co-ordinated targeting of groups not well represented among councillors (women, young people, people of working age, people from black and minority ethnic communities) to explain the role, time commitment and support available to help them take up civic roles
- **third sector**: working with third sector organisations to ensure that active citizens in community and voluntary groups know about the opportunities to take up civic roles
- **liaising with local employers** to encourage support for staff members who have taken on a civic governance role

1.48 We shall also encourage local authorities to do more to encourage voting³⁰ through:

- positive campaigns to encourage voter registration and voting, especially with young people
- schemes which recognise people who have turned out on polling day, for example every voter getting an 'I've Voted' sticker at the ballot box

³⁰ We will encourage local authorities to build on the work they are doing to meet section 69 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

Southwark Active Citizens Hub

Southwark Volunteer Centre is a charity that aims to enhance the community in Southwark through promoting, supporting and developing volunteering and active citizenship. It has been established for 12 years, and has 18 members of staff. In 2006 they enabled 6,500 people to get involved. Since 2005, it has been commissioned by Southwark Council to develop and operate an Active Citizens Hub, with other public sector partners in the borough.

It provides a range of activities including:

- free training on topics such as media skills, becoming a magistrate, effective networking, 'how Southwark works' and developing a project
- producing 'How to' guides explaining the process for getting involved in a formal civic role such as councillor, magistrate, school governor and so on
- producing guides explaining how to get involved in other ways such as starting a campaign or influencing a planning proposal
- raising the profile of active citizens and volunteering through exhibition stalls, conferences and other events
- organising a Southwark Stars event to celebrate people active in their communities through awards such as Active Citizen of the Year
- supporting resident members on the Local Strategic Partnership
- supporting community-of-interest forums, in partnership with the council



Extending the 'Duty to Involve'

1.49 We will **extend the 'duty to involve' to additional agencies and bodies across England**. The 'duty to involve', which comes into effect in April 2009, currently applies mainly to local authorities. It requires named bodies to take appropriate steps to involve people in decisions, policies and services that may affect them or be of interest to them.

1.50 Below are the additional organisations to be covered by the duty to involve:

- the Arts Council
- Chief Officer of Police and Police Authorities
- English Heritage
- The Environment Agency
- The Health & Safety Executive
- The Homes and Communities Agency³¹
- JobCentre Plus
- Probation Trusts and other providers of probation services
- The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
- Natural England
- Regional Development Agencies
- Sport England
- Youth Offending Teams

1.51 NHS bodies are under a comparable duty to involve. Statutory guidance to accompany these provisions will be issued shortly.³²

³¹ The establishment of the Homes and Communities Agency is subject to Parliamentary approval. The Agency will be created by the Housing and Regeneration Bill which has not, at the time of publication, received Royal Assent.

³² NHS Trusts, NHS Foundation Trusts and Primary Care Trusts. For details see section 242 of the National Health Service Act 2006, amended by section 233 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

- 1.52 This represents a major increase in citizen power across organisations with a huge influence on peoples' lives.
- 1.53 We also want to make sure that people are not bombarded with a range of consultation requests. We think that public bodies should, where appropriate, join up with other organisations to engage people. We will work with local bodies under the 'duty to involve' to identify ways to **streamline consultation and engagement**. Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) have an important role here.

Empowering the workforce

- 1.54 Everyone working for the public sector plays a role in empowering citizens and communities. We will **create a new Empowering the Frontline Taskforce**, that will include a wide range of stakeholders from across local government, public services, staff groups, trade unions, third sector organisations and service users themselves. The taskforce will look at the role of the public service workforce in empowering users and residents and how the frontline can respond to a more empowered public. It will consider, in particular, the relationships between local public services and the most vulnerable groups in society. We will announce more detail this autumn, and would expect the taskforce to run until autumn 2010.

The Empowerment Fund

- 1.55 Many thousands of **third sector** organisations already contribute to the aims of this White Paper in a way that no one else can. While it is not our role to support them all, alongside this White Paper we are consulting on a draft prospectus for an 'Empowerment Fund', of at least £7.5m, to be launched later this year. This fund, which replaces the proposed Strategic Partners Programme, will provide support for existing national third sector organisations operating across England which are helping local communities turn key proposals into practical action on the ground in areas such as community leadership, involvement in planning and social enterprise.

Scope and consultation

- 1.56 On 5 March 2008 Communities Secretary Hazel Blears announced her plans to develop this White Paper. In developing the document we spoke to a wide range

of stakeholders who fed their comments and suggestions into policy development. For further details of which stakeholders were involved and the process through which they were involved – see the annex to this document.

- 1.57 The policies in this White Paper largely cover England only. Where proposals cover the United Kingdom, this is explicitly stated. We will engage with all devolved administrations on implementation, issue by issue.

Seven questions on the road to a citizens' democracy

- 1.58 Some people have described the opportunities for community engagement as a 'ladder' or a 'spectrum', from individual acts of good neighbourliness through to taking on formal civic responsibility.³³ While we value those that do go on to greater levels of involvement, we also know that different people want to get involved in community activity and local democracy in different ways and at different stages of life. We recognise and encourage all types of community activity however great or small.
- 1.59 We want a system which gives people a voice, an opportunity to act and, if they want to seize it, real power to make a difference. This White Paper seeks to give answers to seven questions that a citizen might reasonably ask:

ACTIVE CITIZENS AND THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING

How can I be an active citizen and volunteer?

(see Chapter 2)

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

How can I find out information in a way I understand and can use?

(see Chapter 3)

HAVING AN INFLUENCE

How do I have my say and influence the decisions being made on my behalf, both by elected and appointed people?

(see Chapter 4)

³³ Arnstein, S. (1969) *A Ladder of Citizen Participation*, Journal of the American Institute of Planners, Vol. 35, No 4, pp. 216-224

CHALLENGE

How do I hold to account the people who exercise power in my locality?

(see Chapter 5)

REDRESS

How do I get swift and fair redress when things go wrong and make sure it doesn't happen to someone else?

(see Chapter 6)

STANDING FOR OFFICE

How do I stand for office and what support should I get?

(see Chapter 7)

OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL

How can my friends, neighbours and I own and run local services ourselves?

(see Chapter 8)

What difference can I make? ... to climate change

Many believe that climate change is the single most important challenge that we face today. And since around 40 per cent of emissions are a result of the choices each of us make every day, taking action together will make a real difference. So what can you do?

How can I get more active?

- I can work with neighbours to share tips on energy saving
- I can get involved with my local town or parish council in carrying out small scale sustainable energy projects
- I can join the Green Streets competition that will be launched later this year by the Energy Saving Trust
- I can campaign through local and national groups on climate change issues

How can I access information?

- I can find out my Carbon Footprint using the online Act on CO2 Carbon Calculator at www.actonco2.direct.gov.uk or call the Act on CO2 helpline on 0800 512 012
- I can find out how much carbon a product uses to help me make low carbon shopping decisions by looking out for the new carbon labels developed by Government through the Carbon Trust
- I can find out whether my council has signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change and is taking action to reduce climate change by calling my local council or checking online³⁴
- I can ask my employer whether they are reporting Carbon Emissions to the Carbon Disclosure Project³⁵

How can I have an influence?

- I can get involved in setting priorities in my area. I can ask my councillor to set something up or prompt a petition to ensure there's a proper debate on climate change
- I can get involved in participatory budgeting schemes where they exist – or petition for one if they don't – to give me the chance to shape how money is spent locally, for example on community composting or car sharing schemes

How can I run something myself?

- I can set up a social enterprise to address climate change locally. For example, I could take on an underused council building and convert it into an eco-friendly community centre, or set up a specialist recycling firm or a local food cooperative or I could help reduce fuel bills through a community owned windfarm.

³⁴ www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/housingbuildings/localauthorities/NottinghamDeclaration

³⁵ www.cdproject.net



Chapter 2

Active citizens and the value of volunteering

The people who drive the effort to make the good society are willing citizens. These people choose to be part of a local and global community where people show concern for one another. People choose to be willing citizens not because they are forced from without, but because they are compelled from within.

Willing citizens and the making of the good society, Community Links, UK, January 2008

Chapter 2

Active citizens and the value of volunteering

How can I be an active citizen and volunteer?

- 2.1 Active and enterprising individuals can play a crucial role in stimulating community activity. Many people lead very busy lives, balancing the demands of work, family and friends, but simple acts of good neighbourliness performed in our daily lives make a big difference. Our everyday contacts with each other shape both our sense of community as well as providing concrete benefits – from borrowing to babysitting to keeping an eye on each others' property to looking in on elderly neighbours. Knowing that we have good neighbours can help us feel not just that we live in an area, but that it is home.
- 2.2 There are also many inspiring individuals and community groups who have taken collective action to bring about change, for example, by fundraising through church and school fetes or by starting a community enterprise. Others have fought for issues of concern to their local community by campaigning, turning around demoralised estates and helping to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 2.3 Britain has a strong tradition of voluntary and community activity. A myriad of voluntary organisations enrich British society: the Red Cross, Oxfam, Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS), Women's Institute, Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), National Trust, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA). There are thousands of other groups such as trade unions, chambers of commerce, faith groups and political parties.
- 2.4 However, those who want to act for change can face numerous obstacles. This is particularly the case in areas of multiple disadvantage where lack of work, money, mobility or education can all inhibit people from being more active in their communities.
- 2.5 Those who want to engage in community activity can sometimes lack meeting places, appropriate funding or practical help from others who know the ropes. A lack of local community groups in a neighbourhood will make it difficult for

people to get started. Yet, such disadvantages and obstacles make community activity all the more necessary.

- 2.6 We want to make it easier to be involved in voluntary and community activity. This chapter sets out some ways in which government can and will encourage this.

Family crisis led Dorothy to her Good Neighbours

Dorothy Page found the Shotley and Erwarton Good Neighbour Scheme in Suffolk to be invaluable when one of her sons was rushed to hospital with a life-threatening illness. 82 year-old Dorothy, living alone in an isolated rural area then had two new problems.

She had to look after her son's two boisterous collie dogs and try to visit her son regularly at Ipswich hospital. A round trip by taxi cost £25.

Dorothy turned to a local Good Neighbours Scheme and was soon able to visit her son, paying volunteer drivers just £10 a trip for petrol. A rota of volunteers took turns to take the dogs for a walk each day.

"I just don't know what I would have done without the Good Neighbour Scheme," said Dorothy. "They are all nice people, every one of them that's come to help me. They came to walk the dogs come rain or hail, and they always took them for an hour whatever the weather."



Scheme chairman Tony Roberts cleaned her windows and volunteer Ron Parr got a broken bed welded by his son.

www.suffolkacre.org.uk

Volunteering

- 2.7 **Volunteering** can be defined as *'any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives, or benefit the environment'*.³⁶
- 2.8 The Government places huge value on **volunteering**. In July 2007, the Prime Minister created the Council for Social Action, to support the efforts of all those striving for a change in our society. The Government also established the **v** charity in May 2006 to encourage young volunteers, with £75m to design and commission a new programme called **v**involved, to engage 500,000 more young volunteers in England over the next three years.
- 2.9 And in June 2007 the Government appointed Baroness Julia Neuberger to the role of Government Champion for Volunteering. She said in a report in March 2008, *"Volunteering can create a virtuous circle, improving levels of well being for volunteers, professional colleagues and most importantly the people that use the services"*.³⁷ Baroness Neuberger has announced that her next report, due in autumn 2008, will be on volunteering across the Criminal Justice System.
- 2.10 In December 2007, Baroness Sally Morgan led an independent cross-party panel which supported The Scout Association to undertake an inquiry into young adult volunteering in the UK. She recognised, in her report in June 2008, that volunteering is an excellent way for young adults to develop transferable skills and recommended there was greater flexibility by government, business and academia to unlock this potential and support volunteering as a route into work.³⁸
- 2.11 Today nearly three-quarters of people are active in a range of voluntary activities, from raising money, to serving on committees, to visiting vulnerable people, to campaigning for change.³⁹ In the UK, the over-60s contribute no fewer than 18 million hours per week, or approximately 800 million hours per year in unpaid work. Their work is worth over £5bn each year.⁴⁰

³⁶ Commission on the Future of Volunteering www.volcomm.org.uk

³⁷ Neuberger, J (2008) *Volunteering in the Public Services: health and social care* London: Cabinet Office.

³⁸ The Morgan Inquiry www.morganinquiry.org.uk

³⁹ Communities and Local Government (2008) *Citizenship Survey: April-December 2007, England and Wales*, London: Communities and Local Government

⁴⁰ Harper, S. (2007) *The Future of Retirement*, HSBC.

2.12 Volunteering can also be a means for people from different ages and backgrounds to come together. Different generations are becoming disconnected from each other, with changing family patterns and living arrangements. These issues will be the main theme of this year's *UK Older People's Day* on 1 October 2008. The Department for Children, Schools and Families' *Time to Talk* consultation found that young and old people wanted to get together more. Ministers across Government have been considering how the Government can support more intergenerational activity to take place and will report to the Prime Minister in summer 2008.

Volunteering, learning and work

2.13 Voluntary activity can play an important role in helping people who are not working to keep in touch with the labour market and to obtain skills and experience that may help them into work.

2.14 The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations (ACEVO) have launched a taskforce to explore the role of the third sector in welfare-to-work reform.

2.15 DWP are also working closely with the Create Consortium to look at allowing community organisations to pay people to do work that strengthens their communities without it affecting their benefits. The Create Consortium, DWP and Communities and Local Government are aiming to pilot this '**Community Allowance**'. DWP are also reviewing training and operational guidance for their staff in JobCentres to ensure that people are able to take up volunteering opportunities.

2.16 The Government wants everyone to be able to volunteer. Volunteering For All is a three-year £3m campaign to raise awareness of volunteering opportunities and help people become volunteers. It has helped disabled people, those with no qualifications and people from different ethnic communities access quality volunteering opportunities. Another scheme called *Goldstar* provides £5m to train and support organisations in involving people from these groups as volunteers.

2.17 The Government, through the Office of the Third Sector (OTS), will **invest a further £2m to create opportunities for people with disabilities to become volunteers and volunteer managers.**

Mentoring and befriending

- 2.18 Mentoring and befriending are popular forms of volunteering. These include 'peer to peer' school buddying schemes, specialist programmes connecting people at times of crisis or transition and online mentoring such as the *Horses Mouth* website capturing the power of lots of ideas from different people for a social purpose. Strong and supportive individual relationships are at the centre of every successful community. Sustaining and developing 'one to one' work is important.
- 2.19 There are many effective mentoring and befriending schemes in the UK, often small scale and local. We are working closely with the Council on Social Action and the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation on ways of extending and replicating this work and **developing a strategy for extending one to one engagement through the delivery of local services.**

Mentoring Young Black Men: the REACH Programme

The REACH programme emerged from an independent report on young black men and boys and the discrepancies between their achievement levels and those of their white counterparts.

Recommendations to government include improving the visibility of black male role models at a national level, creating better links between schools and families, improving reporting of race equality in schools, and looking at how government can support voluntary and community organisations to share expertise. Communities and Local Government is supporting this programme of work.

Communities and Local Government will help the community to recruit at least 20 black male role models as part of a role modelling project. The involvement of young black men will be key in selecting candidates. The work is designed to build a group of national figures, who have been successful in their field and who are able to demonstrate achievement and inspire and motivate young black men.

Clive Lewis, REACH panel member said: "I believe the REACH role modelling programme offers the opportunity to significantly enhance the communities' offer to young black boys and men. Research also shows that the opportunity cost of failing to raise aspirations and attainment in this group amounts to some £24bn over the next 50 years".

Citizenship learning

- 2.20 Another key barrier to people becoming active citizens is their perceived lack of confidence and skills.⁴¹ Citizenship learning in schools is vital to help young people develop the skills they will need to participate in their communities both as young people and in future life.
- 2.21 As part of the new curriculum being taught in secondary schools from September, the citizenship curriculum will continue to include participation in different kinds of decision making and voting and the roles of citizens and Parliament in holding those in power to account. It will also promote taking social action. For primary schools, Sir Jim Rose, former Deputy Chief Inspector of Schools, is chairing an independent review which will be looking at the position of **citizenship education** as part of the wider review of the whole curriculum. An interim report is due in October 2008 and the full report in March 2009.
- 2.22 Citizenship learning is also important for adults. Some people want to know more about how local services are managed and local democracy operates. Some people need support and encouragement to have the confidence to speak up and get involved. We will support a **Take Part local pathfinder programme**, offering information and training on how to be an active citizen. It will build on the existing Take Part network.

Community leadership

- 2.23 For communities to feel empowered they need leaders they trust who understand them and reflect their makeup. But in many places people from certain communities feel they lack pathways into power. That is why it is important to help young people from diverse backgrounds to become effective leaders whether in the public, private or the third sector. Important work has been done by organisations including the Princes Trust and Windsor Fellowship and there are innovative new programmes such as the Young Foundation's Uprising Leadership programme. This is supporting and training a new generation of 19-25 year olds to play a greater role in politics and public decision-making and to take up positions of power. We will **encourage and support innovative community leadership programmes**, including providing funding through the new Empowerment Fund.

⁴¹ See page 48 of Dalziel, D, Hewitt, E, and Evans, L,(2007) *Motivations and Barriers to Citizen Governance*, London: Communities and Local Government.

Miriam gains the confidence to speak up as a carer

Miriam had been feeling very isolated as she cared for her 16-year-old severely autistic son.

After a Speaking Up course in Devon she now delivers regular talks on autism and disability awareness to local organisations, including the Devon and Cornwall Police.

“I have been tremendously encouraged by the interest that my talks generate,” she said. “I owe a lot to the Speaking Up course. Without it, I certainly wouldn’t have had the confidence to become a trainer.”



Currently around 40 people are training social services staff to respond better to carers’ needs, others are training social workers at the University of Plymouth, or are part of local health and social care forums and initiatives.

The courses are organised by Take Part in the South West, a partnership led by Exeter Council for Voluntary Service, which uses the courses to encourage users of health and social care services and carers to say what they feel about the services provided for them.

www.exetercvs.org.uk

Community development

2.24 Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people by providing them with the skills they need to effect change in their own communities. We support the role of community development workers as a catalyst for active citizenship. However there are too few specialist community development workers to carry out this work on the scale needed. We are therefore keen to support local authorities and Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) who want to prioritise community development, by enabling other front-line workers to do more community building. Increasingly, working with communities

will be part of the day job for many service providers who recognise that services and outcomes – ranging from recycling to education, from street maintenance to social care – can be better when residents share aims and are actively involved.

2.25 We will:

- work with the Community Development Foundation and other community development networks, to build on the Community Development Challenge report from 2006 to ensure that practical guidance is available on community development⁴²
- work with the Academy for Sustainable Communities to ensure appropriate training in community development and community empowerment skills is available to relevant public sector officials, including planning officers, regeneration practitioners, housing managers and a wider range of service providers

Investing in community organisations

2.26 Community-based organisations are the key to solving some of the most difficult and complex neighbourhood issues. But they often require greater financial stability. Neighbourhood organisations can provide a base from which people and grassroots groups can get involved in driving positive social change through a range of activities, services, support and facilities. Yet, for many of these organisations it is a struggle to survive.

2.27 We want to support these community-led organisations. **We will establish a £70m Communitybuilders fund**, delivered by a national partner, incorporating £11m from the Office of the Third Sector. We will be inviting expressions of interest to administer the fund as soon as possible.

2.28 The fund will be invested to enable community organisations to make a step change in their activities. We want to ensure there are suitable, accessible community facilities where people can meet to run their activities. We want neighbourhoods to have spaces where people can come together to discuss their local concerns and channel them effectively and constructively into local decision-

⁴² Communities and Local Government (2006) *The Community Development Challenge*. London: Communities and Local Government.

making. We want organisations to have the ability to bid for and run local services – tailored to the needs of their own particular neighbourhood or community. And we want community organisations to be run as economically-viable social enterprises without being perpetually dependent on grant funding.

Grassroots Grants

- 2.29 Government also recognises that a huge range of small voluntary and community groups and organisations (grassroots groups) play a vital role in strengthening communities. The Third Sector Review celebrated this and highlighted the positive impact that small grant funding streams can have on the community sector.⁴³
- 2.30 Discussions in 2007 with small groups, community and voluntary sector organisations, community foundations and national third sector organisations all highlighted the need for immediate small grants funding for grassroots groups and the need to address the sustainability and independence of funding. The Government has recognised that small grants programmes are essential to support active community organisations including marginalised and excluded groups.
- 2.31 The Office of the Third Sector has developed the **Grassroots Grants programme**. The programme provides small grants to grassroots groups that have volunteer time as their main resource and aims to:
- increase immediate grant funding and capacity building support to small voluntary and community groups and organisations (grassroots groups) throughout England
 - increase the long term funding available to grassroots groups from community-owned endowments raised from local donors
 - improve the sustainability and quality of local grant making by strengthening independent funders throughout England
- 2.32 **Small grants will be dispersed from an £80m fund from 2008 to 2011.** Grassroots Grants also aims to invest in the longer-term sustainability of the sector through an additional £50m endowment fund. This is a ‘match challenge’ endowment: those receiving the endowment will be expected to raise further

⁴³ Cabinet Office and HM Treasury (2007) *The Future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration: Final report* Norwich: TSO.

investment from private donations to match the Government funding. The endowment match challenge element of Grassroots Grants is expected to draw in funding from private individuals and organisations, encouraging and reinforcing a culture of giving in response to local needs.

The role of faith-based groups

- 2.33 Among the voluntary organisations we want to help in different ways to build stronger communities, there is a particular role for faith based groups. Britain has a strong tradition of faith-based organisations working to improve local communities. This reflects the importance placed on charitable acts, social action and civic duty in all religions practised in the UK. There are over 23,000 religious charities in the UK and many more faith-based organisations, involving tens of thousands of people motivated by their faith, working at a local and national level to provide support and services to communities. At times there has been reluctance on the part of local authorities and agencies to commission services from faith-based groups, in part because of some confusion about the propriety of doing so. Building on the Faithworks Charter, we intend to work with faith communities to clarify the issues and to **remove the barriers to commissioning services from faith-based groups**.
- 2.34 The Office of the Third Sector will be carrying out a **new national survey of third sector organisations** – including faith-based charities – later this year to better understand the issues which influence the well-being of the sector.

Inter-faith strategy

- 2.35 We will shortly publish our strategy for increasing dialogue and collaborative social action between people with different religions and beliefs and those with none. Our aim is to foster an understanding of what we all have in common and create more opportunities for people to work together to bring about a real and positive change within their local community. To boost local activity, we will be announcing a multi-million pound programme of investment and support alongside the strategy.

Climate change and environment

- 2.36 Climate change is a key challenge of our times and a complex problem requiring action by numerous parties including central and local government, the third sector, the private sector, communities and individuals. Active citizenship is crucial

to meet the demanding, but essential, goals of reducing carbon emissions as well as adapting effectively to its consequences.

- 2.37 There are already outstanding examples of citizen engagement in tackling climate change. For example, the village of Ashton-Hayes, in Cheshire, has set itself an ambitious target to become carbon neutral and has already achieved substantial reductions in emissions by acting as a community, coordinated by the parish council.
- 2.38 The Government is keen to support community effort in tackling climate change, and has a number of initiatives underway. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs plans to develop a number of 'tools' aimed at both helping individuals and communities understand how they can tackle climate change. They have also launched a £10m Green Neighbourhoods scheme which will demonstrate how communities can take action to live low-carbon lifestyles in 100 pioneering neighbourhoods. A number of existing schemes run by the Energy Savings Trust (EST), particularly the Community Action for Energy Scheme, offer support and training for community activists. The EST's Advice Network provides information on grants. Businesses are also important players in tackling climate change and the Carbon Trust supports them through a range of initiatives aimed at reductions in their energy use and carbon emissions.
- 2.39 Environmental action is an aspect of voluntary activity that has grown rapidly in recent years. In some situations this has involved public campaigns, in others it has involved responding to emergencies such as floods. But, for many people it is simple actions such as recycling, helping clean up a local park or participating in 'walking bus' schemes that have made a difference in their communities. Volunteers and local community groups also play a vital role in helping support, protect and enhance our local greenspaces and local wildlife. For example, Friends of Eaton Park in Norwich, look after and improve the environment of the park and help make it accessible to everyone. Their programme of events includes health walks, talks and conservation days.⁴⁴

Community events

- 2.40 Locally-focused events provide a great opportunity for people from different backgrounds and generations to come together and encourage people to get involved in local activities. They can develop a sense of belonging to an area.

⁴⁴ see www.friendsofeatonpark.co.uk/about_us.html

They can also increase knowledge about how to influence local decisions. These could be open-days for local community groups, and showcases for schemes such as participatory budgeting or locally-owned and run assets. The events might include litter picks, painting community centres, street parties or fairs in local parks or public celebrations of faith festivals to which all are invited. Many local authorities already encourage or organise these.

Lozells Community Clean Up

Lozells is an inner city area of Birmingham blighted for many years by litter, fly-tipping, graffiti and fly posting. Fed up with filthy public spaces, a gathering of Black Majority Churches joined St Paul and St Silas Church who ran the Lozells Community Clean Up to improve the local environment.

The churches invited representatives from Birmingham City Council, Groundwork, Lozells and Birchfield Trading Associations and other community organisations to joint meetings to plan and deliver the event. Other faith communities were also involved.

The churches contributed by informing the community, providing a central meeting place, recruiting volunteers and preparing refreshments whilst the other participants contributed in other ways. B&Q provided paint and graffiti removal equipment, McDonalds contributed to the refreshments and financial contributions were made by local businesses.

On the day of the Clean Up, the volunteers carried out the planned work for each site over a period of 90 minutes or so, staying in contact via walkie talkie.

The event was a great success with over 70 people taking part in the Clean Up. Jeremy Shields from Birmingham City Council said of the day:

“An excellent day; a lot was achieved. Having established some momentum, I think we should work out a medium-term strategy to see how we can capitalise on the effort that went in. It really was extremely good.”

St Pauls and St Silas continue to run the Lozells Community Clean Up, setting all sections of the community to work together to improve the appearance of their community.

We are considering ways to support local communities in developing such events. There is already *The Citizens' Day Framework* published by the Citizenship Foundation.⁴⁵ We are exploring, with partners, the development of the inaugural annual global social forum, *Chain Reaction*, being organised by Community Links this autumn, enabling activists across the world to connect, collaborate and commit to social action. We are also in conversation with a wide range of public, private and voluntary sector partners about a national summer event to promote social action which will be launched in early 2009.

Lewisham People's Day

Lewisham People's Day is now in its 24th year. In that time it has grown from a small scale council event to a community festival involving all of the Lewisham Local Strategic Partnership partners, with 10 stages, 1,750 participants and 30,000 visitors.



The programme involves local and international performers who are representatives of Lewisham's diverse communities. In 2008 they are working with the Arts Council and Audiences London on the Taking Part project to encourage new audiences including older people, people with learning disabilities,

lone parents and refugees. They have commissioned the English Folk Dance and Song Society to work with a local primary school to devise a performance piece for the event blending the traditional music and dance of English, Irish and Congolese cultures.

Local people will have an opportunity to engage on issues affecting them as Lewisham Local Assemblies Team will be at the event collecting views and opinions on various local issues. Pressure groups and political parties are also represented at the event.

www.lewisham.gov.uk/newsandevents/events/peoplesday

⁴⁵ See www.citizenshipfoundation.org.uk/main/resource.php?s367



Chapter 3

Access to information

But Mr Dent, the plans have been available in the local planning office for the last nine months."

"Oh yes, well as soon as I heard I went straight round to see them, yesterday afternoon. You hadn't exactly gone out of your way to call attention to them, had you? I mean, like actually telling anybody or anything."

"But the plans were on display ..."

"On display? I eventually had to go down to the cellar to find them."

"That's the display department."

"With a flashlight."

"Ah, well the lights had probably gone."

"So had the stairs."

"But look, you found the notice didn't you?"

"Yes," said Arthur, "yes I did. It was on display in the bottom of a locked filing cabinet stuck in a disused lavatory with a sign on the door saying 'Beware of the Leopard'".

From The Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams

Chapter 3

Access to information

How can I find out information in a way I understand and can use?

- 3.1 The quote from *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* illustrates what it must have felt like when trying to get information 20 or 30 years ago. Since then much has been achieved and one of the main issues is how to bring all public authorities up to the standard of the best. This chapter looks at how people can obtain understandable local information and share information of their own. The Government is committed to making timely and relevant information about public services and critical issues more available to everyone.

Information is power

- 3.2 One of the main reasons people can feel powerless is a lack of information, in formats and places which are readily accessible and easily understood.
- 3.3 Across the public services, professionals and experts have sometimes used jargon, acronyms and technical language which alienate, confuse and frustrate citizens in their pursuit of simple answers or basic information. All professions use jargon as a short-hand: as a way of transmitting complex information among their peer group, based on the knowledge that their peers will understand what they mean. In the NHS and social services, this can be a life-saving process. But technical language can become a means of excluding the ordinary citizen. Most local authorities have sought to remedy this, through initiatives such as plain English campaigns and advocacy programmes.
- 3.4 Through the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Government ensured that citizens in England and Wales have a general right, with limited exemptions, to the information held by public authorities, including local councils, the police, the NHS, schools, hospitals, universities and government agencies. We did this to recognise that unless a citizen has full access to the information he or she needs, then full citizenship cannot be achieved.

- 3.5 Access to information is a pre-requisite to community empowerment.
- 3.6 People want access to relevant information about the services and facilities which they use regularly – information which is understandable at the level of their neighbourhood or local area.⁴⁶ They also want to use information to get involved in local decisions.⁴⁷ When they can get such information, they often feel better about the quality of services. Yet in 2006–07, barely half of local authority residents felt that their council kept them very or fairly well informed about the services and benefits it provided – a decline of nine percentage points since 2003–04.⁴⁸ For vulnerable people the role of accessible support and advice in making choices related to services they need is crucial.
- 3.7 People want information so that they can understand:
- what services and facilities are available in their local area
 - how they can get more involved in their local area
 - how their local services compare with those in other areas
 - how a complaint they have made is being addressed

⁴⁶ Darlow, A, Hawtin, M and Jassi, S (2008) *Reporting Performance Information to Citizens*, London: Communities and Local Government.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Communities and Local Government (2007) *Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys 2006-07 – General Survey National Report*, London: Communities and Local Government.

Redbridge's customer friendly website

The 'Redbridge i' website (www.redbridge.gov.uk) has effectively rewritten the rules for council website design and adopted innovations from the private sector – Google, Amazon, eBay, Facebook – to deliver highly personalised, customer-driven 'Web 2.0' services.

Using Google mapping, registered users of the site are shown their own house in the middle of the screen, marked with a blue 3-D house icon. Layers of information can be easily added to and removed from the map, such as schools, health services and libraries.



At the launch of Redbridge i in 2007, the Redbridge Chief Executive stated that the site's flexibility "means it can evolve and grow in a direction largely dictated by its audience".

Redbridge Council used its website for the Redbridge Conversation, a major public consultation which asked residents about long term improvements they wanted to see in the Borough and how to pay for them. By using Redbridge i, the council was able to offer interactivity and provide large amounts of content in a structured way, so residents could make informed choices.

Over 2,500 online responses were received, providing detailed feedback on the priorities of residents and the trade-offs they would be prepared to make. Although there was a parallel off-line consultation, residents were encouraged to go online by giving them free access in Internet cafes, libraries and school ICT suites.

The power of information online

3.8 The Internet now performs a range of roles from being seen as a trusted friend in making purchasing decisions, to being a source of support for different communities, to being a source of tips on a huge range of areas. Government itself produces a great deal of information of interest to people for a variety of uses. The Ordnance Survey for example, estimates that the information it produces underpins £100bn of economic activity every year. A recent review *The Power of Information*, conducted by Tom Steinberg and Ed Mayo for the Government stated that:⁴⁹

“There are social and economic benefits to new ways of making and sharing information, whether involving government, citizens or both, for example:

- *in medical studies of breast cancer and HIV patients, participants in online communities understand their condition better and generally show a greater ability to cope. In the case of HIV, there are also lower treatment costs*
- *studies of ‘wired’ local communities demonstrate that there are more neighbours who know the names of other people on their street*
- *sharing restaurants’ food safety information in Los Angeles led to a drop in food-borne illness of 13 per cent (compared to a three per cent increase in the wider state in the same time frame). The proportion of restaurants receiving ‘good’ scores more than doubled, with sales rising by eight per cent*
- *by providing clear information when dispensing medication, pharmacists can improve patient adherence and persistence with medication advice by 16–33 per cent”*

3.9 The copyright in local government information is owned by the local authority. A number of public sector bodies have authorised reuse by offering online licences such as the Click-Use Licence, which is hosted by the Office of Public Sector Information. Any public sector organisation can allow their information to be made available via this route.

⁴⁹ Mayo, E and Steinberg, T (2007) *The Power of Information: An Independent Review by Ed Mayo and Tom Steinberg*. London: Cabinet Office. Available from: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/reports/power_of_information.aspx

Freeing up public sector information

Essex County Council and Worcestershire County Council have been accredited under the Information Fair Trader Scheme.

Elmbridge Borough Council is using the online Public Sector Information Click-Use Licence to authorise the re-use of the material it produces.

Devon County Council has a very liberal position on re-use: its “copyright protected” material may be reproduced free of charge in any format or media without requiring specific permission. (<http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/copyright.htm>).

Hampshire County Council allows all types of non-commercial re-use free of charge under the terms of a general licence, with commercial re-use under the terms of specific licences.

(www3.hants.gov.uk/freedomofinformation/web-copyright-licence.htm).

- 3.10 Some of the best examples of how information can be used to empower citizens are generated by citizens, not government. The democratic activist group MySociety has produced a number of online services which reuse basic public information – such as the name of an elected representative, their contact details, the email address used by a council to report broken things on the street or how to find other local groups.

FixMyStreet.com – has received 20,000 reports of street problems that it has fed through to councils. The site invites you to take and upload photos and highlight examples of graffiti, vandalism, broken paving slabs or fly-tipping and the web team then make the complaint to your council on your behalf. They monitor progress and report back.

WriteToThem.com – sent 175,000 messages to representatives in 2007 by providing a simple way to send messages online – just enter your post code, select your Councillor, Member of Parliament (MP) etc and send your message.

Theyworkforyou.com – analyses and publishes the parliamentary activity of your MP, including votes, speeches and questions, and compares them to others.

Information online is not enough

- 3.11 There is a strong correlation between those who are socially excluded and those who are digitally excluded. For example, it is estimated that 15 per cent of the adult population (more than six million people) suffer social exclusion and are also unable to use the Internet.⁵⁰
- 3.12 The Government recently announced that it would support a network of digital inclusion advisers who will work directly with individual local authorities and their partners.
- 3.13 A forthcoming cross-government **Digital Equality Action Plan** will aim to ensure that local communities and all sections of our society can enjoy equally the full range of benefits that digital technologies can bring.
- 3.14 Some people, including those who are web-literate and have access to the web, prefer to receive information and participate without going online.⁵¹ Some groups of people rely on word-of-mouth for their information, with a central role given to faith group leaders or community leaders. It is particularly important that accessible support and advice is given to vulnerable groups such as drug users and rough sleepers.

⁵⁰ Digital Inclusion Team (2007) *The Digital Inclusion Landscape in England: Delivering Social Impact through Information and Communications Technologies*, London: Digital Inclusion Team.

⁵¹ Dutton, W and Helsper, E J (2007) *The Internet in Britain: 2007*, Oxford: University of Oxford.

- 3.15 Therefore, the preferences and needs of different groups in society need to be considered. For example, the online world is predominantly a young domain. For all the talk of 'silver surfers', Internet usage decreases with age, with 71 per cent of those aged 65 and over never having used the Internet, compared with four per cent of 16-24 year olds.⁵² Older people are likely to use different Internet services: they are more likely to use e-government services than students.⁵³
- 3.16 A range of methods will therefore be necessary, using the media that different people prefer, and delivered where they can easily access it, including through libraries. Many local authorities are already providing information in innovative ways including key facts cards and fridge magnets.
- 3.17 This type of information enables people to make informed decisions, from finding suitable childcare to deciding which candidate to vote for in an election, holding their local representative to account and making the most of living in their area.

Making progress on providing local information

- 3.18 Communities and Local Government has played a significant role across government and with local authorities to develop an IT network called **Government Connect**. English and Welsh local authorities can share information securely between themselves and with central government using Government Connect.
- 3.19 In the *Governance of Britain* Green Paper, published in July 2007, the Government proposed to work with local authorities and public service providers in England to ensure that there is widespread use of local real-time data.⁵⁴ This would provide communities with regular and accessible information on local services, helping citizens judge their effectiveness and the performance of service providers.
- 3.20 Through **NHS Choices**, data are published to enable people to make informed choices about their care.⁵⁵ Some of this information is provided by patients themselves and informs people about the quality of care in their local area. This

⁵² Colville, R (2008) *Politics, Policy and the Internet*, London: Centre for Policy Studies.

⁵³ Dutton, W and Helsper, E J (2007) *The Internet in Britain: 2007*, Oxford: University of Oxford.

⁵⁴ Ministry of Justice (2007) *The Governance of Britain*; London: Ministry of Justice

⁵⁵ See <http://www.nhs.uk/scorecard/Pages/ScorecardWelcome.aspx>

includes data on the outcomes of surgery and other medical interventions and the levels of patient satisfaction with hospitals and other clinics. Information is also provided locally through 'information prescriptions' for people with long-term conditions to empower people to manage their care more effectively, and to help them stay more independent and to feel more in control.

- 3.21 In **education**, Ministers have made clear their expectation that all secondary schools by 2010, and all primary schools by 2012, will report online to parents on their child's attendance, behaviour and attainment, and special needs. Evidence underlines the positive effects of parents being involved and informed, and schools already see the benefits of greater engagement with parents.
- 3.22 Louise Casey's *Crime and communities review* found that the public were very clear about the information they want on **crime**.⁵⁶ People want regular information on crimes committed and punishment served in their local area. They want to have named contacts with clear information about who is responsible for what locally, and how to contact them in both emergency and non-emergency situations.
- 3.23 The Government proposes to meet these expectations through the new **Policing Pledge**. The content of the proposed Policing Pledge will be set out in the Policing Green Paper. It will include a national element which will set out what each force in England and Wales will deliver for the public, such as keeping people informed about the progress of their inquiries, plus a local element where local priorities can be set in each area, agreed by people in the neighbourhood. The local element will also give the public a way to hold Neighbourhood Policing Teams to account for tackling their local priorities. The police will provide regular feedback to people about what actions are being taken and what happened as a result.
- 3.24 Keeping people informed of what is being done to deal with their problems and telling them about progress plays a very important role in making them feel safer. From July 2008 **monthly crime information about levels and types of crime will be made available**. The Government is also considering how crime mapping can be used so that the public can compare levels of crime and performance in their area with other similar areas.

⁵⁶ Cabinet Office (2008) *Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime: A Review by Louise Casey*, London: Cabinet Office.

Moving forward

- 3.25 We want **information on services to be truly local** – available at local neighbourhood level – so people can see what is happening in their own area. For example council-wide crime statistics can hide marked differences in particular areas; for the information to be useful to a community group it needs to be as local as possible. The Office of National Statistics ‘Neighbourhood Statistics’ website already provides a lot of information of this type.
- 3.26 The **Local Area Agreement (LAA)** offers an opportunity for local authorities and their partners to present clearly to local citizens how they are going to tackle the major priorities for their area, and their contribution to national issues which affect everyone, such as climate change.
- 3.27 Communities and Local Government has recently launched the cross-government **Data Interchange Hub** which gives local authorities access to the most up-to-date information on National Indicators⁵⁷ and through that, the chance to compare local performance against LAA targets. This will allow local authorities to benchmark their performance against similar authorities elsewhere in the country. Reporting of the Comprehensive Area Assessment – the main indication of local performance – will enable citizens to compare the performance of all areas against all the National Indicators.

⁵⁷ Indicators cover a wide range of national priorities, such as pupil achievement in schools and numbers of new homes. The new set of 198 National Indicators was announced as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 and came into force on 1 April 2008, replacing all previous performance indicators including Best Value Performance Indicators and Performance Assessment Framework indicators.

How the American public is informed about crime

When residents in many of the biggest cities in the United States want to know what's really going on about crime in their neighbourhood, they can find all the information they want on their local police website.

Police chiefs regularly collect performance information from different precincts across a growing number of cities including New York, Los Angeles and Baltimore so that they know where crime is rising and falling.

They use the data to challenge local police commanders where crime appears to be rising. They also use the information to keep the Mayor informed.

But the data are not kept within city circles – they are all made public each week on the Internet.

The process was first developed as part of New York's drive to cut crime in the 1990s, which has seen the number of murders fall from 2,262 in 1990 to 496 last year.

Now visitors to the New York Police Department's CompStat website can see figures updated every week for the city as a whole and for their own local precinct.

The data show how the number of burglaries, robberies and murders has changed over the past year as well as what's happened so far this year.

Baltimore City's police department publishes similar data in its CitiStat programme, as well as an interactive crime map which allows people to see average crime statistics for the last three years, for an area covering a radius of 1/2 mile from their home. Los Angeles also publishes monthly data on gang-related crimes.

www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/crime_prevention/crime_statistics.shtm

- 3.28 Communities and Local Government is also looking at how to open up further elements of the **Places Database**, a major repository of information about communities. This will help people better understand the trends and challenges in their local area. We will use feedback from users of the site to improve and tailor

the database to provide the information that citizens want, in a way they want to view it. We will launch the new public facing Places Database in autumn 2008.

- 3.29 In addition to this, there is a huge amount of information collected locally by authorities themselves. This information could be of great interest to people if they could access it. However, currently there is big variation between authorities in how much of this information they make available and in its quality, accessibility and usefulness to citizens, including those with disabilities and special needs. We want local authorities to publish this information as soon as they have access to it themselves. We will work with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to **support local authorities in making information they hold more readily available**. We will also work with local authorities to **pilot innovative approaches to sharing information, with citizens, community groups and with third parties** like MySociety and others, to consolidate, reuse and republish local information.

Screenreader.net – a gateway to independence for the blind and partially sighted

Screenreader.net supplies a free tool to enable the blind and partially sighted without financial resources to make a computer talk for them, allowing the user to hear exactly what's on the screen, to access the Internet, to write emails and letters, or search for a job. This invaluable tool is called 'Thunder' Screenreader.net and was founded by blind people (Roger and Margaret Wilson-Hinds) for blind users.

The technology used is not new but, because it tends to be expensive (£500-£1,100), most blind and visually impaired people still find themselves barred from productive use of computers. Screenreader.net is unique in providing this technology for free.

More than 100,000 blind people have downloaded Thunder from the site in the last 18 months and over 20,000 have become 'registered users'. Screenreader.net's objective is to disseminate the technology as far as possible – as its constitution states: "make this universally available to all that need it".

Screenreader.net views the talking computer as the "new Braille", the gateway to reading, writing, learning and independence for blind people.

www.screenreader.net

- 3.30 Those in need of support in our society can experience particular challenges in finding information about the services they are entitled to. As part of our pilots of innovative approaches to sharing information we will explore ways of strengthening information provision for vulnerable and socially excluded people through **Charters for Independent Living**. These charters will provide a clear and accessible statement of the standards service users can expect. They will also provide information on the performance of services in meeting these standards.
- 3.31 And it is not just local authorities who hold information that is of interest to citizens. The new **independent social housing regulator**, the Tenant Services Authority⁵⁸ will ensure that information is available to enable social tenants to compare the performance of providers of social housing including housing associations and, in future, local authorities.

Community media

- 3.32 The mainstream media – national, local, print, broadcast and online – has an enormous influence over people’s attitudes towards the political system, towards politicians and towards political institutions and is a key source of information about the big issues in a local area. John Lloyd has gone as far as to suggest that:

“The media in the twenty-first century, are in Britain at the height of their powers – a position shared by their counterparts in no other country, even the US...Nothing – not religious belief, not political debate and argument, not even conversation with friends and family – possesses the command over mass attention that the media have taken as their own. Their themes dominate public and private lives. Their definitions of what is right or wrong, true or false, impose themselves on politics and on the public domain. Their narratives construct the world we don’t immediately experience – which for nearly all of us, is most of the world.”⁵⁹

- 3.33 The Government recognises the importance of a range of media outlets, like community radio and television stations and local websites, as a way of promoting alternative information for discussion and debate, and enabling citizens to make choices about where to get information on their neighbourhoods. The

⁵⁸ The establishment of the Tenant Services Authority is subject to legislation. The Tenant Services Authority will be created by the Housing and Regeneration Bill which has not at the time of publication, received Royal Assent.

⁵⁹ Lloyd, J (2004) *What the media are doing to our politics*, Constable.

Government will work with mainstream broadcasters and Ofcom to encourage new opportunities for this sector to develop.

Supporting innovation

- 3.34 We want to support innovation in the use of new technologies. This could be in the form of active debate and deliberative engagement with government or **innovation in community and social media**. We will work closely with the Office of the Third Sector, Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Justice, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and other partners to explore ways of doing this. We will also provide funding for media and technology through the Empowerment Fund.

Mobilising volunteers to respond to summer floods

Community Service Volunteers (CSV) is the UK's largest volunteering and training organisation. It runs 36 BBC Action Desks across England, linked to the BBC and reaching into 10 million homes. This network was particularly useful during the 2007 summer floods.

CSV responded to the crisis in South Yorkshire through the CSV Good Neighbour Appeal, run in partnership with local BBC Radio partners, BBC Radio Sheffield. BBC Radio Sheffield's CSV Action Desk broadcast on-air appeals for listeners to donate essential items of household equipment and furniture to people whose homes and possessions had been destroyed. CSV also appealed for volunteers to assist with the collection and distribution of donated items as well as the physical clean-up of flood areas.

BBC Radio Sheffield broadcast 24 hours a day for ten days during the appeal, with CSV's Action Manager Andy Kershaw managing both their outreach efforts as well as being the voice of the appeal on air. At its peak, the Action Desk Appeal was generating 200 calls an hour and 400–500 emails a day from people offering items and support, and recruited over 250 volunteers.

www.csv.org.uk



- 3.35 Government will pilot a '**Digital Mentor**' scheme in deprived areas. These mentors will support groups to develop websites and podcasts, to use digital photography and online publishing tools, to develop short films and to improve general media literacy. The Digital Mentors will also create links with community and local broadcasters as part of their capacity building, to enable those who want to develop careers in the media to do so. Depending on the success of these pilots, this scheme could be rolled out to deprived areas across England.
- 3.36 The Department for Children, Schools and Families is supporting a Youth Media Fund, known as Mediabox, to help young people have a positive voice in the media. It offers disadvantaged 13-19 year olds the chance to develop and produce creative media projects about issues that are important to them, using film, print, television, radio or online platforms. Over 7,000 young people have been funded so far.
- 3.37 Since legislation in 2004 providing for the licensing of community radio, Ofcom has awarded some 170 **community radio licences** and around 100 stations are now on-air. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport provides some core funding via Ofcom. We believe that community radio can have a unique role in working within communities to build social cohesion and empowerment and draw on a range of funding sources to deliver social benefits.
- 3.38 Benefits also include providing local education, training and volunteering opportunities – including for the hundreds of media professionals who give up their time to mentor local community groups through programmes such as that organised by the Media Trust. In addition, social media can be an entry point for people to become active citizens, especially for young people, providing them with ways to create their own stories and content about anything that interests them, ranging from daily blogs to online discussions about raising children.

Refugee Ben broadcasts to Bradford

Ben Mussanzi broadcasts regularly on Bradford's community radio station, BCB 106.6fm.

Six years ago, Ben fled the Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite his qualifications and experience, Ben found it impossible as a refugee with poor English to find a job.

A chance encounter with Mary Dowson, the BCB Director, opened Ben's horizons to community radio and a host of new production and presentation skills.



Ben has been volunteering with BCB for over four years, broadcasting a French language programme called Africa on Air. More recently he started a monthly English language programme, Peace Music.

"Not only was I giving a voice to my community, but through presenting Africa on Air and later Peace Music, I was able express my feelings, deep feelings that had been caused by the trauma of war," said Ben. "I recognise now that the radio show was the start of me dealing with this trauma."

The multi-award winning station is also available online. It broadcasts 24 hours a day with a mix of music, local news, sport and community programming. Funding comes from the Bradford City Council, government, charities and the European Union.

As a membership organisation, it encourages people to be involved in the life of the station. There are also training workshops to help people learn the basics of broadcasting.

www.bcbradio.co.uk



Chapter 4

Having an influence

Go to the people. Live with them. Learn from them. Love them.

Start with what they know. Build with what they have.

But with the best leaders, when the work is done, the task accomplished, the people will say "We have done this ourselves".

**Lao Tzu (600 – 531 BC)
Chinese Taoist philosopher**

Chapter 4

Having an influence

How do I have my say and influence the decisions being made on my behalf, both by elected and appointed people?

- 4.1 This chapter explains how we will give people new rights to petition for action from their representatives and public officials and how we will encourage higher turnouts in elections, including through voting incentives.

Petition power

- 4.2 Britain has a long-standing tradition of petitioning to express a collective view and put pressure on those in power. For example, the Chartists demanded greater democracy in the 1840s, including demanding an end to rotten boroughs, payment for MPs, votes for working men and annual parliaments. They organised a petition in support of their demands which was signed by six million people, out of a population of under 20 million. Tens of thousands of people signed petitions as part of the campaign to abolish the transatlantic slave trade.
- 4.3 There is a long-established tradition of members of the public presenting petitions at the door of No. 10 Downing Street. Since its launch in November 2006, the e-Petitions site has proved to be a highly popular innovation, helping people communicate with the Government and with the Prime Minister's office. There have been more than eight million signatures, originating from more than four million different email addresses. The software behind the system is also available free for anyone to use.
- 4.4 We are not proposing government by petitions, nor are we suggesting that the role of elected representatives in taking difficult decisions should be undermined. But, we do believe that stronger petition powers will enable more people to have their voice heard and help elected representatives do their jobs better.

Influencing the national agenda

- 4.5 The Scottish Parliament successfully allows individuals, community groups and organisations to have petitions on issues of public concern considered by a standing committee. They can decide whether an issue raised by petition should be considered in a Scottish parliamentary debate.
- 4.6 For the UK, the House of Commons Procedure Committee has looked at the Scottish parliament system and at other models in proposing reforms to the petitioning system at Westminster. The Committee has now published a report proposing a system of e-petitioning, which could result in a parliamentary debate or Select Committee inquiry. It is ultimately a matter for Parliament how it takes this forward, but the Government welcomes the work done by the Committee which has the objective of re-engaging people with politics and Parliament. The Government will respond to the Committee's recommendations in due course.
- 4.7 The Ministry of Justice discussion paper, *A national framework for greater citizen engagement*, which is published alongside this White Paper, also welcomes the proposed e-petition scheme for Parliament and looks forward to implementation.

Making things happen locally

- 4.8 Many local authorities handle petitions very well. However, research for the Local Government Association (LGA) suggests that fewer than a third of councils guarantee a response to petitions.⁶⁰ Our own research suggests that the number of councils who make details of their petitions scheme available to the public is even smaller.
- 4.9 We will introduce a **new duty on local councils to respond to all petitions, including electronic petitions, relating to local authority functions or other public services where the council shares delivery responsibilities**. Petitions could call for action – to deal with empty properties, to transfer the ownership of a building to the community, to calm traffic in an accident blackspot, or to request refuse collection on a certain day, gates at the end of the passages behind houses, a new school crossing, or new street lights in a dark corner of an estate. They could also call for participatory budgeting or a local referendum thus giving the initiative to the citizen.

⁶⁰ Local Government Association rapid survey of 102 member authorities, 2007.

- 4.10 Responding to a petition should not be a 'tickbox' exercise. If the council's overview and scrutiny committee decides the response is not adequate or substantive, petitioners will be able to secure a debate of the full council. In any event, if five per cent of the local population sign a petition, there will have to be a full council debate. Local authorities will be able to set lower thresholds.
- 4.11 A few issues, for example planning, will need to be dealt with differently to reflect existing robust statutory processes for public participation and consultation. Petitions are already used extensively by local communities to express their views on planning matters. Local planning authorities are already legally required to address representations, including petitions, by taking relevant comments into account and by making their decision and the reasons for it public.
- 4.12 **Councils will also act as community advocates**, for example for petitions related to the Primary Care Trust on subjects such as the level of provision of community services. We will work with our local partners to devise a system which will work in practice and which is capable of engaging the public in a meaningful way.
- 4.13 We want to empower the public to use petitions in other public services. The Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills has announced that in the future the timing of inspections will be determined by an annual risk assessment which will be informed by a range of evidence including the views of parents obtained through surveys or from complaints. This will include issues raised through petitions.
- 4.14 We will work with key inspectorates to encourage them to consider petitions as important pieces of evidence to determine when inspections must take place, for example if an old people's care home is not up to an acceptable standard or a workplace is felt to be unsafe.

Councillor Call for Action

4.15 We introduced a new power for councillors in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 called the Councillor Call for Action. This empowers councillors to require overview and scrutiny committees to consider issues of local concern. We will work with the Local Government Association (LGA) to issue guidance later this year to support councillors in exercising these powers. A Councillor Call for Action also exists in the Police and Justice Act 2006 to raise crime and disorder issues such as gangs and guns. The Home Office will be consulting on how a Councillor Call for Action might add value as part of the broader local accountability arrangements for crime and disorder in the upcoming Policing Green Paper. Consideration of the crime and disorder Councillor Call for Action will be taken forward in light of the results of that consultation with a view to guidance by the end of the year.

Participatory budgeting

4.16 Participatory budgeting involves people in making decisions about how sections of local public budgets are allocated and invested. Originating among the poorest communities in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 1989, the system has been used in 300 cities with 12 million people. The Government currently supports the Participatory Budgeting Unit, a project of the Church Action Group on Poverty, to encourage the spread of participatory budgeting in England.

4.17 Participatory budgeting helps to develop the skills, experience and confidence of those involved. It helps to bring people together across divides of race, age, class and background to build a stronger community and engenders greater understanding of the complexities of local councils' decision-making, including compromises and trade-offs. The decisions taken can be better tailored to local needs because local community views are built into the process from the start, and the process enables local councillors to adopt a position of strong community leadership.⁶¹ It is important that socially excluded groups are not marginalised in the development of these approaches and that their inclusion helps to inform and balance community decision-making.

⁶¹ Lavan, K (2007) *Participatory Budgeting in the UK: An Evaluation from a Practitioner Perspective*, Manchester: PB Unit.

- 4.18 There are 22 local authority participatory budgeting pilots currently operating in England, with more planned by the end of the year. We want to encourage all local authorities to follow the example of pioneering local authorities such as Sunderland and Bradford so that participatory budgeting is used in every local authority area by 2012. We will shortly publish a **National Strategy on participatory budgeting**, which will set out how this aspiration will be achieved.
- 4.19 The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has provided discrete funding for young people to control – the Youth Opportunity Fund and the Youth Capital Fund. These funds will enable local authorities to develop new approaches to strategic investment in youth activities and facilities, particularly in deprived areas. We are working with the Department of Health to explore how participatory budgeting can be used to involve people in decisions about health-related spending. Additionally, local councillors can choose to allocate any delegated budgets through participatory budgeting approaches.
- 4.20 The Home Office will support piloting the use of participatory budgeting for local community safety budgets. We, and other government departments, are considering whether money recovered from criminals under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 should be available to be used in this way.

Newcastle youngsters decide what they want to fund

In Newcastle more than 4,000 youngsters were involved in spending £110,000 of the local Neighbourhood Renewal Fund from 2006 to 2008 in an award-winning participatory budgeting pilot, branded locally as Udecide. Children and young people set priorities for spending the money and put forward project ideas.

Among the successful proposals was an outdoor play area for babies at a local children's centre, new samba drums for a special school and a play area at a homeless families project.

James, a pupil from Farne Primary School, said: "Adults pick different, boring stuff, but Udecide gives children a go at spending the money".

Teacher Rose Wilcox added: "The children made all the decisions for themselves. They've really discussed the merits of the ideas and whether they met the criteria."

The City Council was so impressed by their enthusiasm, commitment and ability to make good decisions that they have embedded this method of engagement within their structures for delivering services for children and young people. So much so that when Children's Services wanted to know which projects bidding for their £2.25m Children's Fund would make a difference to the lives of young people, they asked young people themselves to vote.

www.newcastle.gov.uk/udecide#what



Voting incentives

- 4.21 Many people view voting in elections as one of the duties of citizenship, and carry out their responsibilities every polling day. Increasingly, though, voting is seen as an arcane and alien process, which deters many people from taking part. This is especially true of young people, who are turning their backs on voting in elections in record numbers.⁶²
- 4.22 As part of the new duty to promote democracy that we will place on local authorities, they should run information campaigns to explain the processes and implications of voting, especially to young people. This might involve local councils forging partnerships with schools to use citizenship education to advocate voting. The Quality Parish Scheme requires parish councils to promote local democracy as one of the criteria for achieving Quality status.⁶³
- 4.23 We will give local authorities **the power to provide incentives for voting in local government elections**, for example by entering voters into a prize draw. Voting incentives should not be construed as ‘paying for votes’ or create a major new financial burden on councils. Instead, they should be viewed as an eye-catching method to increase awareness and engagement, especially with young people who have never voted and who might view the process with suspicion.

Stronger community governance

- 4.24 We want formal democratic decision-making to be conducted as locally as possible, so that citizens can feel that their local government is part of the fabric of community life and that their views can be heard and acted upon by local councillors.
- 4.25 To this end, we want to encourage the creation of councils at the most local level where these are wanted and needed by local people, so that councils do not just exist at district, county or borough level. In big cities, people tend to identify with the part of the city they live in. In conurbations, people identify with their suburb, estate or neighbourhood. In rural areas, people identify most strongly with their village or nearest town. This can lead to a disconnect between the place people

⁶² Electoral Commission (2005) *Election 2005: Turnout – How Many, Who and Why?*, London: The Electoral Commission.

⁶³ Achieving quality parish status demonstrates that a council has met certain minimum standards expected from an effective, representative and active parish council.

say they live in, and the name of the local authority which delivers their services and collects their council tax. So for example, a resident of Malmesbury or Pewsey, in Wiltshire is unlikely to say they live in Kennet, even if that is the name of the council which collects their tax every year.

- 4.26 There are already about 8,900 parish or town councils in England, with about 70,000 elected parish councillors, covering roughly 90 per cent of the geographical area of England. These parish and town councils can generate local income to fund their activities through a supplementary charge (called a 'precept') which is added to the council tax bill for the residents of their area.
- 4.27 In some areas, parish or town councils have worked with local groups to develop a community governance partnership model, based on the development of a collective vision and action plan. This lends itself to methods such as participatory budgeting.
- 4.28 Residents in every part of England can now seek to establish this form of local council, including in major cities such as London. People can now also choose to call their local council a neighbourhood, community or village council instead of a parish or town council if they wish. This will help to avoid confusing civil parish councils, which are local councils, with ecclesiastical parish councils which are linked to a church. We want to encourage the creation of more local councils especially in major cities, where there is local demand for them, and where they can be managed in a financially sustainable way, which is acceptable to local taxpayers. We intend to introduce a **right of appeal to the Secretary of State where a community's proposal for a local council is denied by the local authority**. We will also work with the National Association of Local Councils to encourage more parish and town councils to become Quality councils under their revised scheme.
- 4.29 Since 1972, every parish council has been obliged to hold an annual parish meeting of its electors, and residents have the power to demand a poll of all electors on any question under discussion at the meeting. The poll is then organised and held at a later date. In the past parish polls have been conducted on questions which are not local issues. We propose to **make the rules governing parish polls more accessible** and better understood and to more clearly define their scope. This might lead to changes such as extending the hours during which parish polls are conducted.

4.30 Bye-laws can be used to ensure that open public spaces can be enjoyed by all. For example, local authorities have used them to ban the riding of mini-motorcycles in public parks, to ban skateboarding in inappropriate areas and to prevent dogs entering children's play areas. In future, local authorities, including in some cases parish councils, **will be able to make certain bye-laws without the need for scrutiny by central government**. This will make bye-laws easier to understand and explore, allowing local solutions for local issues.

Neighbourhood management

4.31 Around a quarter of local authorities, covering nearly 500 neighbourhoods and 4.2 million people, now operate a system called neighbourhood management. This seeks to link local services, particularly environmental services, wardening and policing, and focus on the needs of a community. In areas where neighbourhood management is working, people report a reduction in their perception of problems such as car crime, vandalism, graffiti and racial harassment; increased satisfaction with the way drugs, litter and nuisance are being tackled; and increased satisfaction with the police because of greater visibility of police officers and police community support officers (PCSOs).

4.32 Sir Ronnie Flanagan, in his recent review of policing⁶⁴, recommended that neighbourhood-level policing should be part of wider local authority-led neighbourhood management. This would mean locally-negotiated community safety priorities; shared information and feedback for residents; and strong resident involvement in the direction of policing. (This was supported by Louise Casey in her recent review.)

4.33 Both neighbourhood policing and a more integrated neighbourhood service rely heavily on the active participation of local communities to make them work. The Home Office will take forward the Casey proposal to support community groups to play a stronger role in tackling crime through the *Community Crime Fighter* programme. It will be an opportunity to increase the visibility and effectiveness of the many and diverse local groups already working in the community – such as Neighbourhood Watch – and to extend involvement into new areas and include new citizens.

⁶⁴ Flanagan, R (2008) *The Review of Policing: Final Report*, London: Home Office.

4.34 There are plenty of examples of this around the country. In Derwentside, County Durham, the police and other agencies launched a campaign to tackle underage drinking and anti-social behaviour. The initiative reduced the amount of alcohol seized by 85 per cent to just 18 seizures a month, with a reduction in anti-social behaviour. We will take this approach further with the National Police Improvement Agency and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships.

Strengthening community voices

4.35 The third sector has a unique ability to give a voice to the community and drive change, most powerfully where third sector organisations work together. We recognise that inclusive participative structures for third sector organisations are important in ensuring that the sector has a consistent, effective and accountable voice in local decision-making.

4.36 This essential role is reflected in statutory guidance for local authorities. We have worked closely with third sector umbrella groups to develop ‘Principles of Representation’ for third sector organisations on Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs). These principles will help the sector to organise its involvement in LSPs and help LSPs decide how they might best support this involvement in a sustained way.

Engaging people in developing and commissioning services

4.37 Understanding the needs of citizens, customers and users of services is fundamental. In the words of one local government officer “If we really want to put our customers first, then we need to get to know them better”. Such work, sometimes called Customer Insight, includes better measurement of satisfaction; service design with the involvement of users and customers; and the identification of different groups of service users with different needs.

4.38 Through the new ‘duty to involve’ placed on local authorities in England, councils should include people in developing and commissioning local goods and services. Involving local communities will ensure better decisions and improved value-for-money. Particular efforts should be made to engage vulnerable groups, who are often the most dependent on services. Different features include:

- people taking part in commissioning services, through neighbourhood contracts, participatory budgeting and neighbourhood management

Communities in control: real people, real power

- direct payments and individual budgets for service users so they can decide for themselves what services best meet their needs and manage them
- passing the delivery and ownership of services to people through social enterprises and cooperatives

4.39 The work of the **Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships** (RIEPs) and the **Regional Empowerment Partnerships** (REPs) can support local authorities in involving people in improving services and influencing local decisions. We will encourage greater collaboration between them to prioritise empowerment and engagement within the RIEP programmes, and to ensure empowerment is taken account of in improvement and efficiency work. This will also involve the Community Development Foundation.

4.40 Working with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the RIEPs, we will ask that empowerment is embedded in projects supported by the £115m capital fund for efficiency and transformation of local services.

School e-Admissions – London Borough of Hackney

Despite being one of London's most deprived areas, without widespread home broadband access, Hackney has reported 85 per cent of parents and carers applying online for secondary school places in 2008. This figure is significantly higher than the national average.

The reason behind Hackney's astonishing success in achieving high use of e-admissions is that local headteachers were closely involved in the technology project. Parents complete the application form at a meeting with the primary headteacher using the school's computer to fill out and submit the form. Staff are on hand to help with any problems. Overall, the system makes it far easier, less stressful and quicker for busy parents to apply for a school place for their children.

www.learningtrust.co.uk/schools/admissions_and_transfers/e-admissions.aspx



The Sustainable Communities Act 2007

- 4.41 The Sustainable Communities Act 2007 aims to promote the economic, social or environmental well-being of local areas, including participation in civic and political activity. It provides a channel for people, through their local authority, to ask central government to take action to promote sustainable communities. The Act also ensures that communities will be better informed about public money that is spent in their area. We are issuing brief guidance alongside this White Paper about how local authorities should work with panels of local representatives, including members from under-represented groups, on the best proposals for change in their area.

The criminal justice system

- 4.42 We want witnesses and the victims of crime to be able to get information, have a fair say, and feel that the system is on their side. The review of crime and communities by Louise Casey⁶⁵ found that some members of the public were fearful that if they challenge crime or anti-social behaviour by reporting it to the police or giving evidence in court, they may be at risk of harassment. A Law Reform, Victims and Witnesses Bill, proposed in the draft legislative programme for 2009-10 will strengthen the arrangements for protecting vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. That Bill will build on the Criminal Evidence (Witness Anonymity) Bill introduced in July, which seeks to place the use of anonymous evidence in criminal proceedings on a firm statutory footing, while safeguarding defendants' right to a fair trial.

Community justice

- 4.43 The Casey review also identified the need for a stronger sense of 'visible justice' so that communities feel that the system is working and criminals are not 'getting away with it'.
- 4.44 In 2004, the Government launched a 'community justice' programme with the aim of putting the court at the heart of the community. There is a dialogue with the community on the impact of local crime and anti-social behaviour, and reporting of actions taken by the court, with people having the opportunity to propose projects for payback activities. People are also encouraged to serve as volunteers within the system.

⁶⁵ Cabinet Office (2008) *Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime: A Review by Louise Casey*, London: Cabinet Office. Available from: www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/crime.aspx

- 4.45 The first two community justice projects were established in Liverpool and Salford in 2004 and 2005. Community courts are now established along the principles of community justice in Birmingham, Bradford, Hull, Leicester, Merthyr Tydfil, Middlesbrough, Nottingham, Devon and Cornwall, and three locations in London – Haringey, Newham and Wandsworth.
- 4.46 The principle of community engagement by the courts, piloted in the community justice projects, has proven so successful that it is now being rolled out to all Magistrates, courts in England and Wales, linking in with wider engagement work led by neighbourhood police teams.

Justice is seen to be done at a North Liverpool Community Justice Centre

Residents in North Liverpool were fed up that prostitutes were turning a local street into a no-go area for families.

They used a regular 'Meet the Judge' event to talk to Judge David Fletcher, who heads their local community justice centre.



North Liverpool Community Justice Centre brings together criminal justice agencies and voluntary organisations to tackle local crime.

Its dedicated courtroom, presided over by Judge Fletcher, hears Magistrates' Court and Youth Court cases, as well as cases that would normally be sent to the Crown Court for sentence.

As a result of combined efforts between the centre and the police, prostitutes and kerb crawlers were brought swiftly to court.

Judge Fletcher disqualified seven kerb crawlers from driving, ensuring that they did not return to the area, or drive to any other area.

"We have come to see His Honour Judge Fletcher as 'Our Judge'," said one local resident. "He knows what is important to us and has made himself known in the community by getting out and about meeting the people who live here."

www.communityjustice.gov.uk/northliverpool

Community sentences

- 4.47 In polling conducted for Louise Casey's Review, 90 per cent agreed that all punishments for crime should involve some payback to the community. Over half the people wanted a say in the type of work that should be undertaken. The Ministry of Justice will work with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Association of Chief Police Officers to agree pilot projects that provide the

opportunity for citizens to meet with police, probation and local councils to vote on priorities for 'community payback' work and local community safety priorities.⁶⁶

Empowering people in the planning system

- 4.48 Our planning system is intended to help deliver local, regional and national priorities, balancing individual rights, community needs and national interests. It takes into account social, environmental and economic concerns including Britain's strategic economic needs, environmental challenges such as climate change and the needs of our changing society.
- 4.49 A wide range of planning reforms is taking place alongside this White Paper. For example, at local level we have made it easier for people to get involved with plan preparation by streamlining the process.
- 4.50 We are also moving to a system where developers make contributions to infrastructure on a much fairer basis. This new regime will be called the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The local authority's proposals for how much developers should be charged will be consulted on. This will provide more opportunities than are currently available for local communities to get involved in decisions on where to spend money.
- 4.51 The current planning obligations system (often referred to as 'section 106'), where developers contribute to local facilities such as play areas, open space and transport, will continue alongside CIL. We are exploring how we can give local communities more information about what contributions have been made, more opportunity to shape how the contributions are used and whether the local planning authority has spent them on the facilities that were originally agreed.
- 4.52 There are many different techniques available which help engage the public and other stakeholders in generating ideas and making decisions on issues which affect their lives. One popular method is Planning for Real:

⁶⁶ Cabinet Office (2008) *Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime: A Review by Louise Casey*, London: Cabinet Office.

Planning for Real involves the community in Swale Borough Council Queenborough and Rushenden

Planning for Real was used to gather the ideas and views from the community in creating a master plan for a brownfield site situated between Queenborough and Rushenden on the Isle of Sheppey. Community engagement has been key to the regeneration on the island which is part of the Thames Gateway Programme.



A series of participatory consultation events provided local residents with information on how the area would change but most importantly the Planning for Real process gave people the opportunity to genuinely shape elements of the master plan.

Local school children participated by helping to make a large 3D model of Queenborough and Rushenden. Thirty per cent of the local population were consulted, which generated more than 5,000 suggestions.

Following the enthusiasm created by Planning for Real, residents and local partners have gone on to set up the Community and Skills Group, introduced a community newsletter and have established a dedicated website (www.qrregen.co.uk/).

Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation, 01952 590 777 (www.nif.co.uk).

Planning for Real is a registered trademark of the Neighbourhood Initiative Foundation.

- 4.53 As well as improving the planning system itself, we want to offer more support to individuals and communities taking part. We are providing **£3.2m in 2008/09 to increase support for Planning Aid**, with a particular focus on securing constructive input into local and regional plans, working in partnerships across the sector, and targeting hard to reach groups. We will also contribute up to **£1.5m over three years to the new Empowerment Fund** for organisations involved in community engagement in planning.
- 4.54 In addition to this support, we will be allocating up to **£4m over three years to local planning authorities in England** to promote community participation in planning, whether at individual or group level.
- 4.55 To develop skills in community engagement, we will work with the Royal Town Planning Institute on the **community planning content** of their education and lifelong-learning programmes. We will also work with the Planning Advisory Service to ensure professionals have access to appropriate good practice and information. It is important for planners to develop stronger skills in communicating the purpose behind local and regional plans, and how and when communities can influence them.
- 4.56 We will also **extend the planning bursary scheme** by £1m between 2009 and 2011; this will bring another 45 planners a year into the system and help ease staffing pressures so that more time can be spent working more directly and proactively with communities.

Empowering tenants

- 4.57 Tenants groups have campaigned over many decades to be involved in decisions about their homes, notably fair levels of rent and decent standards of repair. Today, one in five people engaged in civic activism is a member of a tenants' group or committee: possibly as many as three-quarters of a million people.⁶⁷ The Government is on the side of tenants in social housing who want to have a direct influence and say over the running of their homes, estates and neighbourhoods.
- 4.58 Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) have successfully managed social housing estates for many years. In many places they are ideally placed to use their skills, experience and community roots to influence and deliver other neighbourhood

⁶⁷ Based on analysis of Citizenship Survey data (April to December 2007).

services. We want to encourage those TMOs that wish to do this by **offering support from neighbourhood management specialists** and developing a practical toolkit to assist them.

- 4.59 For the first time **a single body – the Tenant Services Authority**⁶⁸ – will be responsible for protecting all social tenants in all forms of social housing. The Tenant Services Authority aims to put social tenants at the heart of regulation. It will have objectives to ensure protection and choice for tenants and to ensure they are involved in the management of their own homes. We are also committed to establishing a **National Tenant Voice**, to ensure tenants have a powerful voice and expertise at national level.
- 4.60 In 2000 the Government introduced **Tenant Participation Compacts**: agreements between councils and their tenants on how tenants would be engaged in decision-making and how the agreements would be reviewed. The best of these agreements engage local residents, especially groups such as young people, people with disabilities and people without English as a first language. They lead to better decisions and value for money. Since 2000, the landscape of social housing has been transformed, with more arms-length management organisations (ALMOs) responsible for managing social housing and changes to the number and operations of registered social landlords (RSLs). Therefore, we will review Tenant Participation Compacts to take into account changes to the social housing sector, the new 'duty to involve' on councils and new arrangements such as Local Strategic Partnerships and neighbourhood management.
- 4.61 We want tenants to have **more choice and control over where they live**. Our programme of 'choice-based lettings' offers this. We will expand this scheme with an extra £2m until 2010.
- 4.62 The Housing Green paper set out our increased ambition for more homes to meet growing demand.⁶⁹ We are producing a **toolkit on empowering people** in the decisions about housing growth in their area.

⁶⁸ The establishment of the Tenant Services Authority is subject to the passage of legislation. The Tenant Services Authority will be created by the Housing and Regeneration Bill which has not, at the time of publication, received Royal Assent.

⁶⁹ Communities and Local Government (2007) *Homes for the Future: More Affordable, More Sustainable – the Housing Green Paper*. London: Communities and Local Government

4.63 We support the spread of strong, viable, well managed, financially robust and democratically accountable **housing cooperatives**, where homes are owned by residents in mutual organisations, rooted in the principles of democracy. Being a member of a housing cooperative can lead to other forms of engagement. For example 10 per cent of tenants living in Redditch Co-operative Homes are also school governors. We have supported the call for evidence from the Mutuality in Housing Commission and will be considering the findings of their report which is exploring how mutual housing solutions could successfully be expanded in England once it is published.

Marc Gardiner and fellow tenants improve their tower block

Marc Gardiner could remember the community room at the bottom of his tower block as a hub of the local community. The room was used for activities such as a very popular bingo night and adult evening classes. However, this community room had been closed down and left empty so Marc decided to get involved in trying to get the room open and used again.

Marc has been active in his community in Plymouth for many years. He is currently the Chair of the area's New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme Board and previously set up and chaired a residents' group for seven years. He believes his past experiences have helped in working towards opening the community centre.

The first thing Marc did was to resurrect the residents' group, which he was then keen to open up to the wider community. "I was impressed with the number of local people who were up for getting involved," Marc said about the way the community has supported the project.

Once the community group was established, they spent time understanding the challenges and issues they faced in getting the community room reopened. They made progress by working with the council and by thinking of creative solutions to problems.

Together they are now achieving some success. The community room is open and is used for meetings to discuss the new activities they will offer. They have already hosted a bingo and social night and are organising day trips in a mini bus borrowed from the local NDC regeneration project.

It's hoped that in the future, the community room will play host to evening classes, table tennis, darts and music events as well as being a hub of activity in the local community.

Empowering older people

4.64 In an ageing society it is particularly important that older people are actively involved in shaping local services. In June 2008 the Department of Work and Pensions launched a **review of older people's engagement with Government**.⁷⁰ This will examine the current arrangements for the engagement of older people and how these arrangements inform policy and actions of government at all levels. The review will report in the autumn. In addition, we will be refreshing our strategy for older people, *Opportunity Age*, over the coming months.⁷¹ Communities and Local Government's recent 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' strategy highlighted how we would empower older people to live independently in their own homes for longer, creating more choice and control for people over their lives.⁷²

Empowering young people

4.65 We know that young people are disengaged from formal politics but they cannot be dismissed as 'apathetic'. Sixty-seven per cent of 18-24 year olds say they are interested in local issues.⁷³ They are more likely to participate in regular informal voluntary activity than older people and are also more likely to be involved in some types of informal social activity. For instance, young people, in particular, have been at the forefront of online social networking. According to the 2007 survey of *The Internet in Britain*, the largest difference in use of social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace and Bebo was based on people's age.⁷⁴

4.66 The **Youth Citizenship Commission** chaired by Jonathon Tonge, Professor of Politics at Liverpool University, is due to report in spring 2009 and will be considering how to increase young people's participation in politics, how active citizenship can be promoted through volunteering and community engagement and how political systems can reflect the communication preferences of young people. The Commission will also lead a consultation with young people on whether the voting age should be lowered to 16.

⁷⁰ See www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmwms/archive/080522.htm#hddr_17

⁷¹ see www.dwp.gov.uk/opportunity_age/

⁷² Communities and Local Government (2008) *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for housing in an ageing society*. London: Communities and Local Government

⁷³ The Electoral Commission and Hansard Society (2007) *Audit of Political Engagement*.

⁷⁴ Dutton, W and Heksper, E (2007) *The Internet in Britain*. Oxford: University of Oxford.

- 4.67 It is important for local authorities to engage meaningfully with young people to allow them to influence the services they use and to work with adults in their communities on issues of common concern. Such work should be part of the local children and young people's plans.
- 4.68 In *Aiming High for Young People: a ten-year strategy for positive activities*⁷⁵ we set out the importance of empowering young people across the services they use, backed by measures to ensure they have real influence over spending decisions. These included the extension of the Youth Opportunities Fund and Youth Capital Fund until at least 2011 and we expect local authorities to devolve 25 per cent of their positive activities budget to young people's influence by 2018. Subsequently the new *myplace* programme was launched by DCSF on 3 April 2008 to provide new and improved youth facilities across the country explicitly driven by the active participation of young people and their views and needs.
- 4.69 In 2005, we established 'young advisors' to create a pool of young people aged 16-21 to help public bodies in their policy-making and delivery of services. There are now 38 schemes, with 250 trained young advisors. Forty per cent of the young advisors are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. We will support the Young Advisors charity to make young advisors available in more local areas. There are also other ways for young people to engage such as being a member of a parish 'Youth Council'.
- 4.70 Many existing initiatives such as the Youth Opportunities Fund, the Youth Capital Fund and young advisors are having a visible impact on the ground with more young people getting involved in local decision-making and more benefitting from provision that is relevant to their needs and aspirations. However, there is scope to go much further and to give young people a bigger say. Innovative community leadership programmes (see Chapter 2) will help here.
- 4.71 We will establish a system for young advisors aged 16-21 to have **direct access to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government** to give a young person's perspective as policy is being formulated and implemented.

⁷⁵ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2007) *Aiming High for Young People: a ten-year strategy for positive activities*. London. DCSF.

- 4.72 We are also establishing a national Young Muslims' Advisory Group (YMAG) to talk directly to government on issues, aspirations and concerns that affect the lives of young Muslims in England.⁷⁶
- 4.73 We will set up a **programme for young people to 'shadow' government ministers**, and other leading political figures such as elected mayors.
- 4.74 DCSF is also investing £6m to create a new national institute for youth leadership. This will work with Communities and Local Government to create a programme of **internships** for young people to work with local councillors to learn about the workings of local democracy and offer their perspective to councillors and officers.
- 4.75 DCSF has also established a Youth Sector Development Fund of up to £100m to support third sector organisations to expand their provision and to support young people in setting up and running social enterprises to provide positive activities for their peers.

⁷⁶ See www.nya.org.uk/information/100598/109667/113489/youngmuslimadvisorygroup/

Young Mayor taking forward views of young people in Tower Hamlets

The young people of Tower Hamlets have recently elected their second Young Mayor, Akram Hussain. He is supported in his new role by Alex Kuye and Faiza Mukith, the new Deputy Young Mayors.



The Young Mayor and his two Deputies carry real responsibilities, taking forward the views of young people in the borough to adult decision makers.

Young people have an elected local voice that can represent them not just locally, but also on a national stage through the UK Youth Parliament.

The Young Mayors and Deputy Young Mayors frequently appear alongside the Mayor, Leader and Lead Members at key events, and have the opportunity to job shadow them.

They contribute to Cabinet decisions affecting young people. The Young Mayor and Deputy Young Mayors hold a budget of £30,000 and consult other young people about how the budget should be used. Last year following consultation, the budget was spent on new equipment for local youth clubs. They regularly consult other young people about issues affecting them in Tower Hamlets. They also feedback to young people what actions they and the council have taken.

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/templates/news/detail.cfm?newscd=8882

What difference can I make? ... as a tenant

How someone's accommodation is managed, maintained and repaired can make a big difference to their well-being. As many as three-quarters of a million people are already involved in decisions about their homes but in the future they will be able to make even more of a difference. So what can you do?

How can I access information?

- I can find out about tenants' and residents' groups in my area from my council website
- I can see what I can expect from my housing authority by finding out about their housing policies on my council's website
- I can compare the performance of my housing association through information published by the new Tenant Services Authority

How can I have an influence and hold people to account?

- I can get involved in the management of my home
- I can sign a petition if I need to

How can I get redress when things go wrong?

- I should be told how complaints will be dealt with
- if I am unhappy, I can take my complaint to the local government ombudsman or if I am a housing association tenant the housing ombudsman
- if I have a serious problem with my landlord I may be able to refer it to the new Tenant Services Authority who will have strong powers to get these problems sorted out
- I can share my concerns and campaign for change as part of the National Tenant Voice network

How can I run something myself?

- I can build on my experience in housing issues by managing other neighbourhood services such as a local park or street environment
- I can help set up a housing cooperative where homes are owned by residents in mutual organisations or a community land trust to deliver affordable housing



Chapter 5

Challenge

Honest disagreement is often a good sign of progress.

**Mahatma Gandhi
(1869–1948)**

Chapter 5

Challenge

How do I hold to account the people who exercise power in my locality?

- 5.1 This chapter outlines how people can hold officials to account through new powers of petitioning, and ways in which we will establish more visible and accountable local leaders by encouraging more powerful elected mayors.

Overview and scrutiny committees

- 5.2 Introduced in 2000 in England, overview and scrutiny committees hold council Cabinet members, the council and other public bodies to account. They work in a similar way to Select Committees in Parliament and give councillors the power to champion issues and challenge council leaders and officers, on behalf of their constituents. We want to **raise the visibility of the scrutiny function** to ensure that people are aware of this powerful tool at their disposal.
- 5.3 We will do this by encouraging councils to consider new approaches to scrutiny, including:
- encouraging more creative involvement of the public, for example through holding deliberative events along the lines of 'America Speaks' (large scale citizen engagement forums involving up to 5,000 people)
 - moving committee meetings and hearings out of the town hall and into the community, and considering webcasting
 - greater public involvement in suggesting and selecting topics for review
 - making information more readily available and accessible on websites and at council offices

5.4 In addition, we will make changes to the scrutiny function by:

- further enhancing the powers of overview and scrutiny committees in local authorities to require information from partners on a broader range of issues
- if necessary providing councils in areas with district and county councils with a power to combine resources in 'area' scrutiny committees
- requiring some dedicated scrutiny resource in county and unitary councils

Increasing visibility and accountability of local officers

5.5 We will increase the **visibility of local public officers** so that they are all open to public scrutiny and questioning from local communities. A key part of the role of chairs or chief executives of a local public body should be that they face a regular public hearing. It should be expressed in their job objectives and could be introduced as part of strengthened overview and scrutiny procedures. This happens already in many public services such as the NHS but we want to bring a consistency across local public services.

5.6 We also propose to consult on a **new right to petition to hold local officers to account**. If enough people served by a local service or agency sign a local petition then, senior officers working for a local public body should be required to attend a public hearing such as overview and scrutiny.

5.7 These public meetings should be open to all local residents and be chaired by the local mayor or council leader. There should be an open agenda. We would expect these events to be open to the local media, and to be webcast live. These hearings would give senior managers the opportunity to explain their activities, describe the hard choices and trade-offs, and listen to people's concerns and questions. Safeguards will be put in place to ensure that the system is not open to abuse. This approach will be developed alongside other existing and new approaches to scrutiny.

5.8 We will support strengthening relationships between professionals in local public bodies by encouraging people from across the public sector to run joint leadership development programmes. This will include establishing the key leadership competencies around community engagement, cohesion and empowerment.

Making police forces more accountable

- 5.9 We will make sure that people have a voice in deciding how policing is delivered, are clear about who represents their interests on crime and policing, and are able to hold the police to account.
- 5.10 Police forces will be held to account for tackling local priorities decided by local people and for meeting service standards set out in the 'Policing Pledge'. Citizens will directly elect an individual to represent their interests in relation to crime and policing. Further proposals on this will be set out in the forthcoming Policing Green Paper.

Accountability for health services

- 5.11 We have introduced extensive reforms to make the NHS more accountable to its users. We have given overview and scrutiny committees of local authorities the power to review and scrutinise local health services; obliged commissioners of health and social care services to respond to Local Involvement Networks (LINks), the new recognised structures by which patients and the public can influence their local services; put a legal duty on NHS organisations to involve people and their representatives in the planning and development of services; and made sure that Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) must report back publicly on how they have responded to local views.
- 5.12 As indicated in the Department of Health's consultation on the new NHS Constitution, we are encouraging PCTs to enhance their accountability to their local communities as they determine most appropriate for their locality, including creating a local membership system or developing stronger partnerships with local government. For example, PCTs already have the ability to invite a councillor or their mayor to sit on the board as a non-voting member and many PCTs do this already. This can be mirrored with a reciprocal arrangement where the PCT chair (or another board member) attends the council cabinet for health related matters.⁷⁷
- 5.13 We will also be inviting LINks to come forward if they would like to pilot expanding their remit beyond health and social care issues.

⁷⁷ See http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_085814

Hull Primary Care Trust (PCT) create their own local membership system

Hull PCT is drawing up a membership system similar to Foundation Trusts, with different 'constituencies' for patients and public, staff and the voluntary sector. There will then be three tiers of membership: core members; 'NHS Hull Champions'; and a shadow board of governors.

Core members will complete questionnaires and attend focus groups and public meetings. The 'champions' will work proactively with the PCT as partners, generate health information relevant to the PCT, and support Locality Boards in identifying local health priorities. Members of the shadow board of governors will be elected from the 'NHS Hull Champions'. The shadow board of governors will establish a programme of work as defined by the membership and in line with the corporate objectives of the PCT. Hull PCT is also trying to co-ordinate its membership with the local acute and mental health trusts, who are both applying for Foundation Trust status.

www.hullpct.nhs.uk

More directly-elected mayors

- 5.14 The Government supports the directly-elected mayoral model for local leadership, because it provides visible leadership for a local area. We believe that elected mayors make it clearer who is responsible for local services, and have the potential to engage more people in politics. A survey in 2004 showed that 57 per cent could name their elected mayor from a prompt list, compared to 25 per cent who could name their council leader⁷⁸.
- 5.15 The potential for local areas to elect their mayor was established in the Local Government Act 2000. Since then 12 places have moved to a directly-elected mayor: Bedford, Doncaster, Hackney, Hartlepool, Lewisham, Mansfield, Middlesbrough, Newham, North Tyneside, Stoke-on-Trent, Torbay and Watford. Five are independents, five are Labour, one is Conservative and one is Liberal Democrat.

⁷⁸ Randle, A (2004) *Mayors in mid-term: lessons from the eighteen months of directly-elected mayors*, London: NLGN 2004.

5.16 We have also established a directly-elected Mayor for London and a Greater London Assembly, with a budget of £11.4 billion. This re-establishment of London-wide government, after an absence of 14 years following the abolition of the Greater London Council (GLC) in 1986, has been deemed a huge success and is now an accepted part of the lives of Londoners. No serious commentator, lobby group or political party now wants to reverse the decision to have a directly-elected mayor and assembly for London. The existence of a high-profile mayor for London helped our capital win the 2012 Olympics.

5.17 We want to make it easier for people to demand that their local leaders move to establishing a directly-elected mayor through a referendum, so:

- we will consult on permitting on-line petitioning as well as traditional paper petitions to demonstrate support for a referendum
- we will consult on reducing the threshold for a petition to trigger a mayoral referendum from 5 per cent of voters – perhaps to 2, 3 or 4 per cent
- we will remove the stipulation that no referendum may be held for 10 years if a referendum is lost and instead move to a system where a new referendum may be held after four years in these circumstances

5.18 We will make the move to a directly-elected mayoralty more attractive to local politicians with an expectation that directly-elected mayors, where they exist, would chair the Local Strategic Partnership and, be the new Crime and Policing representative, as announced by the Prime Minister in the draft legislative programme for 2008-09.

Comprehensive Area Assessment

5.19 From April 2009, new independent assessments of local areas will be introduced. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will relate people's experiences of living in an area to how local agencies work together and how local public services can be improved. The level and quality of public engagement and empowerment will be tested and evaluated as part of the CAA process, including how well vulnerable and marginalised groups have been involved.



Chapter 6

Redress

When complaints are freely heard, deeply considered and speedily reformed, then is the utmost bound of civil liberty attained that wise men look for.

John Milton (1608–1674)
English Poet, Historian
and Scholar

Follow the customer, if they change... we change.

Sir Terry Leahy,
(Chief Executive, Tesco plc)

Chapter 6

Redress

How do I get swift and fair redress when things go wrong, and make sure it doesn't happen to someone else?

- 6.1 There will unfortunately be occasions where services do not meet people's expectations. This chapter looks at how to make sure that expectations are clear, how citizens can seek redress and how redress can be used to improve performance in the future.
- 6.2 The days are over when people accepted a wait of many weeks for a phone to be installed, or waited months for repairs to their home, or waited years for their NHS operation. People no longer accept housing offices that close for lunch, or phone lines that shut down at 5pm. People want systems and services that match their busy lifestyles and working patterns. People also expect their complaints to be dealt with promptly and with courtesy when systems fail.
- 6.3 Around a fifth of the adult population contact their local council every year with a complaint about their area or the quality of the council's services.⁷⁹ However this may not represent the full extent of dissatisfaction as not everyone will have the knowledge or confidence to make an official complaint or they may not feel their complaint will make a difference. This is especially true when people are unsure who is responsible for a local service.
- 6.4 Many people who do complain feel that their complaints are handled poorly. Only 34 per cent of those who had contacted their council in the last year were satisfied with the way their local authority handled their complaint.⁸⁰ A number of factors influence satisfaction. Knowing the name of the person dealing with the complaint (35 per cent), keeping people informed (32 per cent) and the speed of response (32 per cent) are seen as particularly important. Knowing the organisation will treat complaints fairly (32 per cent) is also mentioned by many.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Communities and Local Government (2007) *Best Value User Satisfaction Surveys 2006-07 – General Survey National Report*, London. Communities and Local Government.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*

⁸¹ MORI (2003) *Ombudsmen Awareness Survey 2003. Survey of the General Public and Advisory Bodies*, London: Parliamentary, Health Service and Local Government Ombudsmen.

- 6.5 Despite this, a majority of people believe that public services have become better at dealing with complaints: the proportion believing that public services match or outperform private companies rose from 47 per cent in 1997 to 55 per cent in 2005.⁸²

The principles that underpin complaints procedures should be that:

- the citizen is the most important person in any transaction, and has a right to decent, agreed standards of service and care
- everyone should have easy access to clear information
- both sides should have a clear understanding of what is expected from each other
- systems of redress and compensation should be clearly explained and understood
- services should learn from the complaints received and make sure that this learning influences delivery next time

- 6.6 Local government and other agencies take their responsibilities to handle complaints very seriously. Most have robust systems in place. Websites like Directgov⁸³, and phone lines such as Consumer Direct and 101⁸⁴ give a first point of contact to raise an issue with your council or a public body. The Audit Commission's guide to complaining about local public services explains where to go if you have a complaint, and the steps to take if you want to take it further, including the role of the Ombudsman where there may have been maladministration.⁸⁵

⁸² MORI (2003) *Ombudsmen Awareness Survey 2003, Survey of the General Public and Advisory Bodies*, London: Parliamentary, Health Service and Local Government Ombudsmen.

⁸³ Directgov gives information on how to make a complaint about all public bodies, covering the Ombudsman services and the procedure in place for the NHS, police and housing, and will help you to locate your local MP or council, and take you directly to their webpages describing the local authority complaints procedure. www.direct.gov.uk

⁸⁴ The 101 scheme, which has been piloted in a number of areas, shows the partnership working that new forms of technology can make possible.

⁸⁵ www.audit-commission.gov.uk/complaints/faqs.asp

- 6.7 The Local Government Ombudsman's new Access and Advice Centre has just opened in Coventry. The centre provides a first point of contact for all enquiries and complaints, and offers advice to callers so they can make an informed decision about taking their complaint forward. An improved website makes it easier to submit enquiries or complaints by phone, email and in writing.⁸⁶
- 6.8 Confusion can arise when a number of agencies are involved in handling a complaint, as can happen where local services are being provided through partnerships. We are therefore **reviewing the Local Ombudsman's jurisdiction** to make sure that any limitations on where the Ombudsman can act are in the genuine interests of people, and to ensure all partners involved in complaints including the Local Ombudsman, have the flexibility to work together.
- 6.9 We also expect that local service providers will move towards systems of **accessible, interactive contact** for individuals to raise their concerns, for example Salford Council's 'Report it!' scheme under which you can ask online for services, including reporting antisocial behaviour or flytipping; or the *Love Lewisham* website on which residents can report graffiti, upload photos, receive immediate acknowledgement and track progress as it occurs.

Community contracts

- 6.10 New rights and powers must be balanced by responsibilities and duties. The Young Foundation has produced guidance for local authorities⁸⁷ to promote more community contracts. This guidance states that:

"Community contracts create a clear set of obligations on the side of communities and the people who deliver their services, and encourage the idea of accountability between people and agencies."

- 6.11 We would like to see the idea of Community Contracts developing in every neighbourhood. Community contracts are in place in several areas including Manchester, Milton Keynes, Bolton and Walsall, with 11 further pilot schemes underway. These contracts bring together councils, police, the local NHS and community groups to agree priorities for action. In return, people collectively

⁸⁶ www.lgo.org.uk/

⁸⁷ Communities and Local Government (2008) *How to publish a local charter*, Young Foundation for Communities and Local Government: London.

agree to take responsibility for a local park, running after-school clubs or keeping a community centre open. For example, in the Peel Hall neighbourhood in South Manchester 60 residents received free hanging baskets, in return for a commitment to keep them watered for neighbours if they were away.

A contract helps restore community pride in Staffordshire

People living in the Biddulph East ward of Staffordshire Moorlands have good reason to take greater pride in their community.

The residents are among the first in the country to have a contract informing them clearly not only of who does what locally – whether removing abandoned cars or cleaning up dog mess – but how they can play a part in making their community a cleaner and safer place to live.



The Community Pride contract was the response of the Moorlands Together Local Strategic Partnership – supported by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council – to residents' concerns.

Residents and local partners spent six months drawing up the eight-page charter, which has been distributed to all 2,700 households in the area.

Resident Dave Davies, a member of the local safety and environment sub-group, said: "Before, nobody took any pride – they accepted and lived with things. Now the community is involved and can see the difference."

The contract has already made a visible difference to the Staffordshire community. Residents complained that the streets were being swept on a Monday, a day before the bin collection, leaving dirty streets all week. A simple rota switch solved the problem.

People are also expected to play their part in helping to deliver local services – such as community gardens – as part of the agreement. And after a year of operation, most people think it has been a success.

www.staffsmoorlands.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=650

6.12 The current pilot schemes have been running since the beginning of the year. We are extending the pilots until the end of 2008 and we will evaluate these current schemes at the end of the year as part of looking at how to develop more contracts in other areas.

Community pledgebanks

6.13 Pledgebanks help people to get things done by letting them register a pledge saying they will do something, but only if a certain number of other people do the same. People can use www.pledgebank.com to set one up. In a community pledgebank individuals would pledge to provide a certain amount of resource (such as a small sum of money or their skills and expertise), to a central pot that would be used to further the priorities identified in the community contract. **We would like to hear from local areas who would be interested in running a community pledgebank** alongside or as part of a community contract (or a similar agreement that sets out local priorities, for example a local Policing Pledge). We will look to start piloting this approach with interested areas in 2009.

What happens when services fail

- 6.14 Many organisations, in the private and public sectors, have schemes of financial redress if promises are broken.
- 6.15 For example, Orbit Housing Association offers its residents £10, plus £2 per day for every day that a repair has not been completed past the agreed date as part of its Right to Repair scheme. Some train operators give customers vouchers if the train is cancelled or delayed and some companies delivering groceries or takeaway food offer free food if the delivery is late.
- 6.16 We believe that these schemes offer two benefits: firstly they serve as an incentive for service improvement and efficiency; and secondly they make the service user feel that the service-provider is there to serve them, not the other way round. The amounts of financial redress – either pecuniary or a voucher – are a token, but they are a reminder of who matters most in the transaction: the citizen. The schemes which currently operate in the public sector do not place an undue burden on budgets, and by driving up efficiency, they may save money over the medium term.

- 6.17 We will commission a concise review into the feasibility and practicality of introducing and extending the idea of redress for citizens when their council services fail to meet agreed targets. This **review into redress** would review current arrangements across the public services, in the private sector, and arrangements in other countries, and make recommendations. We anticipate that the review report will be submitted to the Secretary of State in early 2009.

How a housing association pays to say sorry

Residents who experience poor service from Raglan Housing Association may get more than an apology. They can also be given vouchers worth up to £50 each to spend on the High Street to compensate them for any distress caused.

The Dorset-based housing association, which owns and manages over 10,800 homes across Southern England and the Midlands, has introduced the initiative alongside a new customer charter for its residents.

This approach is not just good for residents, it makes good business sense too. Raglan knows that it takes valuable time to win back unhappy customers, taking resources away from other activities.

www.raglan.org



What difference can I make... to planning my neighbourhood?

Do you want to improve the places where you live, work and play? Are you interested in the provision of housing, renewable energy and green space, the regeneration of deprived areas, protection of old buildings or provision of other services and facilities in your neighbourhood? If you are then you need to get involved in planning your neighbourhood. So what can you do?

How can I get more active?

- I can get involved in the preparation of the strategies for my area. For example, I can contribute to my local development framework
- I can take the lead and help my community write its own plan
- I can get involved in planning decisions which affect me through responding to consultations and contributing to public hearings and inquiries

How can I access information?

- I can find out how I can get involved by looking at my local authority's statement of community involvement
- I can find out more about the big planning issues in my neighbourhood by visiting the planning section on my local authority's website

How can I have an influence?

In order to influence I need to understand when and how to influence:

- I can visit the Planning Portal at www.planningportal.gov.uk/ or get in touch with Planning Aid (Tel: 0121 693 1201, www.planningaid.rtpi.org.uk) to get information on influencing local plans and decisions
- I can look at The Handy Guide to Planning (www.urbanforum.org.uk/pubs/index.html) or www.communityplanning.net for information on the planning process

The Planning Bill, currently before Parliament, also sets out clear opportunities for local people to influence decisions on major infrastructure. So, for example, infrastructure developers will be legally required to consult local communities before they submit an application for development.



Chapter 7

Standing for office

Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, for the people.

Abraham Lincoln
(1809–1865)

Chapter 7

Standing for office

How do I stand for office and what support should I get?

7.1 This chapter is about how people can take on a civic role and stand for office, especially for their local council, building on the recommendations of the Councillors Commission.⁸⁸

More representative local councillors

7.2 According to the 2006 Census of local authority councillors:

- only 29 per cent of councillors are women, despite over half the population being women
- only four per cent of councillors are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, despite nearly 10 per cent of the population describing themselves as coming from an ethnic background
- only 0.3 per cent of councillors are aged under 25⁸⁹

7.3 These figures are an indication of a serious weakness in our local democracy and the Government is committed to ensuring that local representatives reflect the local communities they serve. This will not only lead to a fairer system, with more effective representation but will also encourage people to serve as councillors because they can see role models 'like them'.

⁸⁸ Communities and Local Government (2007), *Representing the Future: The Councillors Commission*, London: Communities and Local Government.

⁸⁹ IDeALGALGAR (2007) *2006 National Census of Local Authority Councillors in England*, London: IDeALGALGAR.

The Councillors Commission

7.4 The Local Government White Paper 2006 established a Councillors Commission, chaired by Dame Jane Roberts, to review the incentives and barriers to people standing and serving as councillors.⁹⁰ Their report, *Representing the Future*, published in December 2007, addressed the many issues that affect people's desire to be a councillor and their ability to stand for election; as well as their capacity if successful, to take on and stay in the role. It also looked at how to ensure that councillors' public service was fully recognised.

7.5 The Commission established as their founding principles that:

- local authorities are key to promoting local democratic engagement
- promoting a sense that an individual is able to influence the democratic process and course of events is the key to engagement
- councillors are most effective as locally elected representatives when they have similar life experiences to their constituents
- the relationship and the connections between councillors and their constituents is key to effective representation
- it should be less daunting to become a councillor, better support should be provided once elected as a councillor and it should be less daunting to stop being a councillor

7.6 The Government endorses these principles. Our full response to the Councillors Commission is being published alongside this White Paper.⁹¹

The central role of local councillors

7.7 The Government believes that local councillors are central to our national life and to our system of democracy. We recognise the vital role of councillors in shaping and delivering local services, speaking up for people, championing their areas, and keeping our democracy alive in every part of the country. We see councillors as true 'local heroes', deserving our respect and support.

⁹⁰ Communities and Local Government (2006), *The Local Government White Paper*. London: Communities and Local Government.

⁹¹ See www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communitiesincontrol

- 7.8 Earlier in this White Paper, we set out our proposals to introduce a new **'duty to promote democracy'** for local authorities, and to enable councils to provide **incentives to vote** in local elections. These are both recommendations made by the Councillors Commission.

Removing political restrictions

- 7.9 We will **amend the 'Widdicombe rules'** (section 2 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989) which forbid council workers, above a certain salary band, from being active in party politics, so that only the most senior council officers such as chief executives and chief planning officers continue to be barred from political activity along with other 'politically sensitive' posts. This is a demonstration of our desire to rehabilitate politics as a legitimate and worthy activity. Restrictions on council employees being councillors in their local authority in which they work will, however, be retained.

How Leicester attracted new councillors

Fifteen new names were on the ballot papers when Leicester voters went to the polls in May 2007 thanks to a drive to attract new councillors.

There were too few candidates coming forward, particularly from the city's diverse ethnic communities.

The council put posters across the city. Articles appeared in the local press. Voluntary and community groups were emailed, open evenings were held, and an informative website answered any questions people might have. The Mayor also hosted events.

"There are no formal qualifications required to become a councillor," stressed Head of Democratic Services, Liz Reid-Jones. "Life experience is one of the best things you can bring to the role."

The 'Make Your Voice Heard' campaign included events with presentations on 'Life as a Councillor', as well as sessions on the nomination and election processes. There was even a 'speed dating' session where prospective candidates could discuss their concerns with existing councillors. An information pack answered people's questions.

Seven of the 15 who stood were elected to serve as councillors.

www.leicester.gov.uk/your-council--services/council-and-democracy/local-democracy/become-a-councillor

- 7.10 We recognise the excellent work currently being done by councillors but we now want to do more to recognise and reward local councillors, and to encourage more people from a wider range of backgrounds to consider serving as a councillor.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women Councillors Taskforce

- 7.11 Less than one per cent of local councillors are black, asian and minority ethnic women. To be more reflective of society this needs to increase more than five fold to around 1000. At the current rate of increase this could take more than 130 years. Therefore a taskforce has been established by the Government to help more black, asian and minority ethnic women to become councillors, and so make councils more representative of the community. The taskforce is chaired by Baroness Uddin, the first Muslim woman in the House of Lords.
- 7.12 Members include councillors from across Britain, from a range of ethnicities and political parties. The taskforce will take practical action to address this under-representation. This will include mentoring and outreach events in community centres to make the role of councillors more widely known and better understood. This work will involve organisations such as the Local Government Association (LGA), Operation Black Vote (a non-partisan organisation working to address the under-representation of black and minority ethnic communities in political and civic life) and the Fawcett Society. This will focus on training, establishing networking groups, strengthening the evidence base and working with local councils, political parties and organisations like the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA).

Operation Black Vote and Bristol City Council work together to increase representation

Bristol's Councillor Shadowing Scheme is run jointly by Operation Black Vote and Bristol City Council. It addresses the under-representation of black and minority ethnic members within all levels of the Council and helps to ensure that black and minority ethnic communities have confidence in the democratic process.



The participants shadowed high-level councillors from the three main political parties for a minimum of eight days over a six-month period. The shadow councillors became involved in local life and party politics, learning about the role of councillors, the serving officers and how the authority works.

Yasminah Beebeejaun, who shadowed Cllr John Deasy and Cllr Jenny Smith during the 2007 scheme, said:

"It was much more of an insight than I could have imagined and really made me feel part of the political process."

Liberal Democrat councillor John Kiely, who mentored shadow Maleeka Bokhari, said:

"I cannot speak more highly of the scheme. It was a great experience and a privilege. It has given my shadow an opportunity to experience every aspect of political life. It has also had an unexpected effect on me as I saw the life of a member of the black and minority ethnic community more closely than usual and recognised some of the very different cultural issues facing those from the black and minority ethnic community who want to engage within mainstream politics."

Graduates of the Councillor Shadowing Scheme have gone on to be involved in a range of civic governance roles such as school governors and have stood at local elections. The programme won a Local Government Chronicle award in 2006.

www.obv.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=570&Itemid=128

Positive images of councillors

- 7.13 We support the Councillors Commission in its desire to see a more positive profile for councillors. We agree that the media have a responsibility to their audiences to help people understand local and national democracy. This is reflected in the public service broadcasters' remits. We welcome the recent public commitment to this from the BBC.
- 7.14 People must know what their councillors do, particularly if we are to encourage new candidates to stand. Many authorities already set out this role clearly for the wider public on their websites and in leaflets. We welcome the Improvement and Development Agency's (IDeA) commitment to develop model descriptions of the role of a councillor for councils to use. The Urban Forum's recent publication of *A Guide to Your Council*, providing information on how local authorities work and what they are responsible for, will also help people understand what their council does.
- 7.15 We support the Local Government Association's (LGA's) Reputation Campaign⁹², which sets out a dozen ways in which councils can be better communicators. However, there is still too much confusion and reluctance within local government about how far councils should promote and support councillors' activities. We want to clarify this and ensure that any guidance makes clear the legitimate support which should be given to councillors, including to those with disabilities. We recognise the need to review the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Government Publicity⁹³ and other central guidance which sets out which activities are deemed party political or official. We will formally **consult on potential changes to the Publicity Code**, and associated guidance in the autumn. This will include guidance which relates to support for disabled people.
- 7.16 But public confidence requires citizens to be clear about what they can expect from their councillors. We welcome the LGA and IDeA's plans to establish indicative role descriptions, setting out what councillors should do.

⁹² See www.reputation.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=1

⁹³ See www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/155067.pdf

Powers for councillors

- 7.17 Councils already have powers to delegate **discretionary localised budgets for councillors** to allocate to local groups or services. This allows councillors to target their budget on the concerns they judge to be the highest priorities of local electorates, and we would encourage all councils to make use of this power. Councillors may, of course, use participatory budgeting techniques to decide how to spend their budget.
- 7.18 Section 236 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 allows councils to make arrangements so that individual councillors can exercise more power in their ward. A local councillor could, for example, have the power to get a dumped fridge in the local park removed. This will enable councillors to assist their constituents in a way that sees quick and direct results, giving local councillors powers to get things done.

Support for councillors

- 7.19 The Councillors Commission recognised the need for councils to provide more effective support to councillors; and to organise council business in ways that make the best use of councillors' time. We welcome the work that the local government sector is doing here.
- 7.20 We want to support authorities in modernising the way they do business by legislating to enable councillors with caring responsibilities and others, for example those with long journey times, to use information and communication technology **to participate in meetings and vote remotely**. Any such arrangements would need to be balanced with measures to preserve accountability and transparency, so that citizens can remain confident that they are being properly represented by their local councillor.

Aldermen and Alderwomen

- 7.21 When councillors lose their seats or retire, often their experience and knowledge is lost to local government. We want more councils to recognise the contribution of former councillors, and encourage their continuing involvement through existing powers to create Aldermen but also through new powers which we will introduce to enable the use of the title of 'Alderwoman'. An Alderman or Alderwoman is a former elected councillor of good standing, having usually

served at least two full terms of office, who has provided distinguished service. Aldermen and women should be able to use the prefix to their name Alderman, Alderwomen or Ald. instead of Councillor or Cllr.

- 7.22 By recognising their contribution and creating a way in which they can continue to contribute their skills and abilities, we hope that a greater proportion of long-standing councillors will be less reluctant to retire from office and thus create more opportunities for new councillors to stand in seats.

Other ways to serve the local community

- 7.23 There are many more ways to serve the local community than being an elected councillor. We want to open up the opportunities to serve on the other local committees and boards which direct local services. We want the pool of people serving their communities in this way to be deepened and for a refreshing blast of common sense to be applied to decision-making.
- 7.24 In some places there are not enough people with the incentives, knowledge or desire to serve on boards or committees. For example 12 per cent of England's 350,000 school governor places are vacant, with a quarter of places unfilled in some of the poorest and most deprived areas.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Department for Children, Schools and Families (2006) *Briefing Information Sheet – School Governing Bodies: Roles, Responsibilities and Membership*, London: DCSE.

Jennie Henry – a school governor in Manchester

Jennie had long felt she had something to offer and wanted to make a difference. Despite being unsuccessful the first time she stood as a school governor, the next time a vacancy arose she stood again and was successful.

Jennie is currently Chair of the Governors. She chairs termly full governors meetings, as well as staffing and budget meetings. She has regular contact with the Head of the school and as Chair is responsible for disseminating information to other governors and feeding back to governors from meetings she attends.

Sometimes it is difficult for Jennie to fit her work for the governors around her family commitments. So her employers at Manchester City Council have made it easier to fit her duties as a governor around her work commitments by giving her a leave allowance of 1.5 days per annum.

However Jennie remains absolutely convinced that the rewards of her work as a governor far outweigh the pressures placed upon her other commitments. Jennie says of these rewards:

“Being a school governor has given me a greater understanding of the complexities of schools in general. This has, in turn, helped in my position as Central District Team Manager in Children’s Services at Manchester City Council. As I truly believe that every child does matter, maintaining this position in this type of community creates many challenges. I get a great sense of achievement in contributing towards the school’s achievement in addressing these challenges.”

Time off for public duties

7.25 A lack of time is regularly cited as a key barrier to involvement in governance positions.⁹⁵ The current law allows you time off from work for public duties if you are a councillor, a magistrate, a member of a police authority (including the new elected crime and disorder representatives), a health body such as a foundation trust, any statutory tribunal, a school or college governing body, a member of the

⁹⁵ Haberis, A and Prendergrast, J (2007) *Research Report 1. Incentives and Barriers to Becoming and Remaining a Councillor: A Review of the UK Literature*, London: Communities and Local Government
Dalziel, D, Hewitt, E and Evans, L. (2007) *Motivations and Barriers to Citizen Governance*, London: Communities and Local Government.

General Teaching Council, a member of the Environment Agency or Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, a member of a prison monitoring board, or a member of Scottish Water or a water customer consultation panel. We consider that the law works well for these public duties, but, as we spread democracy throughout our society we need to ensure that the law is up-to-date.

7.26 **We will consult on extending the right to time off for public duties** to people serving in the following roles which are decision-making functions in statutory bodies:

- members of probation boards/board members of probation trusts⁹⁶
- members of court boards
- youth offender panel members
- co-opted overview and scrutiny committee members
- lay advisers on Multi-Agency Public Protection Panels

7.27 The Government will also consult on whether roles in the housing sector such as members of Boards of tenant management organisations (TMOs), housing associations or arms length management organisations should be covered. We will ask for views from all stakeholders on this question.

7.28 We also want to encourage people to take on other roles in independent and voluntary or community sector organisations, for example Local Strategic Partnerships or Community Land Trusts, and will consider non-regulatory ways to do this as part of the consultation.

⁹⁶ By April 2010, all Probation Boards will become Probation Trusts.

Better information for employers

- 7.29 We want there to be better information available for employers so they know exactly what undertaking these roles entails for their staff, recognising the valuable transferable skills that an employee performing a civic role can take back into the workplace.⁹⁷ We hope that better informed employers could, as a result, promote the benefits of civic participation to employees.
- 7.30 We are therefore planning to work with local government and employer organisations including the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) to produce an **information pack** for employers on civic roles, outlining the commitments and also the benefits.
- 7.31 There is plenty of good practice we can draw upon. For example, there are around 200 governors of local primary schools among Rolls Royce employees. Rolls Royce support them through an annual conference and an electronic email network and each year make money available for governors to apply for grants for projects to promote science, engineering and technology in their schools⁹⁸. KPMG believe that magistrates not only help towards improving the safety of our communities, they also develop core business skills which are immediately transferred back to the workplace.⁹⁹

Community Mark

- 7.32 The 'Community Mark' run by Business in the Community is a new national standard that publicly recognises companies that are good investors in the community. Any company working in the UK, in any sector, however big or small, can apply. We want the Community Mark to play a role in incentivising more businesses to support their employees undertaking civic roles. Business in the Community will celebrate best practice through case study material and incorporate employee volunteering examples into the guidance notes that companies use when they apply.

⁹⁷ John, P, Gains, F, Goodwin, M, Richardson, L, Rao, N, and Evans, E (2007) *Research Report 4. Improving the Representativeness of Councillors: Learning from Five High Performing Local Authorities in England*, London: Communities and Local Government.

⁹⁸ See <http://www.bitc.org.uk/document.rm?id=6831>

⁹⁹ 'Supporting Magistrates in Your Workplace: A Practical Guide', Business in the Community.

- 7.33 We want to recognise the role the private sector has in supporting empowerment. We will sponsor an **'Award for Excellence'** run by Business in the Community.

Making it easier to serve

- 7.34 Many different public agencies spend significant sums of money in encouraging and recruiting citizens to serve their local communities, for example as school governors or magistrates – through advertising, websites or help-lines. We will make it easier for people to find information on the range of ways they could be active in civic roles in their communities. This will involve directing people to further information, and also allow those running community websites to present information relevant to their local community. So, for example, if someone is interested in becoming a magistrate, but decides not to do so, they can easily investigate another form of service, such as becoming a school governor, prison visitor or member of a youth offending panel.

Accreditation

- 7.35 We want to recognise the contribution citizens make and the skills that they gain when they take up a civic role, whether that be as a councillor or as a member of another board or committee in the community. The National Census of Local Authority Councillors in England in 2006 found that 42 per cent of councillors would welcome the opportunity to gain a more formal qualification for their work as a councillor; this rate increased significantly for female councillors (44 per cent), those from an ethnic minority background (64 per cent) and younger councillors, aged 25-29 (63 per cent)¹⁰⁰. Accreditation might, therefore, be an incentive to those groups currently under-represented in civic roles.
- 7.36 Accreditation would need to be optional for individuals taking part in all civic roles, not necessarily require formal learning or teaching time and be available at different levels, for example level 2 (equivalent to GCSE), level 3 (equivalent to A Level) and possibly level 4 (equivalent to the first year of a higher degree). **We will undertake a review** to find out what relevant qualifications and modules exist and see what could be built upon for this purpose.

¹⁰⁰ IDeALGA/LGAR (2007) 2006 National Census of Local Authority Councillors in England, London: IDeALGA/LGAR.



Communities in control: real people, real power



Chapter 8

Ownership and control

We do not learn to read or write, to ride or swim, by being merely told how to do it, but by doing it, so it is only by practising popular government on a limited scale that the people will ever learn how to exercise it on the larger.

John Stuart Mill (1806–1873)

By 'action group' I mean people who come together to get something done properly, where so far things have been done badly or not at all. They could be concerned about housing, jobs, traffic dangers, run-down neighbourhoods, children's play facilities, conditions at work, shoddy goods, vandalism, nature conservation, police behaviour or a better bus service. They see for themselves what is wrong and they fail to see why everyone should sit around any longer waiting for something to happen.

Tony Gibson, People Power, 1979

Chapter 8

Ownership and control

How can my friends, neighbours and I own and run local services ourselves?

- 8.1 This chapter looks at how citizens can move beyond being consulted or holding officials to account, to how people can own and run services for themselves, either by serving on local boards and committees, or through social enterprises and cooperatives.
- 8.2 Many thousands of people in Britain are active in the running of local community groups and campaigns and in organising and delivering local services. The Government places enormous value on this activity, not only because of the positive impact on people and neighbourhoods, but also because by being involved in running local services individuals can develop their skills, confidence and expertise.

Community ownership

- 8.3 The Government wants to increase the number of people engaged in the running and ownership of local services and assets. We continue to work towards achieving the vision set out by Barry Quirk in his 2007 Review, that in 2020 “in every locality a proportion of all public assets are in the ownership or management of sustainable and energetic community organisations”.¹⁰¹
- 8.4 These assets might include community centres, street markets, swimming pools, playgrounds and tracts of land, as well as derelict facilities such as a disused school, shop or pub.
- 8.5 Where local asset management and ownership works well, it can create a new cadre of active citizens, owning, directing and running a service as well as providing good value for money for local authorities and other public bodies. It can support the creation of new co-operatives, mutuals and social enterprises which are responsive to local needs, reflect local ambitions and which generate loyalty from the local community.

¹⁰¹ Communities and Local Government (2007), *Making Assets Work: The Quirk Review*. London: Communities and Local Government

8.6 Working with local government, professional bodies and third sector partners, we have made good progress in implementing the recommendations of the Quirk Review. We have set out clearly what we believe are the main characteristics of good local authority asset management as a whole¹⁰² and the Audit Commission has published the basis on which they intend to assess the way local authorities manage their assets under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment. A guide to risk management¹⁰³ is now available and revised good practice advice on local authority asset management will shortly be available from Communities and Local Government and the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Twenty local authority areas have made strong advances both on how they approach asset transfer strategically and on individual projects, and capital investment awards worth £30m are being made to refurbish local authority assets for transfer to community management or ownership. We now need to raise the game, spreading the best practice across the country and have announced projects in an additional 30 areas this year.

Asset Transfer Unit

8.7 We will therefore establish an **Asset Transfer Unit** (ATU), building on the work of the Advancing Assets for Communities programme, led by the Development Trusts Association and its partners. This partnership will extend the demonstration programme and will lead a campaign with local authorities and community groups to step up the number of transfers (either of ownership or management), where this is a justified outcome of a strategic approach to asset management, in line with the recommendations of the Quirk Review. Working with Communities and Local Government, the Asset Transfer Unit will review progress after 12 months.

Accountability for assets

8.8 Up to date information on local authority assets should form the basis of a local authority's corporate planning and decision-making. However, in some cases issues around ownership and restrictions on land and property are legally complex or commercially sensitive. But, in general, making as much information as possible available to local individuals and groups, would allow them to openly challenge

¹⁰² Communities and Local Government (2008), *Building on Strong Foundations: a Framework for Local Authority Asset Management*. Communities and Local Government: London

¹⁰³ Communities and Local Government (2008), *Managing Risks in Asset Transfer: A Guide*.

authorities if they think assets are underused. No authority should be simply sitting on underused assets. We also want to see local authorities increasingly working with their other partners to ensure the whole public estate in their area is being used to give maximum value to the local community. We will explore with the Audit Commission, the Local Government Association (LGA) and other partners how we can learn from and disseminate best practice in this area.

Community builders breathe new life into London's South Bank

Millions of people enjoy London's South Bank riverside walkway. The design shops, galleries, restaurants, cafes and bars attract thousands of visitors.

But it was not always like that. By the early 1970s, the South Bank was largely bleak and derelict. The population had fallen from 50,000 to just 4,000.



This situation galvanised people to draw up a planning strategy which would breathe new life into the area with new homes, shops and other facilities.

Central to this was a derelict 13 acre site at Coin Street. Half the land was owned by the Greater London Council (GLC) and the other half by office developers who planned to use the sites for office space and a hotel.

After years of campaigning, the GLC acquired the remaining land and sold the sites for a nominal fee to Coin Street Community Builders (CSCB), a development trust and social enterprise run by local residents.

CSCB set about providing affordable co-operative homes and a full range of services to make the area an attractive place to live.

"We're trying to make the best use of land and to show that people can live closely together and run their own estates in the very centre of one of the richest cities in the world," said CSCB Executive Director Ian Tuckett.

An area that 25 years ago was bleak and undeveloped is today a thriving mixed and balanced neighbourhood, with a growing residential community living in well designed homes and with a wide range of jobs on offer.

www.coinstreet.org

Community Land Trusts

- 8.9 A Community Land Trust (CLT) is an independent organisation which owns or controls land for the benefit of the local community. Community Land Trusts can secure the long-term future of vital assets such as open spaces, local shops, affordable housing and meeting halls. The Housing Corporation has offered funding to CLTs and has been working with the University of Salford to assist 14 pilot CLTs across the country.
- 8.10 The Government is seeking views on a **national framework to support CLTs**, including principles around democratic participation, the possible corporate, financing and regulatory structures and what more can be done to enable CLTs to develop. A summary of the responses to the consultation will be published in the autumn.
- 8.11 We will also be working with the Development Trusts Association, Co-operatives UK and others to provide greater support to organisations that would benefit from community share or bond issues.

Social enterprises

- 8.12 A social enterprise is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than driven by the need to maximise profits for shareholders and owners. There are at least 55,000 social enterprises in the UK, with a combined turnover of £27bn per year.
- 8.13 The Government's Social Enterprise Action Plan¹⁰⁴ identifies four ways in which social enterprises build a fairer society and stronger economy:
- meeting social need using business success for social or environmental ends and providing opportunity and skills for marginalised groups
 - encouraging ethical markets, driven by ethical consumerism and through pioneering ethical practice such as fair trade

¹⁰⁴ Cabinet Office (2006) *Social Enterprise Action Plan: Scaling New Heights*, London: Cabinet Office.

- improving public services, through shaping service design and pioneering new approaches
- increasing enterprise by attracting new entrepreneurs who want to make a difference to society or the environment, and encouraging more women, under-represented groups and young people to start their own businesses

8.14 Examples of Britain's social enterprises include: Jamie Oliver's restaurant Fifteen, The Big Issue, the Eden Project and the fair-trade coffee company Cafédirect, as well as thousands of smaller social enterprises in every part of the UK providing a range of services. Communities and Local Government has recently worked with the TREES Group, the Big Issue and Eastside Consulting to run the Spark competition for social enterprises preventing and tackling homelessness.

Fifteen Cornwall

Fifteen Cornwall opened in May 2006. Each year the restaurant gives up to 20 trainee-chefs the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to turn their lives around.



All profits from Fifteen Cornwall go to the registered charity, The Cornwall Foundation of Promise. The charity's purpose is the creation of career opportunities for disadvantaged, local young people, helping them to achieve their potential. The restaurant also provides a boost to Cornwall's tourism industry and makes use of high quality local food producers in the region.

On the graduation of the second group of apprentices in June 2008, Chief Executive Dave Meneer said: "the restaurant goes from strength to strength seeing an average of 100 for lunch and dinner every single day of the year. It's now a big business for Cornwall, employing 100 young people in an award winning restaurant at a stunning location – a true social enterprise, combining public funding with the revenue from the restaurant, every penny of which is ploughed back into the training scheme."

The social enterprise has received support from many, including JobCentre Plus, the Learning and Skills Council, Cornwall College, Cornwall County Council, Restormel Borough Council, St Austell Brewery, HSBC Bank, Barclays Bank and the Hotel and Extreme Academy, Watergate Bay.

www.fifteencornwall.co.uk

- 8.15 The Government wants to see many more people involved in starting and running social enterprises, providing goods and services across a range of sectors, and creating work and wealth, particularly in the most deprived neighbourhoods. In May 2008 the Government announced a review to examine how the £1.5bn Working Neighbourhood Fund can be used more effectively by social enterprises and other local partners to improve employment rates.
- 8.16 Communities and Local Government wants communities to benefit fully from the skills, knowledge and expertise of social enterprises. A new **Social Enterprise Unit** is in the process of being established that will champion the role of social enterprise models in delivering Communities and Local Government's strategic objectives, by recognising their contribution in areas such as housing, regeneration and creating empowered and cohesive communities. Supporting social enterprises to empower communities and local residents is a key theme of the new Empowerment Fund, details of which are published alongside this White Paper.
- 8.17 In addition we will encourage **local authorities to ensure that social enterprises are able to compete fairly for contracts**. Social enterprises often offer good value for money and innovation. However, they also often experience difficulties in breaking into the local government market. Local authorities should think about their role in supporting and promoting social enterprises through procurement. For example, contracts should be advertised in forums social enterprises access and contracts could be broken down into smaller sections making it easier for social enterprise to bid for them.
- 8.18 The Office of Government Commerce has recently published guidance on how to consider social issues in procurement policy¹⁰⁵. The Glover Review into small and medium enterprise involvement in public sector procurement is making recommendations on the steps Government should take to ensure that more small firms are able to access the market place. Alongside this we will work with Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform and the Office of the Third Sector to encourage all parts of the public sector to sign up to *Supply2.gov portal* which allows small businesses, start up companies and social enterprises to search and view open lower value contract opportunities and promote themselves to the UK

¹⁰⁵ Office of Government Commerce (2008) *Buy and Make a Difference: How to Address Social Issues in Public Procurement*, London.

public sector. In addition, we will work with the Office of the Third Sector to disseminate the outputs of the Social Clause Project, which seeks to tackle the barriers to the use of social clauses and to make public services more accessible to the third sector through effective commissioning and improvements in procurement processes.

- 8.19 We will also work with colleagues in other government departments **to ensure that procurement processes do not unfairly disadvantage social enterprises** in recognition of the particular expertise that social enterprises can bring to bear in the delivery of a range of Government objectives.

Conclusion

Unleashing genius and talent

“Revolutions create genius and talent; but those events do no more than bring them forward. There is existing in man, a mass of sense lying in a dormant state, and which unless something excites it to action, will descend with him, in that condition to the grave. As it is to the advantage of society that the whole of its facilities should be employed, the construction of government ought to be such as to bring forward, by quiet and regular operation, all that capacity which never fails to appear in revolution.”

Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, 1791

Conclusion

Unleashing genius and talent

1. Our society is changing faster than at any time in our nation's history. Even the transformation wrought by the industrial revolutions in the 18th and 19th centuries cannot compare with the scale and pace of change we face today.
2. The main changes are:
 - an explosion of information, and the technologies to utilise it
 - personalisation of entertainment, products and services
 - speeding up of all the transactions in our lives
 - growing knowledge and experience of societies and cultures other than our own
3. These changes mean that the modern citizen is empowered to make real choices and expect high standards across a huge range of services, from their finances, food, clothes, holidays and music, to the big decisions about where they study and work, where they live, how their parents are cared for and how their children are educated.
4. Unless we empower citizens to exercise the same level of choice in our democratic system and have the same rights to demand the best, then we will oversee a further erosion of trust and participation in democracy.
5. There are strong demonstrations of people's desire to get involved and have their say, all over the world from the streets of Porto Alegre, to the town meetings organised by AmericaSpeaks, to the young people guiding expenditure in Newcastle. As the Power Commission report into methods of direct democracy *Beyond the Ballot* showed: ¹⁰⁶

"the majority of citizens are attracted by such direct mechanisms and that many are willing to engage with them."

¹⁰⁶ See page 220 of *Power to the People* (2006), York: The Power Inquiry.

6. We believe that there are no limits to the capacity of the British people for self-government, given the right platforms, mechanisms and incentives. Empowering citizens and communities is an urgent task for us all. The implementation annex summarises how we will take forward the actions in this White Paper to recognise and unleash the talents of the British people.
7. This White Paper is part of the Government's answer to the democratic challenges of our times: *real people, real power*.



Communities in control: real people, real power

Annexes

Implementation annex

Central-Local

Concordat annex

Stakeholder annex

Implementation annex

The delivery of this White Paper will provide a challenging agenda for government and its delivery partners. Subject to Parliamentary approval, significant legislative changes will be progressed through the planned Community Empowerment, Housing and Economic Regeneration Bill (CEHER Bill), which will be introduced during the 2008-09 session. Consultation, both formal and informal, will be required on a number of proposals. Pilots, guidance and best practice work will further the achievement of other aims. As far as possible, work will be integrated into the delivery mechanisms of *Strong and Prosperous Communities* – the Local Government White Paper 2006 and other existing programmes. An implementation plan for both White Papers will be published and maintained. The delivery mechanisms which underpin the work already going on in communities across the country will continue to be developed and strengthened. We will reaffirm our approach to guidance and spreading best practice (see Local Government White Paper implementation plan¹⁰⁶). The key pieces of work are set out in the table below.

Commitment	Outcome	Timing	Lead Department
Chapter 1: The case for people and communities having more power			
Duty to promote democracy	Local authorities will have a statutory duty to promote democratic understanding and participation	CEHER Bill ¹⁰⁷	CLG
Extension of duty to involve	The current duty will be extended to new agencies and bodies	CEHER Bill	CLG
Empowering the Frontline Taskforce	To consider the role of the public sector workforce in empowering users and residents	More detail to be announced in autumn 2008, final report 2010	CLG
Empowerment Fund	At least £7.5m to be reinvested to support existing third sector national organisations to help local communities turn ideas into practical action	Consultation published alongside the White Paper. Launch in late 2008	CLG

¹⁰⁶ Communities and Local Government (2007), *Strong and prosperous communities, The Local Government White Paper Implementation Plan: One Year On*, London, Communities and Local Government

¹⁰⁷ Planned Community Empowerment, Housing and Economic Regeneration Bill, announced in the Government's draft legislative programme, May 2008

Commitment	Outcome	Timing	Lead Department
Chapter 2: Active citizens and the value of volunteering			
Take Part local pathfinders	Pilot programme to help people participate in their local areas	Set up December 2008, delivery from January 2009	CLG
Communitybuilders Fund	£70m investment in community led organisations across England	In period to 2010-11	CLG and OTS
Chapter 3: Access to information			
Places Database	Making the Places Database public	Autumn 2008	CLG
Supporting local authorities to make their data more available	Work with Local Government Association and the Improvement and Development Agency to support local authorities to share their information with citizens, including piloting.	We will aim to select pilot areas in autumn 2008.	CLG
Digital Mentor Scheme	Pilots in deprived areas to improve general literacy in Information and Communications Technologies	2009	CLG, DIUS
Innovation in new technologies	Supporting range of innovation including deliberative engagement with government or innovation in community and social media	Spring 2009	CLG

Communities in control: real people, real power

Commitment	Outcome	Timing	Lead Department
Chapter 4: Having an influence			
Duty for Councils to respond to petitions	Councils will have to respond to petitions (including electronic petitions) in relation to local authority functions or other public services where Council shares delivery responsibility	CEHER Bill	CLG
Councillor Call for Action	Publish guidance on promoting the powers for Councillors	End of 2008	CLG
Participatory budgeting	Publication of a National Strategy on participatory budgeting to set out how the Government's aspiration to have participatory budgeting in all local authorities will be achieved	Autumn 2008	CLG
Community safety participatory budgeting pilots	Pilot the use of participatory budgeting in community safety funds and consider whether money recovered from criminals can be used in this way	Policing Green Paper	HO
Voting incentives	Local authorities to provide voting incentives in local elections	CEHER Bill	MoJ
Right to appeal decisions on establishing local (parish) councils	Right of appeal where a community's proposal to establish a local council is not agreed	CEHER Bill	CLG
Bye-laws	Authorities, including some parish councils, will be able to make certain bye-laws without scrutiny from central government	Forthcoming consultation	CLG

Commitment	Outcome	Timing	Lead Department
Service transformation and efficiency	Working with the Local Government Association and the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships, we will embed empowerment in projects supported by £115m capital funds for efficiency and service transformation.	Money for projects will be distributed between 2008-2009 and 2010-2011	CLG
Planning	Up to £6.5m to further assist community involvement in planning	To be implemented 2009-2011	CLG
Choice based lettings	Expansion of programme with an extra £2m until 2010 to give more tenants more choice over where they live	Choice based lettings round ends in October 2008. Funding allocated in Spring 2009.	CLG
Empowering young people	Young Advisors to have direct access to the Secretary of State for CLG	Autumn 2008	CLG
	A programme for young people to shadow government ministers	Summer 2009	CLG
	£6m investment to create a new national body for youth leadership to include working with CLG to create a programme of internships for young people to work with local councillors	Final proposals in summer 2008	DCSF
	Establishing Young Muslims' Advisory Group	Summer 2008	CLG, DCSF

Communities in control: real people, real power

Commitment	Outcome	Timing	Lead Department
Chapter 5: Challenge			
Scrutiny of public officials	Public officials will be subject to scrutiny from local communities, and petitions can be used to hold local officials to account	CEHER Bill	CLG
Higher visibility of Overview and Scrutiny	Councils will be encouraged to consider new ways of working with scrutiny, and powers of overview and scrutiny committees will be enhanced	CEHER Bill	CLG
Expanding the role of Local Involvement Networks (LINKs)	Pilots invited to expand remit beyond health and social care	July 2008-May 2010. Arrange, manage and evaluate pilots	DH/ CLG
Directly elected mayors	Consult on making it easier to have a directly elected mayor	CEHER Bill	CLG
Chapter 6: Redress			
Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)	The jurisdiction of the LGO will be reviewed to make sure that they have the right amount of flexibility to work with partners, and that any limitations are in the genuine interests of local people	Summer 2008: Review CEHER Bill autumn (if needed)	CLG
Community Contracts	Extension of the current pilots for six months	Pilots will run until end of 2008	CLG
Community pledgebanks	Establish pilots to look at how community pledgebanks can help deliver local priorities	2009	CLG
Redress Review	To look at redress arrangements across the public sector	Reporting early 2009	CLG

Commitment	Outcome	Timing	Lead Department
Chapter 7: Standing for Office			
Positive image of councillors	Potential changes to the publicity code	Summer 2008: Consultation. Autumn 2008: Guidance	CLG
Remote voting	Enabling councillors to participate in meetings and votes remotely	CEHER Bill	CLG
Time off for public duties	Consultation on extending the right to time off to more roles	Summer 2008: Consultation. April 2009: secondary legislation	CLG
Employers' information pack	Better information for employers about benefits of civic roles for their staff	Spring 2009	CLG
Information on civic roles	Make it easier for people to find information on ways to be active in civic roles in their communities	Summer 2009	CLG
Review of accreditation for civic roles	Find out what relevant qualifications and modules exist to see what could be repackaged or built upon	Autumn 2008: informal consultation. By summer 2009: programme of accreditation	CLG
Amendment to Widdicombe rules	Changes to rules on politically restricted posts	CEHER Bill	CLG

Communities in control: real people, real power

Commitment	Outcome	Timing	Lead Department
Chapter 8: Ownership and control			
Asset Transfer Unit	Establish a unit that will provide information and expertise on transfer to community management of assets or ownership	Autumn 2008	CLG
Community Land Trusts	Making Community Land Trusts more effective in securing future of community assets	Consultation summary to be published winter 2008	CLG
Social Enterprise Unit	New unit in CLG to champion the knowledge and expertise of social enterprises	Launch in autumn 2008	CLG

Key

CLG	Communities and Local Government
OTS	Office of the Third Sector
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
HO	Home Office
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DH	Department of Health

Central-Local Concordat annex



This agreement, made between Her Majesty's Government and the Local Government Association, establishes a framework of principles for how central and local government work together to serve the public. Central government departments and councils commit to uphold these principles¹⁰⁸. This meets a commitment in the *Governance of Britain* Green Paper, published in July 2007.

These principles reflect the way in which the relationship between central and local government is managed currently. The Government is committed to constitutional reform and will work with the LGA to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of local government are reflected in proposals as they are developed.

1. Local areas face significant challenges, from globalisation and social and demographic change. Our citizens rightly place increasing demands on public services, based on their rising expectations and ambitions. To meet these challenges and aspirations, communities need strategic leadership and public services must continually improve in quality and efficiency and must treat everyone fairly. We believe it is the responsibility of elected politicians and appointed officials in central and in local government to ensure that local places and public services rise to this challenge, for all citizens, in every part of the country, so that everyone can enjoy a better quality of life.
2. Parliament passed the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act in 2007. This, alongside other policies set out in *Strong and Prosperous Communities – The Local Government White Paper*, marks a moment of significant and lasting change. Together, they set a new baseline for relations between central and local government. We will work to develop the relationship further from that foundation.
3. Central and local government both derive their legitimacy from Parliament and the electoral mandate granted to them by individual citizens who look to central and local government to take the lead in ensuring better places and better services.

¹⁰⁸ The LGA represents councils in England and Wales. The UK Government will, as far as appropriate, have regard to these principles in relation to the responsibilities which Welsh local authorities have in non-devolved areas. Relations between the Welsh Assembly Government and Welsh local government are governed by the Local Government Partnership Scheme, as set out in the Government of Wales Act 2006.

4. This means that central and local government are partners in delivering improved services and in strengthening our democracy. In particular, we share objectives to:
- create and sustain thriving communities, where people want to live, work, bring up their families and retire; where they can reach services; and with access to decent homes at a price they can afford
 - tackle anti-social behaviour and crime and promote good health
 - improve outcomes for children, young people and families
 - anticipate the needs and aspirations of an ageing society through preventative measures that encourage greater independence and wellbeing for older citizens
 - nurture business and enterprise, increasing skills and employment and creating wealth and rising prosperity, shared by all
 - protect and enhance the environment, tackle climate change and pollution
 - support a thriving third sector of local voluntary organisations, community groups and social enterprises
 - promote a pluralist, healthy democracy with tolerance, decency and respect at its heart, without space for political or religious extremism
 - promote high standards of conduct in public life

In delivering these objectives, there should be a presumption that powers are best exercised at the lowest effective and practical level.

5. Central government has the responsibility and democratic mandate to act in accordance with the national interest. Acting through Parliament, it has the over-riding interest in matters such as the national economic interest, public service improvement and standards of delivery, and taxation.
6. Councils have responsibilities for service performance but also for the prosperity and well-being of all citizens in their area and the overall cohesion of the community. They have a general power to promote community well-being and a responsibility to

do all they can to secure the social, economic and environmental well-being of their areas. The LGA and central government will work together to encourage all councils to make effective use of the well-being power and to conduct a growing share of the business of government.

7. In this relationship, there are reciprocal rights and responsibilities.
8. Central government has the **right** to set national policies, including minimum standards of services, to work with local areas to support them and, as a last resort, to intervene to avoid significant underperformance. It proposes to Parliament the legislation within which local government works.
9. Central government has the **responsibility** to consult and collaborate with councils in exercising these rights. It undertakes to progressively remove obstacles which prevent councils from pursuing their role, including reducing the burden of appraisal and approval regimes, the ringfencing of funds for specific purposes and the volume of guidance it issues.
10. Councils have the **right** to address the priorities of their communities as expressed through local elections and to lead the delivery of public services in their area and shape its future without unnecessary direction or control.
11. Councils have the **responsibility** to provide leadership that is accountable, visible and responsive to their communities and to work in partnership with the local statutory, business and third sectors, and collectively to drive continuing improvement.
12. Both partners have the **responsibility** to use taxpayers' money well and devolve power, and to engage and empower communities and individual citizens – at national level and at local level – in debate and decision making and in shaping and delivering services.
13. Central and local government will also work together to deliver the Public Service Agreements set out in the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR07) and the new Performance Framework set out in the White Paper and 2007 Act, through around 200 national indicators and a commitment to agree no more than 35 targets in any one area (plus statutory educational attainment and early years targets).

14. Central to these new arrangements will be the negotiation of new style Local Area Agreements between local partners and between them and Government, as the key means of agreeing, delivering and monitoring the outcomes for each area which are delivered by local government on its own or in partnership with others. We accept that this objective will require major changes in behaviour and practice from central government departments, their agencies, government offices, councils and local partners. We share a commitment to leading the effective implementation of the necessary changes.
15. Central and local government share a commitment to delivering services that represent value for money; to ensuring that public services, including new obligations imposed on councils, are properly funded; and that local taxation is guided by principles of transparency, clarity, and accountability. We will work together to provide greater clarity and transparency to local people on the levels of public funding going into local areas, and work towards giving councils greater flexibility in their funding, to facilitate the wide degree of autonomy referred to in the European Charter of Local Self-Government.¹⁰⁹
16. We will work together to develop a new relationship between local businesses and councils; to increase local democratic accountability of key public services, in particular the police and health services; and to explore options for reforming the adult care and support system. We share a commitment to working with the third sector, upholding the principles in the Compact.

¹⁰⁹ European Charter of Local Self-Government, Council of Europe, 1988, Preamble: "Asserting that this entails the existence of local authorities endowed with democratically constituted decision-making bodies and possessing a wide degree of autonomy with regard to their responsibilities, the ways and means by which those responsibilities are exercised and the resources required for their fulfilment."

17. The partners to this agreement will come together regularly in a renewed Central-Local Partnership. One of the roles of that partnership will be to monitor the operation of this agreement, and to revise it for the future as necessary.



Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears MP
Secretary of State for
Communities and Local Government



Cllr Sir Simon Milton
Chairman
The Local Government Association

Stakeholder annex

Who was involved

On 5 March 2008, Communities Secretary Hazel Blears announced plans for a new White Paper focused on empowering citizens and communities –*Unlocking the talent of our communities*.¹¹⁰

This annex gives a short account of our activities and the people we met to gather ideas and views on this White Paper, leading up to publication. We are very grateful for all the very many excellent contributions made and have tried to reflect these in the White Paper.

In total we met representatives from over 200 organisations throughout this period.

Online engagement

We invited views and suggestions through an ‘*unlocking talent*’ online forum where we posed a number of questions relating to key themes in the White Paper. In addition, we received over 300 emails to our unlocking talent email address and updated stakeholders with a newsletter detailing progress in preparing the document.

Regional seminars

Five events, organised by Government Offices, were held across the country. Each event featured four seminars, focusing on different aspects of empowerment. Through these events we met over 200 representatives from 164 organisations, including many local authorities, Primary Care Trusts, Local Strategic Partnerships, New Deal for Communities organisations, housing organisations, social enterprises, and representatives of local voluntary and community sector organisations. Through this process we received excellent insights into the views and concerns of local stakeholders.

Discussion workshops

In addition to the regional events, we held discussion workshops for specific groups, where the approach was tailored to stakeholders’ particular areas of interest. For example, we met representatives from the Local Government Association, London Councils, National Association of Local Councils, UNISON,

¹¹⁰ www.communities.gov.uk/communities/communityempowerment/whatweare/unlockingthetalent/

National Council for Voluntary Organisations, National Association for Voluntary and Community Action, Urban Forum, Equalities groups, Faith groups, policy forums and academics, Community Development Foundation and National Empowerment Partnership, National Community Forum, the Network of Empowering Authorities and the Regional Development Agencies.

Expert panels

The Secretary of State also sought more specific input from key stakeholders on a one-to-one and roundtable basis. The roundtable discussions were used to delve deeper into specific policy areas and helped to shape the overall narrative of the White Paper.

Community Power Packs

To provide an opportunity for input at the grassroots level, we developed an online toolkit aimed at voluntary sector organisations and groups. The Power Pack was designed to encourage and support consultative events about empowerment. The Pack, developed in partnership with *Involve*, was launched in April and promoted widely through existing networks and online. Following feedback it is now being enhanced and reformatted into a hard copy version and will be re-launched this summer.




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