

MPCS



**INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE
LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIPS
AND THE
VCS TOGETHER PROJECT**

A report for
North Norfolk Community Partnership

June, 2011

Research and consultation to evaluate the effectiveness of existing arrangements of support and delivery for voluntary and community infrastructure in North Norfolk to advise on future affordability and alternative delivery models in the context of the changing government priorities and partnership structures

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Preface

The new coalition's emphasis on Localism and Big Society, combined with the demise of Local Area Agreements and growing pressure for further reductions in public sector spending, means that every area of the country is now looking at new ways of planning, prioritising and delivering local services. North Norfolk is no exception.

The difference, though, is that North Norfolk has invested significant resources over the past six years into the development of a District-wide local community infrastructure in the form of seven independently constituted Local Area Partnerships. These bring all the stakeholders together at a locality level and have capacity to research and address local needs and priorities.

This report, and its conclusions and recommendations, attempts to provide an independent assessment of the role, operation and effectiveness of both the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) and VCS Together in the light of their contracted briefs and the changing agenda for local communities and associated local strategic partnership structures. This can all be summed up within the key question, "Are the LAPs and VCS Together 'fit for future purpose'?"

The report has been written primarily for the board and partners of the North Norfolk Community Partnership who have commissioned the Review. Some readers will be familiar with much of the content already, whilst for others the findings and recommendations will provide insights into the complex inter-relationships between the various community, voluntary, public and private partners who plan and deliver services to residents and their communities across North Norfolk who seek to contribute to and improve the overall quality of life.

The report is intended to fulfil the brief, but it is also to be regarded as a key local milestone in this changing national agenda of Localism, Big Society, and associated local partnership structures. We hope that it provides a useful platform for North Norfolk District Council and the other community partnership members to build upon as they review and take forward some, if not all, of the various recommendations.

The report highlights both the successes and shortcomings of the existing arrangements in order to inform any future proposals. It is not intended to profile weaknesses or failings of specific LAPS, or provide any judgemental comparisons and rankings. Facts and analysis will be provided for individual LAPs by way of example and evidence throughout the report, but where any value judgements are provided, they are for the LAPs as a collective group.

Finally, the writing style adopted contains headings and bullet points wherever possible to ease comprehension. The summary sets out the findings which are cross-referenced and substantiated with more in-depth evidence and analysis in relevant sections. This reflects my desire to communicate ideas and key points as efficiently as possible, and to enable any reader to scan and draw on relevant contents as the report is considered and the potential work programme taken forward.

Mark Patchett
May, 2011

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge our appreciation for the generosity of time and opinions given to us by the many people that we interviewed and who are involved or have an interest in both the LAPs and VCS Together and their respective activity programmes. We hope that this report does justice to the wide range of insights, experiences and comments of all those who have participated.

Summary

Background

1. This review was commissioned by the North Norfolk Community Partnership (NNCP) and provides an independent assessment of the role, operation and effectiveness of the seven Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) and VCS Together in the light of the changing agenda for local communities. The focus of the report can be summed up within the key question, "Are the LAPs and VCS Together 'fit for future purpose'?" (section 1.2)
2. The approach was to review all the background material and then to undertake in-depth interviews with the LAP Coordinators and representatives of the LAP Boards. Key staff of VCS Together were interviewed, and then a telephone survey conducted with 12 steering group members and a random sample of 51 of the 420 known voluntary and community organisations across North Norfolk. (section 1.3)
3. The national context for this review is the sweeping away all the Local Area Agreement Targets by the new coalition government, which were the primary drivers for Local Strategic Partnerships over recent years. The new government has also championed "Localism" and "Big Society" as primary means to enable local communities to participate in decisions about the future and prioritisation of local facilities and public services, as well as to enable those same communities to achieve more for themselves, and even be commissioned to directly deliver services. (section 2.1)

Strategic Partners

4. NNCP produced its Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2011 which set out its vision of:

"a place where everyone can enjoy a high quality of life and where the unique and attractive environment is sustained into the future".

 The support for the seven LAPs represented an important feature of the NNCP delivery strategy as the LAPs bring together people and organisations at a local level to create, support and deliver action plans for their communities. NNCP currently spends around 50% of its annual income on the LAPs, ie £273,000 in 2010/11. (section 2.2.2)
5. The NNCP investment in the voluntary sector, through funding to Voluntary Norfolk to deliver the VCS Together Project, was £65,596 in 2010/11. (section 2.2.2)
6. There are eight strategic partners that make up the North Norfolk Local Strategic Partnership (NNCP), and these fall into three main categories, i.e. Public Sector, Private Sector and Third Sector (including Victory Housing Trust, Voluntary and Community Groups. Each of these partners has a material interest in understanding the needs and priorities of the local communities across North Norfolk, and in having a means to engage with local communities to plan and deliver services. (section 3)
7. North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) has the primary responsibility for the wellbeing of the District and its residents as a defined area within Norfolk. This responsibility includes the local economy with implications for local businesses, inward investment and tourism, as well as more traditional service areas around planning, environment, waste, benefits, leisure, and other community services. Subject to ongoing organisational review, NNDC is expecting to have to make further significant revenue savings by 2012 to accommodate cuts in central government grant. This could well have implications for the Council's voluntary and community sector strategy. (section 3.1)

8. Norfolk County Council (NCC) held a public consultation in 2010 entitled the “Big Conversation” in which it set out its service aims and strategy in the context of the requirement to find £155m of annual revenue savings within three years. In the supporting documentation where it sets out its future priorities, it also refers to its anticipated role to “help and enable others to build and maintain strong, sustainable and caring communities, giving back community ownership of locally important priorities best tackled through local community action”. In addition, the County wants to enable community groups to purchase assets which are no longer needed and where there is a strong business case to support the transfer. In April 2011 NCC’s Cabinet agreed a Community Asset Transfer Guidance Pack, which provides information and an application form for any community groups considering the purchase of County Council assets. (section 3.2)

Appraisal and Conclusions of Local Area Partnerships

9. Each of the seven partnerships were individually appraised and evaluated against a pre-prepared survey framework. This evidence was then collated and written up for each LAP with key extracts presented within this report covering two overall aspects:
- A) Organisational Infrastructure (governance, staffing, resources, etc) to enable the LAP to be “fit for purpose”;
 - B) The Activity Programme, i.e the outputs and impact leading to the achievement of its agreed role and purpose. (section 4)
10. Eleven key factors were identified which determine the success or otherwise of the LAPs. These are summarised below with more detailed evaluation in the report (Section 6.2)

Heading	Key Factors
1. Purpose	Clearly identified role and purpose of the LAP
2. Aspiration	Aspiration for the LAP activity programme, outputs and outcome
3. Breadth of Participation	Reach of the LAP in terms of the breadth of participation of the range of local stakeholders and the benefit to the rural hinterland (and Parishes)
4. Public Benefit	Outputs, utilising both quantitative and qualitative measures
5. Impact	The difference made by the LAP’s existence (Outcome), and the sustainability of the impact
6. Sustainability	The sustainability of the LAP organisation and its associated infrastructure
7. Value for Money	The perception of the value of the benefits generated given the financial investment made
8. Acceptance	The extent to which each LAP and its role and activities are valued by NNCP agencies and local stakeholder groups
9. Management & Support	The guidance and support provided by NNCP
10. Working relationships with partners	Effective working relationships with officers from the main public partners or their agencies, i.e. NNDC, NCC, Police, Health Consortium, Victory Housing Trust
11. Leadership	The credibility and capacity to bring people and partners together to lead and enable local initiatives

11. A considerable investment of officer time and over £1.5m funding has been made into the LAPs over the past 7 years. As a result seven local community based infrastructure organisations have developed with a strong sense of identity, purpose and commitment. In turn, a significant range of local projects has been initiated and delivered. These projects

have made a demonstrable difference to the quality of life in their local communities. All the LAP projects are important and contribute to the whole portfolio, but need to be thoroughly reviewed with regard to their individual succession plans and their future fit. (section 6.2.12)

12. The LAPs all have similar objectives and principles, but each is very different in culture, style, focus and programme largely due to their different origins, the Co-ordinator's background and experience, and the varied local circumstances. This brings strength and variety, but there is wide variation in the nature of the outputs, and insufficient cross fertilisation of skills, resources and experience. (section 6.2.12)
13. When the portfolio of the 70 plus LAP projects are considered, along with the total number of beneficiaries and the additional leverage of funding by the LAPs into other local projects, this annual investment of £250,000 does provide value for money when compared with any other means NNCP may have to achieve similar results across seven different areas of North Norfolk. This is the primary benefit, and a secondary benefit is the development and sustenance of seven independent organisations which is also of value and unique. When looking at individual LAPs, it is reasonable to suggest that more appropriate outputs could have been achieved in certain locations. However, given that this is a portfolio of seven different organisations with a wide range of circumstances, Boards, Co-ordinators, opportunities, and challenges, it is predictable that some will perform better than others. The real question that has been consistently raised throughout this review, is "If NNCP had invested the money differently, could it have achieved better results (i.e. opportunity cost) ?". NNCP could clearly have achieved different results, but there is no evidence that it could have achieved better results if it had invested the money differently. (section 6.2.7)
14. None of the LAPs have made any substantial progress towards their own sustainability. This is partly due to the significant challenges entailed and the lack of clarity around the future of the LAPs and NNCP expectations. Sustaining a growing portfolio of projects has left limited time for strategic thinking and new project development. (section 6.2.6)
15. LAPA has a clearly defined purpose which if carried out effectively forms a crucial support and linking function for the LAPs, both with each other and with the strategic partners. It currently performs only two of its four primary functions. Whilst the LAPA meetings are appreciated by most of those that attend as a means for LAP Co-ordinators and Chairs to meet together, the evidence is that it is largely dysfunctional with regard to its ideal and needed purpose. Without the regular attendance and contribution of the Partnership Manager or the input from strategic partners on topics of mutual interest, it can only be an opportunity to talk peer to peer on projects and topics of mutual concern. (section 6.3)

Appraisal and Conclusions of VCS Together

16. VCS Together is the brand name of a project funded by NNCP instigated in 2004/05 and managed and delivered by Voluntary Norfolk under a contract. VCS Together is the Forum for voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups active in North Norfolk. It aims to promote the interests of VCS organisations by providing them with a focal point through which they can raise issues of common interest, provide accountable local representation for the sector, promote best practice and identify development issues and priorities for local access to development support. (section 5.1)
17. There are about 420 known VCS groups operating across North Norfolk with details held on a database owned by Voluntary Norfolk. These groups elect a steering group of up to 20 member organisations (currently 17) who are expected to represent the interests of the wider voluntary sector and who oversee the activity of VCS Together. VCS Together is intended to fulfil the two basic roles of a CVS for North Norfolk, ie:

- 1) act as a Forum to coordinate and represent the sector's interests
- 2) plan and provide infrastructure support for the sector across the District.

As there is no local CVS in North Norfolk, and Voluntary Norfolk have responsibility for the support and development of the sector through the VCS Together contract, this review considers the entirety of the service provided through Voluntary Norfolk to the voluntary and community groups in North Norfolk. (section 5.1)

Recommendations (section 7)

19. Recommendations for the future of the LAPs and VCS Together have to be set in the context of the changing priorities and strategy for public sector partners due to the austerity measures. The starting point is the need and expectation of the public sector partners, particularly NCC and NNDC to respond to the ethos and requirements of the Localism and the Big Society agendas. It is for NNDC to take a lead on setting its strategy for the support and further development of the voluntary and community sectors in North Norfolk, and then specifically the role of the LAPs and VCS Together within that strategy.
20. The support and development of the voluntary and community sector is absolutely crucial, not only to maintain the current energy and viability of the existing groups and activities, but also to enable the sector to rise to the challenge and expectations of Localism and Big Society. This can only be achieved by investing in some form of District-wide infrastructure support. To have area-based structures that encompass all seven local areas to plan, enable and deliver local project initiatives is valuable, but not crucial. (section 7.1)
21. The principal recommendation is for NNCP and NNDC to demonstrate value for the sector by building on the foundations, but setting out clear expectations around role and purpose to allow and enable further local autonomy and empowerment, but encourage the restructuring so that both VCS Together and the LAPs become "fit for future purpose". The best way to achieve this is to enable them to work together more effectively and to be set within the context of any future Partnership structures. (section 7.1)
22. A revised approach is required for VCS Together which responds to the changing agenda and the local needs, builds on the strengths of what has been achieved, and overcomes some of the weaknesses within the existing arrangements. To take this forward, a specification of requirements should be prepared which can be put out to tender to at least Voluntary Norfolk, Norfolk RCC, and to West Norfolk CVS. (section 7.2)
23. A considerable investment of time and funding has been made into the LAPs over the past 6 years which has resulted in a local community infrastructure with capacity which covers the whole District – the key recommendation is "don't lose it !" Apart from the infrastructure itself (governance, staff, database, office, networks), the most significant foundation is community motivation, capacity and commitment which is demonstrated through demonstrable involvement with the various LAP projects. This also comes from the LAP independence, which itself is to be valued and accords 100% with the ethos of Localism. (section 7.3)
24. Clearly financial decisions by NNDC will take precedence, but if it is felt appropriate to build on the investment made by NNCP over the past six years, there is a strong base of local infrastructure through the LAPs that can and should be further supported. (section 7.4)

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

MPCS is pleased to have completed a commission from the North Norfolk Community Partnership (NNCP) to review the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) and the VCS Together project operating across North Norfolk.

There are seven Local Area Partnerships, each centred on a local or market town, and each includes the surrounding hinterland to ensure that all areas within North Norfolk District Council are covered:

LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIP	CENTRE OR MARKET TOWN	NO. OF PARISHES	APPROX. NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS
Fakenham	Fakenham	21	6,500
Griffon	North Walsham	26	12,000
Holt	Holt	20	4,750
Poppyland	Cromer	12	6,500
Stalham with Happing	Stalham	20	7,500
Upcher	Sheringham	9	4,900
Wells	Wells	14 (+6)	3,000

These seven Local Area Partnerships and the VCS Together Project have been funded by the Community Partnership to achieve local and District-wide outcomes for the benefit of the local communities.

1.2 The Assignment Brief

The overall objective is to provide an independent review of the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) and VCS Together project currently operating in North Norfolk district. The aim of the review is to evaluate the effectiveness of existing arrangements in the context of:

- (a) benefit to community wellbeing since project inception
- (b) value for money since project inception
- (c) preparedness in taking forward and developing the emerging localism agenda

The study must examine the terms of engagement and funding agreements with North Norfolk Community Partnership (NNCP) and consider future affordability and alternative delivery models linked to different levels and sources of funding.

The specific aims are to encompass a review of the actual implementation of the work plans as well as the resulting outcomes against the planned objectives and aspirations. In particular, the review is to look at:

- the effectiveness of the LAPs measured against community benefits delivered, stated priorities and overall value for money.
- the aims and objectives of the VCS Together Project and the way it has evolved and overall value for money in the context of:
 - ❖ Benefits delivered to the voluntary and community sector
 - ❖ Benefits delivered to the statutory sector

- ❖ Return on project funding to include additional leverage
- ❖ Sustainability
- ❖ Collective benefits to the wider North Norfolk community

Specifically, the review required the evaluation of the effectiveness of existing arrangements so as to be able to advise NNCP on future affordability and alternative delivery models in the context of the changing government priorities and partnership structures. In particular, it required a measure of the return on investment, and an assessment of where these structures lie in relation to the emerging localism agenda, in order that maximum benefits may be achieved from the limited resources available.

The brief also required the identification of expertise and good practice of the various Area Partnerships, with reference to the best of other similar rural localities elsewhere in the country. Completion of the assignment included the requirement to make recommendations to inform the forward strategy in the context of the localism agenda, and solutions for a more financially sustainable future.

1.3 Methodology

The assignment was carried out through applying a pre-planned process involving six stages as summarised below:

STAGE	ACTIVITY AND MILESTONE
1. Initial Briefing from client	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - briefing from client - obtain existing reports and literature
2. Review of Background and Existing Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research and review written information and reports - review other related monitoring, financial reports and data - read, analyse and comprehend
3. Preparation of Evaluation Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - review key issues - develop evaluation frameworks
4. Interviews with Strategic Partners, Area Partnerships, VCS Together, and Stakeholders	<u>Strategic Partners and Area Partnerships</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify contacts and arrange appointments - group or individual interviews using agreed framework with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Partnership partners (and health) • LAP Coordinators and Board representatives • LAPA Chair • Community Partnership Manager - write up notes from each interview
	<u>VCS Together</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - VCS Together: staff, Chair - Steering Committee: interview 12 out of the 17 - VCS Members: interview 51 (from 420 potential groups): 12% - summarise notes from each
5. Review best practice examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research best practice examples from across UK - summarise and review
6. Prepare Report and Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - collate and analyse information - prepare Report

After analysis of the written information, a survey and interview frameworks were prepared for the research into the LAPs. Appendix C provides the full research framework, which can be summarised as:

- Vision, aims and objectives for each LAP
- Project activities
- Partnerships
- Project Funding
- Community and stakeholder participation
- Capacity and infrastructure
- Finance
- Governance
- Partnership Activity and time
- Impact and outcomes
- Forward strategy

Close liaison was maintained with representatives of the project steering group throughout.

2. Background and Context

2.1 National Context

The national context for this review of the LAPs is that the new coalition government have swept away all the Local Area Agreement Targets (see 2.2.1 below) and in so doing, the primary driver for Local Strategic Partnerships.

In addition, the impending White Paper on the future of public services and the drive for significant cuts in public expenditure due to the government's austerity programme requires, in turn, a reduction in local public services or a new and more cost effective way of delivering these same local services.

Any reduction in expenditure on public services can create challenges to community cohesion, either through reduced availability or access to services, or through alienation of discrete groups of people, whether defined by age (early years, youth, elderly), circumstance (disabled, lone parents, rural isolation, social housing estates), or ethnicity (migrant workers).

The coalition government has championed "Localism" and "Big Society" as primary means to enable local communities to participate in decisions about the future and prioritisation of local facilities and public services, as well as to enable those same communities to achieve more for themselves. This Bill and these concepts are explained more fully below.

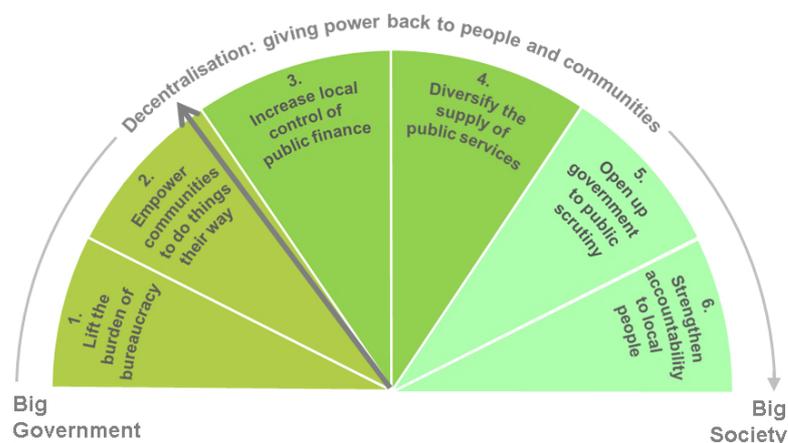
2.1.1 Localism

The Localism Bill now proceeding through Parliament is intended to "mark the beginning of a power shift away from central government to the people, families and communities of Britain". The Localism Bill aims to provide a legislative foundation to enable six essential actions of decentralising reform, namely:

- **Lifting the burden of bureaucracy** – by removing the cost and control of unnecessary red tape and regulation, whose effect is to restrict local action; and
- **Empowering communities to do things their way** – by creating rights for people to get involved with, and direct the development of, their communities.
- **Increase local control of public finance** – so that more of the decisions over how public money is spent and raised can be taken within communities; and
- **Diversify the supply of public services** – by ending public sector monopolies, ensuring a level playing field for all suppliers, giving people more choice and a better standard of service.
- **Open up government to public scrutiny** – by releasing government information into the public domain, so that people can know how their money is spent, how it is used and to what effect; and
- **Strengthen accountability to local people** – by giving every citizen the power to change the services provided to them through participation, choice or the ballot box.

(source: Decentralisation and the Localism Bill: an essential guide, DCLG)

This can be illustrated as a model of growing empowerment in progressive steps:



All public and voluntary agencies across the country are working through what this might mean in practice, and how they can effectively support and enable such measures.

2.1.2 Big Society

The “Big Society” is defined by the coalition as “what happens whenever people work together for the common good. It is about achieving our collective goals in ways that are more diverse, more local and more personal.”

It is, therefore, legitimate for local voluntary and community groups to say that they are “already doing it” or already represent a “model of good practice”. However, this approach is too simplistic, and those with responsibility for planning support services for voluntary and community groups need to look to what the future could hold for “Big Society” in the context of Localism and cuts in public funding.

The Big Society “offers the potential to completely recast the relationship between people and the state: citizens empowered; individual opportunity extended; communities coming together to make lives better”. However, voluntary and community organisations of all sizes within the third sector are facing an uncertain future as they grapple with the effects of public funding cuts upon the services they offer to their beneficiaries. The concept of Big Society emphasises a greater role for charities, social enterprises, voluntary and community bodies in public service ownership and delivery.

The challenge is now for the public and third sectors at both national and local levels to identify their roles within the Big Society, and to reconcile ideas with practical local implementation.

2.2 **North Norfolk Community Partnership**

North Norfolk Community Partnership (NNCP) was originally formed as part of the UK government's programme of Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) that encourage joined up working between various agencies and community organisations. It is intended to bring together representatives from the Parish and Town Councils, the District and County Councils, the police, the health service, learning and skills services, businesses, community and voluntary groups, to work together to improve the quality of life and the delivery of services to the people of North Norfolk.

2.2.1 Purpose

The North Norfolk Community Partnership produced its Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2011 which set out its vision of:

“a place where everyone can enjoy a high quality of life and where the unique and attractive environment is sustained into the future”.

This was based upon a model of Local Area Action Plans, informing the Community Strategy which in turn influenced the priorities within the North Norfolk aspects of the Norfolk Local Area Agreement.



The Local Area Agreement (LAA) for Norfolk was a three-year contract between the County Strategic Partnership and central Government, through GO-East, which identified a series of eight LAA outcomes that NNCP were tasked to address through joint working, namely:

- Thriving economy
- Improving skills and fulfilling aspirations
- Improving Housing
- Environmental Sustainability
- Stronger Communities
- Safer Communities
- Supporting Independence
- Improving Health and Well Being

2.2.2 The Vision Translated

The NNCP strategy focused on three priority workstreams which were to be informed and guided by existing and new work programmes planned, coordinated and/or commissioned through NNCP and its partners:

- Improved housing
- Better jobs and prospects
- Sustaining a high quality of life – a nice place to live, work and visit.

Ipsos MORI undertook market research to publish a report in November 2010 entitled North Norfolk Local Priorities: A report on attitudes towards local area and public services. This features an analysis of developing priorities for improving quality of life for residents, measured against those most needed and those most important.

The support for the seven Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) represented an important feature of the NNCP delivery strategy as the LAPs bring together people and organisations at a local level to create and support plans for their communities. In return

for core funding designed to “ensure the vitality of the LAPs”, NNCP expected the LAPs to “deliver real community benefits” with ongoing funding based upon “the achievement of clear business targets, inclusivity in community engagement and transparent and accountable decision making.”

NNCP currently spends around 50% of its annual income on the LAPs, with the following figures representing the budget allocations for the seven years from 2005/06 to 2011/12:

LAP	2005/06 Budget	2006/07 Budget	2007/08 Budget	2008/09 Budget	2009/10 Budget	2010/11 Budget	2011/12 Budget	Total
Fakenham	£ 6,000	£ 24,450	£ 48,100	£ 24,375	£ 33,300	£ 40,200	£ 20,100	£196,525
Griffon	£ 31,500	£ 50,000	£ 52,000	£ 55,200	£ 45,000	£ 43,013	£ 21,507	£298,220
Holt	£ 0	£29,020	£ 24,770	£ 17,976	£ 22,135	£ 30,597	£15,298	£139,796
Poppyland	£ 21,000	£ 28,000	£ 46,000	£ 34,862	£ 45,000	£ 43,013	£ 21,507	£239,382
Stalham	£ 17,500	£ 43,547	£ 38,629	£ 45,225	£ 34,298	£ 38,686	£ 19,343	£237,228
Upcher	£ 20,000	£ 0	£ 15,364	£ 43,998	£ 45,000	£ 43,013	£ 21,507	£188,882
Wells	£ 20,000	£ 45,517	£ 49,190	£ 40,850	£ 29,067	£ 34,432	£ 17,216	£236,272
TOTAL	£116,000	£220,534	£274,053	£262,486	£253,800	£272,954	£136,478	£1,536,305

The NNCP investment in the voluntary sector through funding to Voluntary Norfolk to deliver the VCS Together project is:

YEAR	2008/09 Budget	2009/10 Budget	2010/11 Budget	2011/12 Budget	Total
VCS Together	£ 63,239	£ 64,688	£ 65,596	£ 32,798	£226,321

2.2.3 Coordination and Implementation

NNDC employ a Community Partnership Manager on behalf of NNCP, whose role is to co-ordinate the ‘day to day’ activities of the Community Partnership. This includes facilitating the implementation of the Community Strategy by supporting partner organisations and local communities to improve the social, economic and environmental well being of the area.

The principal responsibilities from the Job Description include the requirement to:

1. Co-ordinate and administer the day to day activities of the Community Partnership including co-ordinating the contributions of partners so as to ensure the successful delivery of the Community Strategy.
2. Establish and maintain good relationships with particular reference to community groups and the business sector.
3. Actively promote and monitor the achievements of the Community Partnership in delivering the Community Strategy action plans
4. Where appropriate, analyse and evaluate opinions and make recommendations to the Community Partnership Board and other related groups
5. Prepare budgets and financial plans in consultation with funding partners for approval by the Community Partnership Board

6. Manage on a 'day to day' basis the finances and budgets of the partnership and as required provide reports to the Board.
7. Under the direction of the Board prepare the annual report on the Community Partnership finances and budgets.
8. Where required monitor the progress of working groups ensuring that board meetings are supplied with timely information, agenda and minutes.

3. Strategic Partners

There are eight strategic partners that make up the North Norfolk Local Strategic Partnership (NNCP), and these fall into three main categories, ie Public Sector, Private Sector and Third Sector (including Victory Housing Trust, Voluntary and Community Groups).

Each of these partners has a material interest in understanding the needs and priorities of the local communities across North Norfolk, and in having a means to engage with local community groups to plan and deliver services.

The relevant features and priorities of each of these eight strategic priorities are summarised below to both set the context for the LAPs and also to help identify activity areas for mutual interest and partnership working.

3.1 North Norfolk District Council

North Norfolk District Council (NNDC) has the primary responsibility for the wellbeing of the District and its residents as a defined area within Norfolk. This responsibility includes the local economy with implications for local businesses, inward investment and tourism, as well as more traditional service areas around planning, environment, waste, benefits, leisure, and other community services. The District also engages in a number of joint service responsibilities with other partners, particularly with the police around community safety.

Given the geographical focus for NNDC (as opposed to all the other strategic partners who mostly cover larger geographical areas), the District Council is the legitimate and most appropriate partner to take the initiative with regard to the support or otherwise of a District-wide community infrastructure. The District already have a number of staff from different departments (for example planning, assets, environment, economic development, tourism, arts for example) who are engaging with the LAPs on both specific projects and larger scale strategic projects.

Subject to ongoing organisational review, NNDC is expecting to have to make further significant revenue savings by 2012 to accommodate cuts in central government grant. This could well have implications for the Council's voluntary and community sector strategy.

3.2 Norfolk County Council

Norfolk County Council held a public consultation in 2010 entitled the "Big Conversation" in which it set out its service aims and strategy in the context of the requirement to find £155m of annual revenue savings within three years. In the supporting documentation it describes its core role as to:

"...focus our efforts and money on:

- Speaking up for Norfolk – providing strategic leadership and influence sufficient to ensure that Norfolk's voice is heard wherever people are taking decisions that are critical to its future economic prosperity, investment, health and well-being.
- Assessing people's needs and commissioning efficient, responsive and cost effective services to meet them.

- Supporting, developing and maintaining the infrastructure that helps our economy.
- Being a safety net for the most vulnerable people in our county and protecting the public.
- Signposting people to the services they need and providing good quality information to help people choose services relevant to them.
- Helping and enabling others to build and maintain strong, sustainable and caring communities, giving back community ownership of locally important priorities best tackled through local community action.

This is to be delivered through four main strategies:

- a) Making efficiencies
- b) Redesigning services
- c) Scaling back the scope and volume of some services - fewer priorities
- d) Smaller council - bigger communities

This last strategy is of particular interest to this review. The County have set out their intention to “hand back to Norfolk people responsibilities for things [we] believe should no longer form part of the core services provided by the County Council and funded by council tax payers. We will also look to devolve more of our services to parish and town councils.”

In other words, if local communities want to preserve some of the services that the County deem they can no longer afford to fund, the County wish to support communities to develop and own sustainable local solutions for keeping their areas vibrant and strong to support local priorities. The County also propose to work closely with others to help build the necessary extra capacity locally to meet these changed expectations. They “welcome ideas and proposals for how best [we] can do this”.

Some examples of the kinds of services that should or could, be better delivered by local groups, societies, volunteers or organisations in the future are set out below:

- Volunteering for local schools - for example delivering basic road safety or bicycle training.
- Being responsible for helping to stop speeding in local communities - owning local speed watch services.
- Empowering and supporting parish and town councils to take on more highway maintenance, working with the highway and community rangers.
- Giving local young people choices of activities or places to meet out of school hours.
- Keeping footpaths clear and clean.
- Good neighbour schemes or collectives to look out for and support local older and vulnerable people.
- Volunteering to support local libraries.
- Accredited parish or community handyman schemes to support people who need basic help such as gardening, handrail fitting etc.
- Community meals or dining schemes.

Assets

In addition, one of the ways the Government is encouraging Councils and other public sector organisations to do more to support communities through its Localism Agenda is by allowing community groups to buy any buildings or land that the county no longer plan to use.

The County Council supports this and wants to enable community groups to purchase assets which are no longer needed by the County and where there is a strong business case to support the transfer. In April 2011 the Council's Cabinet agreed a Community Asset Transfer Guidance Pack, which provides information and an application form for any community groups considering the purchase of County Council assets.

3.3 Health Care

The Health and Social Care Bill, now proceeding through Parliament, outlines the proposed GP commissioning processes and a new role for local authorities in the co-ordination, commissioning and oversight of health and social care and public health and health improvement. This is significant for North Norfolk given the number of elderly residents, the significant reduction in preventative services to be funded through NCC, and the limited access to services for so many people. Norfolk County Council's response to the proposed Bill focuses on four key areas of interest, namely:

- Health and Wellbeing Boards;
- Health overview and scrutiny;
- Local HealthWatch;
- The transfer of large elements of the public health and health improvement function from the PCT.

The County Council has a number of duties, subject to the enactment of the Bill, which it will need to prepare for over the next 12 months. It is suggested that the next 12 months are treated as a developmental period as transition arrangements are put in place.

The GP commissioning Consortium from North Norfolk will commission an estimated 80% of health care services in the area and so will have a very significant role with regard to the nature and delivery of local provision. There are a number of duties placed upon GP commissioning consortia that will ensure engagement with the Health and Wellbeing Board and local authority.

3.4 Police

The Norfolk Constabulary is managed as a County-wide service, and divided into District-wide operational centres with a District command, based at North Walsham. The 2010/11 three year Policing Plan Targets for Norfolk reflect most of the national priorities to:

- Maintain low crime levels
- Achieve higher detection rates for serious sexual offences and serious violence claims
- Increase public confidence
- Improve public satisfaction
- Achieve safer roads
- Reduce anti-social behaviour
- Reduce anti-social behaviour perceptions
- Maintain efficiency and productivity

These will all be addressed through the Police's day to day operations, with a particular focus on house burglary, violence offences, and auto-crime.

The Police are a key partner within North Norfolk Safer Communities Partnership. Its purpose is to tackle crime, disorder, anti-social issues and drug & alcohol misuse problems by using prevention, diversion, and education combined with enforcement in order to holistically reduce the problems in a sustainable and cost effective way. Priorities for North Norfolk are to:

- Reduce all crime by 15%;
- Target anti-social behaviour;
- Support victims of domestic abuse;
- Reduce the occurrence and impact of crime and anti-social behaviour within North Norfolk (with a targeted focus on anti-social behaviour, alcohol-related and violent crime including domestic abuse and hate crime).

The North Norfolk priorities are to address domestic violence and social isolation, particularly in the context of the significant rural and comparatively isolated populations.

The Safer Neighbourhood Teams work with a wide range of local community and voluntary sector partners, including the LAPs and local Town and Parish Councils. This is for identifying local issues and addressing short and medium term solutions to problems.

3.5 Victory Housing Trust

Victory Housing Trust, the independent registered charity and affordable housing provider for North Norfolk which received the NNDC stock transfer in 2006, manages 4,900 properties in the District, over 10% of the local housing stock.

Victory has a strong commitment to the enabling and support of projects of demonstrable social benefit, primarily to their tenants, but also to the wider community, particularly in the towns and parishes where they have greatest concentrations of housing stock. Its emphasis is on partnership working, and most notable projects have included:

Handyperson Service	with Age UK North Norfolk
Community Support and Befriending Scheme	with About with Friends
Subsidised Furniture	with The Benjamin Foundation
Community Fund	with Norfolk Community Foundation
Savings accounts and community banking	with Norfolk Credit Union
Victory Training Fund	with North Norfolk Skills Partnership

Victory employs a Community Services Manager along with two support staff, to plan, enable and/or deliver Victory's community programme and resident/tenant involvement.

In 2009 Victory embarked upon a year-long consultation with its residents to establish a Victory Charter. The 34 promises covers a wide range of service commitments covering tenancies, tenant involvement, home standards, and communities. Under the Communities Charter, the ballot determined agreed priorities for Victory along with the allocation of £1million Victory funding over five years, which will be used to lever other external funding as required. Those priorities and their associated Victory budget allocations are:

VICTORY RESIDENT PRIORITY	CHARTER FUNDING OVER FIVE YEARS
1. Make homes more energy efficient *	£ 280,000
2. Increase kitchen and bathroom upgrades	£190,000
3. Support community transport schemes and local community shops *	£160,000
4. Prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour *	£140,000
5. Give access to services to improve residents' independence	£100,000
6. Provide additional car parking for residents	£ 90,000
7. Develop community play and sports facilities *	£ 40,000

Four of these priorities (highlighted *) have a direct bearing on the work of the LAPs and some of the voluntary and community groups across the District, and given Victory's approach of facilitation rather than delivery, there are opportunities for further partnership working, community shops being one good example.

3.6 North Norfolk Business Forum

The North Norfolk Business Forum is a co-ordinated group run by businesses on behalf of businesses, and forms a key aspect of the local partnership infrastructure. The forum represents the interests of local employers and their staff in the support and development of the local economy. Its priorities are to:

- Generate more business and income for local businesses
- Improve the skill level of the workforce
- Open lines of communication with key politicians and other decision makers
- Be a strong collaborative voice for the business community
- Raise the profile of local businesses

There is considerable overlap between the interests of businesses and the LAPs, particularly around local regeneration and specifically retail development. Local business leaders are already working closely with the LAPs regarding town centre regeneration in North Walsham, Holt and Sheringham, and also on business development in Fakenham.

3.7 Norfolk Rural Community Council

Norfolk RCC is an independent charity operating across Norfolk with three core roles:

- Community Support - Helping over 500 community organisations a year with support to identify needs or deliver solutions through support and expertise, with focus on Parish Councils and Village Halls.
- Rural Advocacy - Providing a voice to rural communities to ensure that decisions on services, policies and strategies do not discriminate against them and adequately serve and reflect their needs. NRCC leads on specific initiatives on Fuel Poverty, Affordable Housing, and Broadband Access.
- Developing Solutions - To research, consult on and develop initiatives to solve the problems faced by local communities.

Norfolk RCC receives core funding from Defra and Norfolk County Council, which allows for a team of community development staff based at its office in Dereham, one of whom

has a particular focus on North Norfolk. RCC's strategy for North Norfolk is to complement the work of VCS Together and to focus on capacity building, particularly in the more rural and deprived hotspots.

NRCC's membership in North Norfolk is 115 organisations, of which it worked with 69 community organisations or Parish Councils during 2010 resulting in supporting 134 interventions, utilising 283 contact hours.

3.8 Voluntary Norfolk

Voluntary Norfolk is a County-wide Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) established in 1969 to support volunteers and voluntary organisations across Norfolk. Based in Norwich, employing about 90 staff and with an annual income of around £3m, it provides services grouped under three main headings:

- Voluntary Organisations: Supports a wide range of community and charity organisations with expert help and advice.
- Volunteers: Through three volunteer centres (in Norwich, Great Yarmouth and Thetford) and a team of Volunteer coordinators across the county, VN works to recruit volunteers, matching personal skills and interests to the right volunteer opportunities – and to promote the benefits that volunteering brings to individuals and to Norfolk as a whole.
- Voice: Acts as a voice for community and voluntary organisations, ensuring that whatever the organisation size, the value of volunteers and voluntary organisations is recognised and represented when public sector partners and government consider local and national policies and funding.

Voluntary Norfolk holds the contract for the management and delivery of VCS Together, and has also delivered a number of other information and support services to the voluntary sector across North Norfolk through other funding streams identified in section 5.2.2.

4. Appraisal of Local Area Partnerships

Each of the seven partnerships were individually appraised and evaluated against a pre-prepared survey framework (see appendix D) through the following process:

- b) Desk-top review of background reports and information obtained from the NNCP Manager, the LAP Co-ordinators and the respective LAP websites (see appendix H)
- c) Face to face interviews with LAP Co-ordinators (see appendix B)
- d) Face to face interviews with LAP Chairs incl. Board members (see appendix B)

This evidence was then collated and written up for each LAP and key extracts are represented in each of the sections below to provide a comprehensive picture. Throughout the research and this report, two overall aspects are being considered, namely:

- A) Organisational Infrastructure (governance, staffing, resources, etc) to enable the LAP to be “fit for purpose”;
- B) The Activity Programme, i.e the outputs leading to the achievement of its purpose.

A considerable volume of information has been obtained on each LAP, and only selected examples of comparative data has been presented below to ensure that this report is of a manageable size. The individual LAP Business Plans and Partnership Questionnaires (obtained from the NNCP scrutiny process) are full and invaluable documents, and this appraisal draws heavily on these sources to enable in-depth comparison and analysis.

4.1 History and Evolution

Each of the LAPs has evolved from quite different backgrounds, summarised below:

LAP	Origin
Fakenham	Developed out of Fakenham Forum in 2006
Griffon	Began as a regeneration partnership in 1999 and formalised in 2003 as Griffon Local Area Partnership.
Holt	Established in 2006 as a local stakeholder partnership
Poppyland	Grew out of Cromer Past Present Future Ltd which is a Charitable Company and is the successor to the Cromer Regeneration Partnership (2002-2006). The LAP was formalised in 2007.
Stalham	Began as a regeneration committee during mid-1990s, and formalised as a LAP in 2005.
Upcher	Developed from Sheringham Plus regeneration project and formalised as Upcher Community Partnership Ltd in 2008.
Wells	Formed in 2005 as a Partnership and formalised as a LAP in 2006

4.2 Aims and Activities

The Partnerships all have very similar core aims which can be summed up as:

- To identify the particular needs of the Partnership area and to draw up, and action, plans to address them

- To generate and support projects to benefit people who reside in, work in and visit the Partnership area.
- To provide a forum for members of the Partnership to work together and coordinate their activities.

Constitutionally, these are defined in rather different ways and with different emphases, which is more a reflection on who drew up the constitution and whether charitable status was required, than the precise details of the LAP aims.

4.2.1 Local Needs and Priorities

Whilst there are similar features and challenges for most of the communities across North Norfolk given the role of market towns, the coast and the extensive rural hinterland, but beneath the surface, there is considerable variation in the needs of each of the LAP areas. For example, Wells, Cromer and Sheringham are all coastal towns, and yet perform very different roles, have varied population and visitor profiles, and significantly different infrastructure. Holt, North Walsham, and Fakenham play a key role as Market Towns, but similarly have very different profiles and priority needs.

Each of the LAPs undertook public and stakeholder research and consultation in 2007/08 utilising Community Health Checks and have made use of the results to varied extents to inform their programme plans.

The NNCP Local Area Agreement targets (see 2.2.2) and the associated programme matrix has encouraged each LAP to identify project activities that respond to each of the 16 LAP priorities (e.g. IT solutions, young people, credit union, transport) within the six NNCP priority themes (i.e. Improved Housing, Good Jobs with Prospects, Environment, Safer Stronger Communities, Transport and Health).

4.2.2 Programme Activities

The specific Programme Activities have been determined by each LAP based on various influences or approaches, namely:

- a) Expectations of NNCP (particularly LAA targets and Community Strategy priorities)
- b) Expectations of NNCP partners
- c) LAP Board and stakeholders

Each of the LAPs has initiated and/or are participating in a wide range of project initiatives. Appendix J provides an extensive list of the titles of many of the projects for reference purposes. In summary, these projects can be grouped under eight main headings:

LAP PROJECT SUMMARY	
CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Outreach and Engagement	"Health Check" - Local Needs Analysis Consultation on specific topics Briefings to Parish Councils Public meetings and AGMs
Communication and Networking	Newsletters Websites and blogs Business and Organisation Directories Walks and Trail Guides

Community Hub	Town centre location for local resource and information The Happing Hub
Town / Parish Improvements	Holt Vision Town in Bloom Farmers Markets Christmas Lights Speedwatch Teams
Service Delivery	Credit Union / Community Bank Tourist Information Service Care projects (eg Voyager, Happing Services) Youth Activities Oddfellows Hall Car share scheme
Funding	Funding advice for local projects Applying for and acting as “accountable body” for funds for local projects Community Chest
Infrastructure Development and Maintenance	Homes for Wells Pretty Corner Woods
Economic Development	Experience Sheringham Wells Maltings Holt Vision Arts Festival
Representation	Liaison with public agencies (Highways) Participation in SNAP Meetings

Over 70 different projects have been identified across the 7 LAPs, with some being delivered across all LAPs (e.g websites, Community Bank) and some unique to individual LAPs.

Some of these are strategic projects in that they require significant partnership working and capital investment, and have a long incubation period. The Maltings and Fakenham Resource Centre are two such examples. They are of great economic and social significance to the LAPs and to their areas, but require significant pump priming resources and so can take considerable investment of time before there is anything significant to show.

One other key feature to note is that the project titles, even where they may be the same between LAPs, conceal a considerable variation in quantitative and qualitative measures. For example, a newsletter can be simple and quick with small distribution or full and glossy and distributed to every household with an area. An event or activity, say for young people, may be one-off or rolled out across a series of locations.

4.2.3 Engagement, Communication and Marketing

Outreach, communication and marketing are key requirements of all the LAPs to ensure engagement, participation and awareness. The LAPs also increasingly act as an information hub for the activities in the area, with newsletters and websites being used to promote events and activities being organised by local community groups.

The LAPs adopt a range of techniques to achieve this to a greater or lesser extent.

	Tools for Outreach and Communication						
	Website & Blog	Newsletter	Magazine	Visits to Parish Councils	Press Briefings	Stakeholder and Public Meetings	Email Bulletins
LAPs	✓	✓	Some	✓	✓	✓	Some

Each of these vary considerably in their quality, content and focus, reflecting the priority given, the allocation of resource time, and the extent to which voluntary or other discounted expertise and support is accessed.

4.2.4 Outputs

The outputs from the projects as measured by the numbers of people, businesses or groups participating or benefiting are not systematically recorded for all projects, and to do so would in many instances entail a disproportionate amount of administration time, even if it were possible. There are output numbers for specific projects such as members of the Community Bank, care projects, hall user groups, newsletter distribution, visitors to shop, etc.

There is no doubt that considerable numbers of people have benefited from the various project activities with some such as Arts Festivals, Farmers Markets and In-Blooms demonstrating large numbers of beneficiaries. At the opposite end of the spectrum, regular care clubs and youth activities attract considerably smaller numbers and have a much lower profile, but provide considerably more benefit for each participant.

4.3 **Income and Resources**

The income for each of the LAPs is derived from a range of sources. The figures below are extracted from the 2009/10 full year published accounts, representing a one year snap-shot to provide an indication of the scale and variation of NNCP and other income sources through the LAP accounts:

LAP	Scale and Sources of Income	
	2009/10 Income	Sources
Fakenham	£ 57,942	NNCP (75%), Market Place Events (23%)
Griffon	£177,211	NNCP (25%), Big Lottery (37%), Heritage lottery (15%), Sales/events (11%)
Holt	£ 20,770	NNCP (99%)
Poppyland	£ 58,096	NNCP (81%), LSC IT (8%), Mini-bus (4%)
Stalham	£ 68,595	NNCP (50%), Festival (15%), Development Grant (15%), Advertising income (7%)
Upcher	£128,519	NNCP (32%), Sheringham Plus/NNDC Grant (54%), Donations (5%), Rental income (2%)
Wells	£ 45,800	NNCP (85%)

4.3.1 Funding Agreements with Community Partnership

The NNCP funding for each of the LAPs is governed by a uniform contract signed by the respective chairs of each of the LAPs and the Chair of NNCP with the only variation being the amount of funding being applied to each LAP (see appendix E for supporting details).

The main purpose of the document is to “provide a framework for establishing and strengthening a productive relationship between the NNCP and the LAP”. The Agreement sets out a series of obligations on each of NNCP and the LAPs, largely demonstrating the expectations that NNCP has on how each the LAPs will operate.

4.3.2 Leverage of Other Funding

All of the LAPs have provided some support to projects and activities in their areas to enable other income to be raised. This support varies considerably from acting as the accountable body (i.e. receiving and holding the funds) through to providing advice and/or acting as a reference. It is, therefore, very difficult to get a measure of the nature and effectiveness of this support which varies considerably between the LAPs.

One of the LAPs, for example, puts considerable effort into providing practical advice in completing funding application forms, particularly for Community and Parish hall projects. The following table is for indicative purposes only:

LAP	Leverage of Other Funding 2008-2010	
	Estimate of Other Income	Examples of Main Sources
Fakenham	£ 76,000	Community Builders Fund, Farmers market, Christmas Lights, Eco-bag sales, Fakenham Recreation Ground Charity, Tourist Information
Griffon	£ 215,000	
Holt	£ 183,000	Awards for all, EEDA, Community sustainable Energy Programme, NCF, Big Lottery, NNCP
Poppyland	£ 133,000	
Stalham	£ 90,000	Happing Festival, advertising income, project development grants
Upcher	£ 241,000	Lottery
Wells	£ 85,000	

4.3.3 Forward Strategy

There are two elements to the Forward Strategy, one is with regard to long term sustainability and the other concerning the potential impact and mitigation of any reduction in core funding from NNCP.

Most of the LAPs have considered issues of sustainability, with some actively pursuing projects to a varied extents which could supply or make a significant contribution to long term core funding. Despite various proposals and business plans, none have yet made any demonstrable progress in achieving this.

None of the LAPs has adopted a formalised Forward Strategy. Most have regularly discussed the implications of potential funding cuts and some have practical ideas as to how they would like to sustain their organisations and grow their activity programmes.

4.4 Governance

4.4.1 Organisational Structure

Each of the LAPs are incorporated as companies limited by guarantee, but have different constitutions and legal status:

LAP	Legal Structure
Fakenham	Community Interest Company (CIC)
Griffon	Charitable company limited by guarantee
Holt	Company limited by guarantee
Poppyland	Company limited by guarantee
Stalham	Charitable company limited by guarantee
Upcher	Company limited by guarantee (seeking charitable status)
Wells	Company limited by guarantee

Each of the Boards have Directors or Trustees, and are made up of a range of different criteria and numbers:

LAP	Board of Directors	
	No. Directors	Make Up
Fakenham	6	2 NNDC Councillors, 1 Town Councillor, 1 Parish councillor, 6 local voluntary organisations
Griffon	8	2 NNDC Councillors, 1 County councillor, 1 Business forum, 3 local voluntary organisations, and 1 College governor
Holt	10	2 NNDC Councillors, 2 Town Councillors, 3 Parish councillors, 3 local voluntary organisations, and 1 school governor
Poppyland	13	2 NNDC Councillors, 1 Town Council Clerk, 8 Parish councillors, 3 local voluntary organisations, and 1 school governor
Stalham	10	2 NNDC Councillors, 1 NCC Councillors, 1 Parish Councillor, 1 Head Teacher, and 5 local VCS groups represented.
Upcher	6	2 NNDC Councillors, 1 Town Councillor, 2 Parish Councillors, 1 County Councillor, 2 school governor, and 3 local VCS groups represented.
Wells	4	1 NNDC Councillors, 1 Parish Councillor, 1 school governor, 1 Business Forum, and 2 local VCS groups represented.

4.4.2 Engagement and Participation

The LAPs have a wide constituency of stakeholders including residents, businesses, voluntary and community groups, and Parish Councils. They all operate a variety of different engagement mechanisms within their governance structures, allowing for consultation and participation through both formal membership and stakeholder meeting structures and informal networks.

LAP	Mechanisms for participation in Governance Structures
Fakenham	Monthly stakeholder meetings open to anyone to discuss current issues, reports from working parties, and future projects. Board meets as and when required to meet legal requirements.
Griffon	Have a Representative Group which meets quarterly
Holt	Hold two public meetings per annum. All Board minutes, action plan and business plan are published on LAP website.
Poppyland	The Board is the principal means to enable wider participation, and is carefully structured to ensure significant (8) Parish Council representation.
Stalham	Hold bi-monthly representatives group which oversees project and work plans.
Upcher	Stakeholder/representative group meets every 6 weeks to take an overview of the partnership action plan, give advice on strategic direction and receive reports on project development, Meetings are notified to the local media and parish council magazines and are open to individuals and organisations, with meetings circulating around the parish halls where available.
Wells	The Board meets bi-monthly and is made up of one representative from each of 11 theme areas (eg Communications, Children & Young People, Housing). Where there is sufficient community interest a working group or forum has been set up for these theme areas.

4.5 Staff and Volunteers

The LAPs have a range of staff structures and use volunteers in a variety of ways. These are each set out in turn.

4.5.1 Staff

All the LAPs employ a Partnership Co-ordinator on a range of contracted hours, supplemented by an Administrator or other staff in various cases as shown below:

LAP	Staff		
	Core Staff Hours per Week		Other Staff Roles
	Co-ordinator	Administrator	
Fakenham	35	24	Total hrs 65/wk incl. 3 other staff
Griffon	Under review since LAP Co-ordinator left. Other staff engaged on Voyager project and back-filling core roles.		
Holt	25	15	
Poppyland	30	-	Finance Officer (3.5hrs/wk) and Partnership Development Worker (22.5hrs/wk)
Stalham	35	-	
Upcher	30	16	Plus 5hrs/week for Oddfellows Hall
Wells	35	-	

Every one of the Co-ordinators works more than the contracted hours by between an estimated 10-33% .

Each of the LAPs have developed their own Job Descriptions and Person Specifications for their staff, which has resulted in very different emphases of the Partnership Co-ordinator roles, even though staff are performing essentially the same core tasks.

The LAP Co-ordinators were asked to estimate the time they spent on five different task areas. The summary table is summarised below, noting the overlap between some of these areas depending on how they are interpreted:

LAP CO-ORDINATOR TASKS	SPREAD	AVERAGE
Communication and Information	15 – 30%	20%
Consultation	5 – 20%	15%
Project Planning and Development	10 - 30%	25%
Project Management	20 – 35%	25%
Organisation Infrastructure	10 – 30%	15%

4.6.2 Volunteers

Each of the LAPs engages and supports volunteers to participate in both the running of the LAP and in its activity programme. The numbers of volunteers and the range of roles vary considerably, and are summarised below:

LAP	Volunteers		
	No. of Volunteers		Examples of Range of Roles
	Regular	Project	
Fakenham	10	70	Tourist information, speedwatch, Christmas fayre
Griffon	10	10	Voyager Project
Holt	10	50	Website, photography, leafleting, credit union
Poppyland	20	97	Arts festival, speedwatch, coast and heritage projects
Stalham	85	48	Staffing shop, and projects
Upcher	10	70	Credit union, oddfelows hall
Wells	20	40	Various projects

4.6 Local Area Partnership Association (LAPA)

LAPA was formed as an association of the seven LAPs in 2008 following the decision by NNCP to restructure the Partnership Board, and in doing so reduce the number of LAP Chairs participating on the NNCP Board from seven to one. LAPA brings together the LAP Chairs and Co-ordinators and the NNDC Community Projects Manager as a Forum every two months to share best practice, local knowledge and achieve collaborative working between the LAPs, and is the only formal mechanism to connect the LAPs with the NNCP Board.

The first LAPA meeting was held in April 2008 at which the terms of reference were agreed. The main principles within the Terms were:

Purpose: Platform to exchange best practice and learning
Provide a strong voice within NNCP
Mechanism to deliver the LAA and District-wide projects

Membership: 3 from each LAP, including Chair, Co-ordinator and one other NNCP Manager to attend and act as liaison between NNCP partners and LAPA

Meetings: Bi-monthly from 4pm to 6pm with locations rotating across District

Chair: Elected from within group for a one year term

Thematic Groups: LAPA to participate in NNCP's thematic groups as appropriate

In practice, LAPA was initially chaired by a LAP Chair, then by one of the LAP Co-ordinators (i.e. executive staff) until 2010, and then a LAP Chair was again appointed to chair LAPA. Its administrative capacity is provided by one of the LAP Co-ordinators from within their existing work programme.

5. Appraisal of VCS Together

VCS Together is the brand name of a project instigated in 2004/05 and managed and delivered by Voluntary Norfolk (see 3.8) under a contract for £65,000 per annum.

5.1 Aims and Activities

VCS Together is the Forum for voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups active in North Norfolk. It aims to promote the interests of VCS organisations by providing them with a focal point through which they can raise issues of common interest, provide accountable local representation for the sector, promote best practice and identify development issues and priorities for local access to development support.

There are about 420 known VCS groups operating across North Norfolk with details held on a database owned by Voluntary Norfolk. These groups elect a steering group of up to 20 member organisations (currently 17) who are expected to represent the interests of the wider voluntary sector and who oversee the activity of VCS Together. The steering group meets five times a year to discuss the issues relating to, and impacting on, the voluntary sector in North Norfolk and also plans focus topics for full Forum bi-annual meetings.

Current Steering Group membership comprises representatives from:

Age UK North Norfolk	Mundesley Visitor and Advice Centre
Alzheimer's Society North Norfolk	Norfolk Rural Community Council
Break	North Norfolk Older People's Forum
BTCV	Poppyland Partnership
BUILD	The Benjamin Foundation
Citizens Advice North Norfolk	Victory Housing
First Focus Fakenham	Voluntary Norfolk
Holt Youth Project	West Norfolk Community Transport

5.1.1 Purpose and Expected Outcomes

The stated purpose of the Forum is to:

- stimulate development and opportunities in the voluntary and community sector
- share good practice and make it easier to exchange ideas and information
- identify priorities for advice and support needed by voluntary and community organisations
- enable the sector to play a full and equal part in discussions with organisations in the public and private sectors
- support organisations to keep to the undertakings of the COMPACT in Norfolk
- raise the profile of the sector through co-ordinated campaigns and actions
- achieve effective representation for the sector
- develop resources and capacity within the sector.

The expected outcomes were as follows:

- Activity and status assessments within the voluntary and community sector to inform the development of strategy to build community capacity
- Elected VCS representative on the Board of NNCP

- Increased involvement and representation of the VCS in North Norfolk in planning and delivering services
- Clarification of the needs of VCS organisations in North Norfolk and the subsequent development of an implementation programme to meet the specific needs identified
- Improved performance of VCS organisations in North Norfolk
- Better access to support services
- Increased awareness of developments for and by VCS in North Norfolk
- Increased numbers of North Norfolk VCS groups accessing training, support services and funding

5.1.2 Activities

In addition to sector representation, VCS Together provides regular mailings / information, organises thematic events, organises training for the VCS staff and provides one to one support which is mostly related to funding and charity legal matters.

VCS Together estimate that about half the 400+ organisations actively providing community services and benefits for people in North Norfolk have no paid member of staff. The services they offer improve the quality of life for local residents who may be (in their own words, with categories reflecting the focus of the voluntary organisation):

- elderly;
- with learning disabilities;
- with mental health issues;
- looking for work.;
- disabled;
- wanting to develop social skills;
- poor;
- coping with, or recovering, from long-term illness;
- housebound;
- homeless;
- needing transport;
- caring for someone else;
- at risk of offending;
- drug or alcohol dependent;
- lonely;
- experiencing family difficulties;

Other community organisations within the 420 include those running village halls, providing early years or youth and uniformed activities, running arts, leisure or local sports clubs and activities.

The VCS Together Forum provides a focal point for information and support for the managers, and other employees, for the trustees and other volunteers of all these groups to enable them to sustain their work, enhance their ability to raise money, and to apply their limited resources more efficiently.

The Forum also offers a central point for those wanting to engage with voluntary groups. By tapping into the established communication channels or attending Forum events, representatives from statutory and business sectors can quickly establish links with appropriate voluntary or community groups.

5.1.3 Outputs

The full Forum meets at least twice a year and the topics addressed in the last year have been transport and rural isolation, and health inequalities. Two extra events have also been held: one to consider the support available locally for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender) residents and one in response to the exceptional situation currently affecting public finances.

Usual attendance at full Forum meetings is between 43 and 65 people from both statutory and voluntary sectors. Speakers are invited to share good practice and give a national, regional and local perspective on matters directly affecting service delivery. The events support collaborative working among local groups and engagement with statutory organisations.

Improving access to information about and among groups

In the last year, two development workers have facilitated a training programme made possible through a Big Lottery Funded grant secured by Voluntary Norfolk to support voluntary sector infrastructure (which ended on in March 2011) of:

- 15 events (for between 5 and 15 people: total attendance 135)
- two funding fairs (between them attracting 125 people).

In addition:

- an average of 15 to 20 groups a month have been supported through one-to-one support sessions - half of these are related to funding, the remainder cover governance, volunteer management and a range of business planning and policy matters
- a monthly email newsletter circulated to 650 individual addresses (all sectors) that provides updates on current topics, is supplemented by an events listing bulletin that goes to about 500 people in local voluntary and community groups
- Little Libraries in Stalham, North Walsham, Cromer, Fakenham and Wells provide local access to specialist publications.
- Other training events have been facilitated in the area, particularly covering personalisation, developing commissioned services, legacies, and other longer-term funding streams, and raising awareness of the COMPACT in Norfolk.

Improving representation and access to local decision making arenas

The Forum provides a mechanism for the accountable two-way representation of the voluntary and community sector on several partnership bodies.

Transport, a major cross-cutting issue, has (since 2007) been led by a separate Forum that provides opportunities for community transport operators, community car scheme organisers and other voluntary and community organisations to develop good practice and further engagement and co-ordination with the public sector. Its activities have included developing joint promotion campaigns to raise awareness of community transport services and driver recruitment in the area.

5.2 Resources and Means

A full-time VCS Development Manager was employed by Voluntary Norfolk in April 2005 and based in NNDC's offices at Cromer to inform and deliver the VCS Together activity programme. The Manager is line managed by Voluntary Norfolk's Head of

Communications & Engagement and is supported by a number of other staff from the various programmes with Voluntary Norfolk (see 5.2.2 below).

5.2.1 Funding Agreement with Community Partnership

Voluntary Norfolk receives £7,000 annual grant from NNDC to cover its core activities and in 2010/11 a further £65,596 from NNCP for the VCS Together Project.

5.2.2 Voluntary Norfolk's Contribution

Voluntary Norfolk produced a briefing to NNCP to demonstrate the additional funding and related service contribution that they were able to bring to North Norfolk for the benefit of local voluntary and community groups in which they detail:

“The range of services provided by Voluntary Norfolk and funded from other sources is channelled into North Norfolk through the VCS Engagement Project, bringing £371,293 worth of expertise and support into the District for free”.

This benefit can be summarised as follows:

Name of Funding Source	Total 2010/11 Income to Voluntary Norfolk	Financial benefit to North Norfolk	
		2010/11*	2011/12* (approx)
Development Work			
– Basis 1	£ 154,539	£ 77,270	ceased
– Basis 2	£ 101,875	£ 14,554	£ 14,554
Project Work			
- Ensuring Seamless Support	£ 171,673	£ 24,525	Seeking replacement
- LAA Engagement	£ 70,000	£ 10,000	
- Third Sector engagement	£ 70,000		£ 10,000
- Public Services Development	£ 101,500	£ 14,500	ceased
- Link (Healthwatch)	£ 345,000	£ 49,286	£ 49,286
- Norfolk COMPACT	£ 30,000	£ 4,286	£ 4,286
- Workforce Development	£ 49,195	£ 7,028	£ 10,000
- Train to Gain	£ 20,000	£ 2,857	ceased
- Personalisation Development	£ 72,000	£ 10,286	£ 10,286
Volunteering			
- Voluntary Services Co-ordinators	£ 373,663	£106,876	£ 106,876
- v-involved	£ 201,677	£ 28,811	ceased
- Health connectors	£ 50,000	£ 12,500	ceased
- Transport plus	£ 38,760	£ 6,460	ceased
TOTAL	£1,849,882	£371,239	£207,288

* This is mostly calculated as one seventh of the total fund (ie a share of the seven Districts serviced).

6. Conclusions

These conclusions are based on the evidence gathered on and from the LAPs and VCS Together, and supplemented from wider experience derived from the research on best practice (appendix G) and from the consultancy team's work across the UK with other authorities and local voluntary and community groups.

NNCP commissioned a scrutiny report on the LAPs in November 2010. The summary questionnaires from the scrutiny formed an important source of evidence in the appraisal of the LAPs, but its findings have had limited influence on this report due to the relatively superficial and generic nature of its conclusions.

The key issue is the extent to which VCS Together, each LAP, and the LAPs as a collective covering all of North Norfolk, are "fit for future purpose", and in particular the anticipated future purpose with the Localism and Big Society agendas. Such a judgement requires consideration of a considerable range of issues with regard to three key features:

1. the strategy of the local LSP, and/or its key partners (in this case NNDC and NCC)
2. the anticipated requirements of local voluntary and community infrastructure
3. the infrastructure and work of the LAPs

The headline conclusions are that there is strong evidence of some great work and initiatives being delivered on the ground through VCS Together and the LAPs across North Norfolk. The extent to which this work is the most appropriate thing to be doing and represents value for money for the future will be considered further below. However, none of the supporting structures, i.e. NNCP and its theme groups, the LAPs, LAPA or VCS Together, are currently "fit for purpose" for necessary future requirements.

More detailed conclusions from this review are set out below in three main parts:

- a) LAPs - key factors for success
- b) LAPA
- c) VCS Together

6.1 Key Factors for Success of Local Area Partnerships

The key factors which will determine the success or otherwise of the LAPs are identified in the table below, and then conclusions for each key factor set out in more detail in the following sections 6.2.1 to 6.2.11.

Heading	Key Factors
1. Purpose	Clearly identified role and purpose of the LAP
2. Aspiration	Aspiration for the LAP activity programme, outputs and outcome
3. Breadth of Participation	Reach of the LAP in terms of the breadth of participation of the range of local stakeholders and the benefit to the rural hinterland (and Parishes)
4. Public Benefit	Outputs, utilising both quantitative and qualitative measures
5. Impact	The difference made by the LAP's existence (Outcome), and the sustainability of the impact
6. Sustainability	The sustainability of the LAP organisation and its associated infrastructure

Heading	Key Factors
7. Value for Money	The perception of the value of the benefits generated given the financial investment made
8. Acceptance	The extent to which LAP and its role and activities are valued by NNCP agencies and local stakeholder groups
9. Management & Support	The guidance and support provided by NNCP
10. Working relationships with partners	Effective working relationships with officers from the main public partners or their agencies, i.e. NNDC, NCC, Police, Health Consortium, Victory Housing Trust
11. Leadership	The credibility and capacity to bring people and partners together to enable local initiatives

The determination of success against each of these key factors for the LAPs will demonstrate the strengths and successes of the LAPs, but also the shortcomings against the question posed in the preface, "Are the LAPs 'fit for future purpose' ?".

6.2 Local Area Partnerships

6.2.1 Purpose

A clear and agreed understanding of purpose is crucial, particularly in terms of measuring effectiveness and value for money, but also when core funding is being challenged due to competing pressures on a finite resource.

With the LAPs, purpose is both defined and assumed by a number of interested stakeholders which has created natural tensions, those stakeholders being:

- a) The North Norfolk Community Partnership, as set out in the funding agreement (appendix E)
- b) Senior staff within the individual public sector partners from NNCP
- c) The Boards of each of the LAPs
- d) The Co-ordinators within each LAP
- e) The key stakeholders within each LAP, particularly the Parish councils and local community groups or activists.

Whilst there is a common thread between the stakeholders above regarding their respective understanding of the role and purpose of the LAPs, there are a wide range of expectations as to what it means in practice.

The funding Agreement between NNCP and the LAP (appendix E) lays down a series of expectations as to the purpose and operation of the LAPs. Of particular note is the expectation to:

7. *From gathered evidence through community consultation and involvement, develop and regularly reassess and update their complete local vision statement with objectives and associated prioritised action plan for the activities and projects in their area.*
9. *Define and commit to deliver specific outcomes within the above mentioned action plan which will meet local needs and priorities and contribute to wider priorities of the NNCP - linking to its district-wide action plan - and the Norfolk Local Area Agreement.*

And to this aim, ensure the engagement of the LAPs by attending relevant thematic group project meetings.

16. *Develop a business plan aimed at reducing core funding dependency from NNCP grant funding by March 2010 and at achieving match funding from external funding sources for core funding and the delivery activities of the LAP.*

For the LAPs themselves, all have their own vision and associated strategic aims set out in their Business Plans, none of which address the issue of reducing core funding dependency. There is considerable synergy between these as presented (see appendix I), but the interpretation and associated emphasis by the LAP Boards and Co-ordinators varies considerably (see 6.2.4 below).

The particular tensions regarding purpose are around emphasis and therefore resource commitment on:

- Large scale strategic projects versus small scale low impact “nice to do” projects
- Project impact on NNCP priority themes
- Maintaining organisational infrastructure (office, public access, membership, boards) versus project outputs
- Investing on-going time and effort into maintaining regular projects rather than building capacity for others to sustain, leaving time for new initiatives.

6.2.2 Aspiration

Aspiration for the LAPs’ role in working with others to meet local needs and to bring about change and improvements is determined by its vision and related aims and activity programme. All the LAPs set out a vision in their Business Plans which contains expressions around “*enhance the standard of living and quality of life*”, “*encourage a sustainable and resilient community*”, “*providing a sustainable economy, a vibrant community, and accessible environment*”, and “*enabling people and organisations to feel empowered and enabled to achieve their full potential*”.

These are all laudable and to be encouraged. However there is a significant mismatch between the stated aspirations as set out in the vision and aims, and the planned activity programmes.

The LAPs are intended to act as a “mini-LSP”, which means that they are best placed to bring together representatives of all the public, private, voluntary and community stakeholders to set out the requirements to achieve the local vision and work with others to bring together resources to achieve them. That does not mean that the LAPs attempt to do everything themselves, but it should be instrumental in thinking about the long term future of their localities and taking initiative.

6.2.3 Breadth of Participation

For the LAPs to be most effective, they need to be regarded as a key local agency for information, project planning and delivery by the public, private and voluntary and community sectors. This can only be derived from a clear mandate, credibility and the delivery of relevant local initiatives.

The first obligation in the funding agreement is to:

1. Develop a partnership that includes and involves all parishes as well as the town(s) within the defined area as mutually agreed by the NNCP Board and LAPs.

Most of the LAPs have worked hard at engaging with the Town and Parish Councils, but have had very mixed successes for a range of reasons, some inevitable due to the culture of Parish Councils, but some because of the perceived lack of relevance partially due to the nature of the LAP activity programmes.

The business communities have a significant role to play in many aspects of the LAP Action Plans, particularly regarding training, jobs, local economic development, retail provision and vibrancy, as well as being consumers of services with an impact on transport and the environment. Yet the business community is only engaged in a limited way in only a few LAPs.

All of the LAPs have good participation from a diverse range of residents and voluntary and community groups which is commendable.

6.2.4 Public Benefit

From the 70 plus different projects identified across all the LAPs it is very difficult to discern exactly what role the LAP plays in each project's development and delivery. For some, it is clear that projects would not have happened without the LAP, whereas for others the LAP is providing advice, support or simply additional promotion. In these instances it is impossible to determine the impact of any intervention. This is not a criticism as the LAP role needs to be varied with the emphasis on ensuring the right things are done, irrespective of who does them.

The outputs (i.e. numbers of people, businesses or groups participating or benefiting) are not systematically recorded for all projects, and to do so would in many instances entail a disproportionate amount of administration time. There are output numbers for specific projects such as Community Bank, care projects, hall user groups, newsletter distribution, visitors to shop, etc and could be summarised, but the presentation of specific output numbers or their comparison for this review will yield little substantive evidence without detailed explanations of reasons for variations based on related quality measures.

There is no doubt that considerable numbers of people have benefited from the various project activities. The key challenge here is achieving the right balance of programme outputs across a portfolio of projects.

6.2.5 Impact

Given the community development approach adopted by the LAPs as they seek to improve the quality of life for local communities, it is not important to be able to identify the precise role the LAP has played in each circumstance - the real question is "do the LAPs add value and so ultimately make a difference" to their localities and against their stated purposes ?

Impact measures can be undertaken, but require much more in-depth assessments over time to determine baselines of skills and activities, and then to measure the change over time. From experience and an assessment of the evidence gathered through this review, the following observations can be made:

Short term impact:

The LAPs have demonstrated short term impact by adding value through their respective projects in the form of:

- local profiling and needs assessment for each area
- providing visibility and a profile for a community-based agency
- promoting a wide range of activities and events to boost participation numbers through newsletters and websites
- initiating high profile “feel-good” events such as Arts Festivals
- filling gaps in social care provision for “hard to reach” or marginalised groups
- enabling additional funds to be secured for local facilities or projects
- undertaking development work for long term high impact projects

However, this impact appears to be largely location specific, inevitably focusing on the centre or market town. Clearly the development and viability of the market towns is important to those in the rural hinterland, but the benefit or impact is marginal. More initiatives that support projects and build local capacity within the parishes to enable local groups to develop things for themselves is important.

Long-term impact:

Demonstrable long-term impact from investment into the LAPs over the past six years is harder to determine. Even significant high profile projects such as the Maltings and Fakenham Resource Centre are at an early stage of their development, but are anticipated to have significant impact. Given that four of the seven LAPs have grown out of, or are succession strategies for, regeneration initiatives, means that for those areas the impact can be viewed over ten to fifteen years.

There are three primary means to provide long-term impact:

- a) Halting economic and/or social decline
- b) Building physical infrastructure
- c) Building active citizenship – skills and capacity

Using these measures and taking a longer-term view, it can be demonstrated that all of the LAPs are putting in place some means to ensure long term benefit from their activities.

Each of these will be considered further in section 7.4.

6.2.6 Sustainability

There are two key issues with regard to sustainability:

- a) sustainability of the activities and benefits of the LAPs
- b) sustainability of the LAPs themselves.

These are clearly linked, but ideally the projects and their benefits should be able to be maintained whether or not the LAP are supporting them.

a) Sustainability of the activities and benefits of the LAPs

To ensure sustainability of the LAPs’ activities means that on a project by project basis, measures need to be put in place to ensure that each project is viable and that individuals have the skills and capacities to take it forward.

Across the portfolio of projects, there appears to be considerable success in this regard in that most of the more substantive projects appear to have been positioned to be able to continue independently. Clearly ultimate success in this regard will only be measured if the LAPs are removed from the equation, which if this becomes necessary, should only be done on a managed basis to ensure that every project has a continuity plan put in place. This mindset, though, should and largely appears to be, a standard approach for each of the LAPs.

b) Sustainability of the LAPs themselves

The sustainability of the LAPs is much more uncertain, and despite the requirement within the funding obligations to develop a Business Plan which aims at “reducing core funding dependency from NNCP grant funding”, none of the LAPs has done this explicitly. A few have been able to secure small annual surpluses from specific projects, which is a sound principle but insufficient to make any serious impact on the scale of the core funding required.

To achieve sustainability is a very challenging task for any organisation, and requires particular skills with associated commitment from public sector partners to be able to achieve it. There are essentially four means by which organisational sustainability can be achieved, and it is likely and usual that a combination of all four are required:

- A) asset development
- B) project management (with management fees)
- C) income generating activities / user charges
- D) fund raising through grant funds

For a small organisation to invest time and resource into any of these activities will detract from their short term goals of demonstrable project outputs, and so an agreed strategy with external development funding and professional advice, along with a commitment from the public sector partners, particularly NNDC and NCC, is a pre-requisite.

The claw-back mechanisms used by NNCP in its funding arrangements have also mitigated against attempts by the LAPs to generate surpluses, which are crucial to create working capital and so pump prime development initiatives. There was much disquiet during 2008 when some LAPs had made savings (underspent) on their budgets, which were then deducted from the following year’s allocation. Whilst this is understandable from a public sector perspective, there needs to be transparency to enable the LAPs to manage themselves as social businesses and generate surpluses.

What is clear is that without exception all of the LAPs have a strong determination to survive, have thought about the issue of potential cuts to core funding, and are committed to doing all they can to absorb any reductions to their grants. They recognise, though, the significant proportion of their funding spent on the Co-ordinator post, and therefore their limited capacity to reduce expenditure.

6.2.7 Value for Money

The NNCP contract with the LAP (see appendix E) specifies the requirement for the LAP to “*Offer best value for money to the community and NNCP*”. The key question here is how is “best value” measured? There are four issues to consider under value for money:

- a) Are the economic and/or social benefits that accrue from the projects a reasonable return for the investment made ?
- b) Will the organisational infrastructure that has been created through this investment be of value in the future ?
- c) Could the investment into the LAP have delivered better results ?
- d) If NNCP had invested the money differently, could it have achieved better results (i.e. opportunity cost) ?

This is inevitably a challenging and contentious issue as there is considerable subjectivity with regard to views on opportunity cost, which in turn are based upon the value judgements around the LAP outputs and impact (see 6.2.4 and 6.2.5 above), all of which are dependant upon detailed knowledge across the LAPs. Secondly, the investment into LAPs is regarded by some as an investment in infrastructure, which whilst true, does not take sufficient account of the outputs delivered by that infrastructure.

When the portfolio of the 70 plus projects are considered, along with the total number of beneficiaries and the additional leverage of funding by the LAPs into other local projects, this annual investment of £250,000 does provide value for money when compared with any other means NNCP may have to achieve similar results across seven different areas. This is the primary benefit, and the development and sustenance of seven independent organisations is also an important, but secondary benefit.

When looking at individual LAPs, it is reasonable to suggest that more or more appropriate outputs could have been achieved in certain locations. However, given that this is a portfolio of seven different organisations with a wide range of circumstances, Boards, Co-ordinators, opportunities, and challenges, it is 100% predictable that some will perform better than others. With the right and timely guidance and support exercised through the annual financial agreements, those under-performing LAPs could probably have been encouraged to address any shortcomings. This issue will be addressed in the future recommendations.

The real question that has been consistently raised throughout this review, is “If NNCP had invested the money differently, could it have achieved better results (i.e. opportunity cost) ?”. NNCP could clearly have achieved different results, but there is no evidence that it could have achieved better results if it had invested the money differently. The results stem from agreement on purpose of the LAPs, which is then set out in the Business and Action Plans. If NNCP wanted different results, it needed to give clearer guidance on its expectations. Given that this was not forthcoming for a number of reasons covered elsewhere in this review, the LAPs have understandably continued with their current work programmes.

The review has provided a key opportunity to reconsider the nature and scale of the results produced by the LAPs, with proposed mechanisms set out in section 7.

6.2.8 Acceptance and Recognition

This success factor appears classically “soft”, and yet is crucial as without acceptance and recognition, both by the communities served by the LAPs and the public sector partners commissioning and funding the LAPs, then mistrust inevitably occurs leading to implied or overt criticism, defensiveness and even conflict.

Although the external factors of public funding cuts are crucial, the need for this independent review is partly a recognition of the breakdown in effective communication and relationship between NNCP and LAPs resulting in loss of recognition of worth.

6.2.9 Management and Support

The LAPs have had access to a number of different sources of support or guidance over their life, namely:

- NNCP Requirements and Documentation: NNCP Priority Matrix and Funding Agreement
- Templates for Business Plans and Action Plans
- “Challenge” Reviews with NNCP Chair and NNDC Chief Executive
- LAPA Meetings
- NNCP Manager

This support has been important in shaping the development and activities of the LAPs, but it was not sustained or consistent. In particular, the NNCP Manager who plays a crucial role in acting as a link between the strategic partners and the LAPs (and VCS Together) and in guiding the NNCP programme, largely disengaged from the LAPs, and has not attended any LAPA meetings since Autumn 2009.

The Scrutiny Review published in November 2010 required a significant commitment of time from the LAPs to respond to the Partnership Questionnaire and participate in interviews. This information is invaluable in providing a snapshot of each of the LAPs and their effectiveness, but was not followed through as a means to provide informed critical feedback to the LAPs on their progress and performance.

6.2.10 Working Relationships with Partners

Each of the LAPs has developed formal practical working relationships with public sector partners or agencies according to their specific project interests and their skills in this regard. Apart from close working with the Safer Neighbourhood Teams within the Norfolk Police, there is little consistency between the LAPs in the partners they are regularly working with.

The organisations and individuals that occurred most frequently are:

Organisation	Individuals / Departments
Norfolk Police	Safer Neighbourhood Teams
North Norfolk District Council	John Mullen, special projects Planning Department Communities Team Tourism
Norfolk County Council	Norfolk Property Services Highways and Transport
VCS Together	Andrew Campbell
Health	Patient Participation Forum
Local Schools	

In addition, most of the LAPs have informal links with various elements of the wider partnership structures through overlap with their own LAP Boards or membership. This enables information to be communicated to and from the LAPs, but as a communication tool it is unreliable and dependant on the awareness and confidence of the individuals concerned.

6.2.11 Leadership

Leadership comes through two primary means, the Chairs of the individual LAP Boards, who in turn should enable the Board to fulfil its role effectively, and the LAP Co-ordinators. Both the Chair and the Co-ordinator are crucial in providing the LAP with the credibility and capacity required to plan its work and to take initiative. Both are also crucial in setting the aspiration and the culture of the LAP. The LAP Coordinator will also bring practical technical skills and experiences to enable the LAP to develop and implement its local activity programme.

With 7 LAPs, Chairs and Co-ordinators, there is inevitably a wide range of capabilities and experiences between them. Whilst recognising this is one of the most crucial factors in the ultimate success of the LAP, it is also the most sensitive for obvious reasons. From the interviews and evidence, the conclusions are that:

- a) all of the Chairs could usefully participate in a collective workshop on the role of the LAPs and the Board to enable the Chair to effectively lead the Board in raising aspiration and developing an appropriate forward and sustainable strategy;
- b) when combined, the Co-ordinators have all of the necessary skills and experiences, but as individuals there are a number of inevitable shortcomings as the skill base required to run such organisations and deliver such a varied activity programme is very hard to find within one individual.
- c) There is no uniform job description.

6.2.12 Overall Conclusion

A considerable investment of time and over £1.5m funding has been made into the LAPs over the past 7 years. As a result seven local community based infrastructure organisations have developed with a strong sense of identity, purpose and commitment. In turn, a significant range of local projects has been initiated and delivered. These projects have clearly made a demonstrable difference to the quality of life in their local communities. All the LAP projects are important and contribute to the whole portfolio, but need to be thoroughly reviewed with regard to their succession plan and their fit into any future LAP programme.

The LAPs all have similar objectives and principles, but each is very different in culture, style, focus and programme largely due to their different origins, the Co-ordinator's background and experience, and the varied local circumstances. This brings strength and variety, but there is wide variation in the nature of the outputs, and insufficient cross fertilisation of skills, resources and experience.

There are low levels of recognition of the LAP role and brand amongst local populations and businesses, although there is much wider knowledge of the specific activities, even if the public are not aware who has initiated them.

None of the LAPs have made any substantial progress towards sustainability. This is partly due to the significant challenges entailed and the lack of clarity around the future of the LAPs and NNCP expectations, but also sustaining a growing portfolio of projects has left limited time for strategic thinking and new project development.

6.3 LAPA

LAPA has a clearly defined role (see section 4.5) which if carried out effectively forms a crucial support and linking function for the LAPs, both with each other and with the strategic partners. It currently performs two of four primary functions, i.e:

- i) to bring LAP coordinators and Chairs together to
 - share practice and experience
 - inform the LAPs of NNCP and partner priorities and expectations
- ii) to represent LAP interests to NNCP

LAPA should also be the means:

- (iii) to enable strategic partners to meet with and brief LAPs collectively on issues of mutual interest, particularly in the context of service changes
- (iv) to bring together those working on project delivery through the community (including those from strategic partners) to plan and coordinate effective delivery

Whilst the LAPA meetings are clearly appreciated by most of those that attend as a means for LAPs to meet together, the evidence is that it is largely dysfunctional with regard to its ideal and needed purpose. Without the regular attendance and contribution of the Partnership Manager or without the input from strategic partners on topics of mutual interest (see section 3 of this review), it can only be an opportunity to talk peer to peer on projects and topics of mutual concern. This inevitably leads to the growing alienation of the LAPs as a collective body from the mainstream partners with resulting misunderstanding and frustration. A secondary result is that some LAPs then find their own means to communicate directly with senior strategic partners. The polarised views about LAPA's value and effectiveness has also led to some LAP chairs "voting with their feet".

6.4 VCS Together

Within the list of VCS Together's aims and responsibilities the requirement "to develop resources and capacity within the sector" is included (see section 5.1.1). This is significant as it means that VCS Together is intended to fulfil the two basic roles of a CVS for North Norfolk, ie:

- (i) act as a Forum to coordinate and represent the sector's interests
- (ii) plan and provide infrastructure support for the sector across the District.

As there is no local CVS in North Norfolk, and Voluntary Norfolk have responsibility for the support and development of the sector through the VCS Together contract, this review must therefore consider the entirety of the service provided through Voluntary Norfolk to the voluntary and community groups in North Norfolk.

Voluntary Norfolk also made it clear that the additional services (see section 5.2.2) it provides for the benefit of North Norfolk voluntary groups through other funding programmes are provided as added value to the VCS Together project – in other words, if Voluntary Norfolk were not funded to deliver VCS Together, those additional services could not be assumed to be continued.

VCS Together does not currently have an agreed voluntary and community sector strategy in place for its work in North Norfolk. Over the six years that the VCS Together Forum has been in existence, groups have consistently identified their priorities for support as:

- improving local access to resources that support the management and development of their organisations
- improving access to information about local, regional and national opportunities for development support
- improving information sharing among and between local groups
- improving representation and access to local decision making arenas

It is, therefore, against this principal priorities, that the VCS Together programme is being reviewed.

Appendix F sets out the findings from the independent research with 12 of the VCS Together Steering group members and with a random selection of 51 of the 420 known voluntary and community groups from across the District. The main conclusions from this research can be summarised as follows:

- a) The VCS Together Steering Group members are fully engaged and utilising the services of VCS Together
- b) Of the random sample of 51 community groups, about half are aware of VCS Together and its activities. There is confusion over and between the brand names of VCS Together and Voluntary Norfolk – in other words, people interchange and mix them up
- c) 40% of those groups contacted are utilising VCS Together or Voluntary Norfolk services, other than emailings which the majority if not all should receive. This is a comparatively good percentage compared with many Districts.
- d) There was no concept amongst VCS groups of what Localism or Big Society might mean for them or North Norfolk other than “we are doing it already”
- e) There was very little awareness about public sector priorities (eg GP Consortium) or requirements to preparing groups for commissioning amongst the Steering Group
- f) The needs of the sector vary considerably such that:
 - the larger funded voluntary sector groups require support to enable them to be more strategic and able to tender and/or be commissioned to deliver future services;
 - a significant number of small community groups require easy access to simple support services
- g) Existing VCS Together and Voluntary Norfolk services are regarded as basic and low level
- h) It is good that the voluntary sector has a “voice” at NNCP Board, but there appears to be little recognition of the scale and breadth of the community and voluntary groups across North Norfolk amongst NNCP members, and little evidence of any issues for the sector being championed at the Board
- i) Some specialist organisations within the wider voluntary sector are not convinced that VCS Together or its steering group represent their views appropriately.

The known 420 voluntary and community groups in North Norfolk make a huge contribution to local communities, not only in terms of the services they provide, but also in creating strong vibrant local communities to provide opportunities for people to join together and engage in their communities. It is crucial, therefore, that an appropriate range of accessible support and advice services are put in place for the range of VCS groups in North Norfolk.

It is clear that the services that VCS Together (and Voluntary Norfolk) provide to VCS groups in North Norfolk are important and valued. Whilst the basic service should be retained, there is a need for the quality level to be increased to enable progression where required and for some of the larger groups to be supported through this challenging period of reduction in grant and public service income.

The steering group of the VCS Together Forum is well placed to review the conclusions of this review, and to plan the required future support needs of the voluntary and community sector.

6.5 Best Practice

The evidence from the best practice research from across the UK, some examples of which are summarised in Appendix G, indicates that most local authorities are looking at restructuring their means for community engagement. The focus is now, not on delivery of LAA targets (particularly NI4 – influencing decisions), but on providing means to enable local community groups to inform public spending decisions, participate in neighbourhood planning, or support (or even take over) the delivery of appropriate local services.

The research was unable to identify any local authority in the country that had the entire district covered by independent local delivery organisations such as the LAPs. Most had consultative mechanisms such as Forums, and a growing number had improved delegated powers through aspects of area based budgeting, but none had uniform capacity for local service delivery companies.

7. Recommendations

Recommendations for the future of the LAPs and VCS Together have to be set in the context of the changing priorities and strategy for public sector partners due to the austerity measures as set out in section 2 of this report.

The starting point is the need and expectation of those public sector partners to respond to the ethos and requirements of the Localism and the Big Society agendas. Along with every County and District authority in the country, NNDC and NCC have already begun to make organisational changes that will change the way that the authorities plan, commission and deliver services. NCC has already been explicit about its approach to Localism and Big Society (see section 3.2), but given that NCC is servicing residents and businesses across seven District Councils, it is for NNDC to take a lead on setting its strategy for the support and further development of the voluntary and community sectors in North Norfolk, and specifically the role of the LAPs and VCS Together within that strategy.

There are a series of decisions required:

DECISION REQUIRED	BY WHOM
1. Does NNDC wish to plan and resource a strategy for the support and development of the voluntary and community sector in North Norfolk?	NNDC
2. If yes, does NNDC also see sufficient value in an area based LAP structure to warrant further investment ?	NNDC
If the answer is "yes" to these two questions, then a further question can be posed:	
3. What consultation, services and/or strategic developments may be commissioned or contracted to the LAPs ?	NNDC Public sector partners

Funding for both the LAPs and VCS Together is currently committed to the end of September 2011, by which time it will be important to have in place a clear plan for the management of the withdrawal of funding to enable succession planning, or otherwise for any changes to be made if there is to be any future investment.

Given the conclusions that VCS Together (section 6.4) plays an important role in the support of the voluntary and community sector in North Norfolk, and that the LAPs (section 6.2.12) add real value to the delivery of local services, the following recommendations are set out on the basis that NNDC and the NNCP partners have answered "yes" to questions 1 and 2 above, and wish to work in partnership with the LAPs to review and plan what consultation, services and/or strategic developments may be commissioned or contracted to the LAPs over the next three years. These recommendations have, therefore, to be considered in the context of agreement amongst the public sector partners around the future requirements.

The support and development of the voluntary and community sector is absolutely crucial, not only to maintain the current energy and viability of the existing 420 plus groups and their activities, but also to enable the sector to rise to the challenge and expectations of Localism and Big Society. This can only be achieved by investing in some form of District-

wide infrastructure support. To have area-based structures that encompass all seven local areas to plan, enable and deliver local project initiatives is valuable, but not crucial.

The focus of this Report is on the analysis of the issues and evidence derived from the review of the LAPs and VCS Together. It is for the Community Partnership and/or its constituent partners to accept, amend or reject the conclusions and then to guide and oversee, if not directly commission, a work programme to follow through the recommendations.

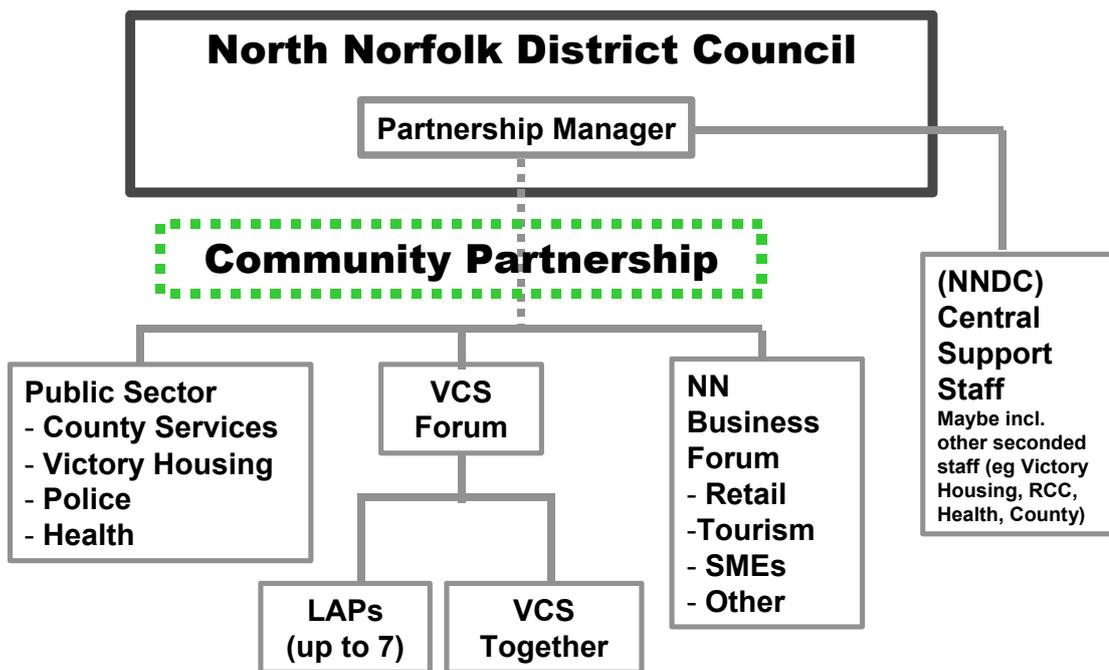
The next two years will be very important in setting out the necessary framework and infrastructure to encourage and enable appropriate development in the LAP areas, and to give a clear steer for the relevant public, private and voluntary sector partners to take forward their respective remits.

7.1 Fit for Purpose

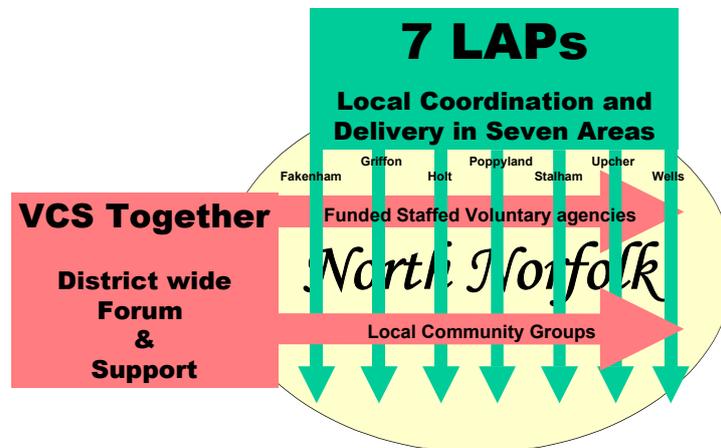
A considerable investment of time and funding has been made into the LAPs over the past 6 years which has resulted in a local community infrastructure with capacity which covers the whole District – the key recommendation is “don’t lose it !”

Apart from the infrastructure itself (governance, staff, database, office, networks), the most significant foundation is community motivation, capacity and commitment which is demonstrated through demonstrable involvement with the various LAP projects. This also comes from the LAP independence, which itself is to be valued and accords 100% with the ethos of Localism.

The principal recommendation is to demonstrate value for the sector by building on the foundations, but setting out clear expectations around role and purpose to allow and enable further local autonomy and empowerment, but encourage the restructuring so that they become “fit for future purpose”. The best way to achieve this is to enable both VCS Together and the LAPs to work together more effectively and to be set within the context of any future Partnership structures:



The LAPs and VCS Together need to work together more effectively, drawing on each other's databases, networks, and skills to add value for common purpose. This diagram below illustrates the importance of effective interface between District-wide infrastructure support and an area based local delivery mechanism:



If NNCP or NNDC decide to refresh the Community Plan, it will set out new or revised priorities which the LAPs will need to be in a position to contribute to, both in terms of the refreshing of the Community Plan itself and in the delivery of local solutions. Then, whatever decision NNDC take about future resourcing for VCS Together and the LAPs, there are three principal requirements of NNDC for both VCS Together and the LAPs:

1. To raise the sights and aspiration for their areas and activity programmes
2. To give clear direction on expectations through Service Level Agreements
3. To provide collective leadership throughout

The recommendations will look in more detail, firstly at VCS Together, and then at the LAPs.

7.2 Developing Voluntary and Community Capacity

The support and development of the voluntary and community sector is absolutely crucial to maintain the current viability and activities of the existing groups, but also to enable the sector to rise to the challenge and expectations of Localism and Big Society. This can only be achieved by investing in some form of District wide infrastructure support. There are essentially three options:

- i) Continue with a partnership and contract with Voluntary Norfolk
- ii) Prepare a specification of requirements and put this out to tender
- iii) Establish an independent CVS for North Norfolk

The recommendation is to prepare a specification of requirements and put this out to tender to at least Voluntary Norfolk, Norfolk RCC, and to West Norfolk CVS. The reason is that a revised approach is required which responds to the changing agenda and the local needs, builds on the strengths of what has been achieved, and overcomes some of the cultural weaknesses within VCS Together. Whilst an independent CVS may be desirable for North Norfolk, given the current funding climate, it is unlikely there would be appetite for the sustained funding commitment at this stage of the new District Administration, and this option for new specification to be put to tender still allows for the creation of an independent CVS at any time.

Given the considerable variation in the needs of the sector (see appendix F), the specification for the refreshed VCS Together service should contain the requirement for the development and delivery of an agreed voluntary and community sector strategy for North Norfolk in the light of NNDC's stated requirements and funding commitment which would include:

- a) improved generic offer of easy access low level information, advice and training on governance, funding, and policies
- b) investment in greater reach and take-up of services by the 60% of groups currently not utilising VCS Together services
- c) targeted intervention into specific sub-sectors to build capacity to meet local community needs
- d) requirement for a clear understanding of public sector interests in North Norfolk, designed to lead to bespoke support and training with VCS groups for risk management during period of funding cuts, further capacity building, and enabling groups to be fit for commissioning
- e) requirement for close working relationship with and through the LAPs via LAPA
- f) the means to effectively utilise any added value services of other related agencies with a remit to deliver in North Norfolk including Norfolk RCC and Voluntary Norfolk.

7.3 Local Area Partnerships

The introduction to these recommendations indicates that NNDC need to take a clear view as to whether it sees sufficient value in an area based LAP structure to warrant further investment. Whilst this review would wish to recommend the sustaining of the existing budget, clearly other financial pressures on NNDC could make that impractical. Therefore, these recommendations are structured to enable variations based on the budget, if so committed.

The other key point to note is that each of the LAPs is independently governed and currently chooses to be in receipt of funding from NNCP in return for the delivery of agreed services to their respective communities. The LAPs would obviously retain that right to continue to choose whether or not they wish to receive future funding, if it were available, in return for the delivery of pre-determined services.

Any strategy to encourage or enable the development of a community based infrastructure needs to address the 11 key factors identified in section 6.2, building on the strengths and addressing the weaknesses highlighted. It may be that, depending on the level of resources committed and the future strategy of individual LAPs, it is not appropriate or necessary for seven independent area based delivery organisations to be funded. This does not alter the principles underpinning the approach or recommendations outlined below.

1. Role and Purpose

NNDC to set out a clear framework for the role, purpose and expectations of area based delivery organisations. This to include a summary of anticipated outputs and outcomes, recognising the strengths and successes of the LAPs, and the need to raise the sights and aspirations of what is possible and expected.

2. Sustainability

Principles underpinning a strategy for future sustainability need to be set out from the beginning, as part of the framework for role and purpose. NNDC / NCC to take a view

on a strategy for sustainability, and advise or resource accordingly, particularly around:

- A) asset development
- B) project management (with management fees) through service commissioning
- C) income generating activities / user charges
- D) the capacity to generate surpluses for reinvestment without risk of clawback

3. Activity

Develop an agreed activity programme in partnership with each LAP which responds to the local needs and priorities and is within the framework for role and purpose. This will dovetail with NNDC strategy around role of “service hubs” and strategic projects for market towns. The potential activity programme is likely to include a balance of:

- core services: e.g. communication, consultation
- local services: e.g. TIC, Community Bank, Festivals, Arts, Youth activities
- strategic projects: e.g. Maltings, Fakenham Resource Centre, Holt Vision, Stalham Hub, North Walsham Place,
- specialist projects to be rolled out across wider area, e.g. Voyager, Victory Charter priorities
- capacity building, advice and support for local voluntary and community groups in partnership with VCS Together

Other strategic or specialist projects, such as the roll out of Broadband access, may be developed and implemented in partnership with NNBF.

4. Governance and Management

LAP independence to be retained through clear partnership and commissioning arrangements between NNCP/NNDC and those LAPs that choose and have the capacity to take forward a revised programme. The Funding Agreement to include expectations on the arrangements for LAP governance and stakeholder participation including the business community through formal links (nominated champion) with NNBF and the Parish Councils.

LAPA (or its replacement VCS Forum) to be restructured and strengthened through redefining role, purpose and terms of reference so that it becomes the “engine room” for thinking, planning, and guidance of strategy and work of LAPs and VCS Together.

If the Community Partnership continues, the role of LAP and VCS representatives must be clarified, with a clear mandate for accountability and communication.

7.4 Making It Happen

Given the investment in both VCS Together and the LAPs, North Norfolk is in a very strong position to take forward a unique model for the effective development of “Big Society” across the District. There is no shortage of innovative project ideas across the country, or indeed in North Norfolk, but no local authority has yet developed an effective means to enable and support local delivery of its priorities through the community sector.

Clearly financial decisions by NNDC will take precedence, but if it is felt appropriate to build on the investment made by NNCP over the past six years, there is a strong base of local infrastructure through the LAPs that can and should be further supported.

APPENDIX A: List of Terms and Abbreviations

CVS	Council for Voluntary Service
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
GO-East	Government Office East of England
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LAP	Local Area Partnership
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership (NNCP in North Norfolk)
NNCP	North Norfolk Community Partnership
NNDC	North Norfolk District Council
NRCC	Norfolk Rural Community Council
SNAP	Safer Neighbourhood Action Panel
Third Sector	Organisations that are non-governmental, 'value-driven', principally reinvest surpluses to further their social, environmental or cultural objectives, and are in the place between State and (the) private sector
VCS	Voluntary, Community Sector

B: List of Interviewees

North Norfolk District Council

Philip Burton	- Chief Executive
Sheila Oxtoby	- Deputy Chief Executive
Beatrix Ward	- Community Partnership Manager
John Mullen	- Community Projects Manager

Norfolk County Council

Debbie Bartlett	- Head of Policy and Performance
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Norfolk Rural Community Council

John Clemo	- Chief Executive
Alison Ball	- Development Officer (North Norfolk)

Victory Housing Trust

John Archibald	- Chief Executive
Helen Burrows	- Community Services Manager

Norfolk Constabulary

Neil Baily	- Chief Inspector North Norfolk and Broadland
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North Norfolk GP Commissioning Consortium

Rebecca Champion	- Health Improvement Specialist
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Voluntary Norfolk

Brian Horner	- Chief Executive
Linda Rogers	- Head of Communications & Engagement
Andrew Campbell	- North Norfolk VCS Development Manager

North Norfolk Business Forum

Ian Doughty	- Chair
Nigel Tomkins	- Chair Holt Vision
Nigel Morgan	- Griffin Area Partnership

Area Partnerships

Fakenham Area Partnership

Jim Harding	- Chair
Tony Irons	- Company Secretary
Gloria Lisher	- Vice-Chair
Jenny Rest	- Secretary
Janet Holdom	- LAP Coordinator

Griffon Area Partnership

Diana Clarke	- Chair
Nigel Morgan	- Vice Chair of the Reps Group and adviser
David Gosling	- Company Secretary and Treasurer
Rebecca Matthews	- LAP Coordinator (Interim)

Holt Area Partnership

Robin Coombe	- Chair
Lara Williamson	- LAP Coordinator

Poppyland Area Partnership

Mark Danson-Hatcher	- Chair
Victor Howard	- Board member
Susan Riggot	- Board member
John Rampling	- Board member
Catherine Plewman	- LAP Coordinator

Stalham Area Partnership

Cllr Richard Price	- Chair
Cllr Paul Rice	- Board member
Michael Castle	- LAP Coordinator

Upcher Area Partnership

Peter Burns	- Chair
Janet Farrow	- LAP Coordinator

Wells Area Partnership

Peter Lynn	- Chair
Joyce Trett	- Board member
Ben Francis	- LAP Coordinator

Voluntary and Community Groups Across North Norfolk

James Kearns	- Chair VCS Together
Richard Draper	- The Benjamin Foundation
Plus representatives from 60 voluntary and community groups	

C. Project Brief

North Norfolk District

Review of Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) and the VCS Together Project, 2011

This is an independent study of the Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) and VCS Together project currently operating in North Norfolk district. The aim of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of existing arrangements in the context of:

- a) benefit to community wellbeing since project inception
- b) value for money since project inception
- c) preparedness in taking forward and developing the emerging localism agenda

The study must examine the terms of engagement and funding agreements with North Norfolk Community Partnership (NNCP) and consider future affordability and alternative delivery models linked to different levels and sources of funding.

In undertaking the study, it is anticipated that the following will be included:

- the structure and status of LAPs as vehicles for community engagement and empowerment – review against formal TOR and funding agreement with NNCP.
- the effectiveness of the LAPs measured against community benefits delivered, stated priorities and overall vfm, to include an evaluation of return on investment by NNCP.
- the success of the Local Area Partnership Association (LAPA) as a vehicle for sharing best practice and problem solving, and in identifying solutions for the financial sustainability of the LAPs.
- a review of the aims and objectives of the VCS Together project and the way it has evolved. Consider vfm in the context of:
 - ❖ Benefits delivered to the voluntary and community sector
 - ❖ Benefits delivered to the statutory sector
 - ❖ Return on project funding to include additional leverage
 - ❖ Sustainability
 - ❖ Collective benefits to the wider North Norfolk community
- an assessment of levels of integration and mutual support between LAPs and VCS Together membership. Consider scope for creating synergy and extent to which it has happened.
- LAPs and VCS Together – key successes and obstacles to developing potential.
- an assessment of how well placed we are with LAPs and VCS Together to embrace localism and to develop a cohesive framework for community engagement.

The study should also consider the following:

- lessons learnt from each project to inform future delivery
- evidence of achievements

- an assessment of the LAPs and VCS Together in the context of best practice and examples from other rural localities outside North Norfolk/Norfolk.

Finally, the study should conclude with an assessment of considerations for the future:

- the potential roles for the LAPs and VCS Together in the emerging localism agenda and Big Society, and structural/process modifications needed to create a best fit.
- solutions for a more financially sustainable future and the impact of reductions in/cessation of core grant funding.

Key leads and contacts and further background information will be provided as appropriate to the successful bidder. It is felt important that the study include evidence gathered from stakeholders not directly involved in either project, but who are potential beneficiaries of outcomes.

D. Survey and Interview Frameworks

Local Area Partnerships

The following headings were used during the interviews with the LAP Co-ordinators and representatives of the LAP Boards.

1.	Vision, aims and objectives for LAP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action plan and planned outputs/targets/outcomes - Progress against previous action plans - Business plan
2.	Project activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role of LAP: development, delivery, exit strategy - Three most successful initiatives - Two least successful initiatives
3.	Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nature and practice: with whom and for what purpose - Hours or contacts/week with partners (and other LAPs)
4.	Project Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role and approach of LAP - Leverage
5.	Community and stakeholder participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What, who and how (town v <u>hinterland</u>) ?
6.	Capacity and infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff resource - Volunteers: nos, hours, etc - Physical facilities and equipment
7.	Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Income and expenditure sources - Changes over years
8.	Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role and operation of Board (policy, decisions, participation)
9.	Partnership Activity and time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-ordinator: approx percentage of time on tasks - Particularly interface with Parish councils and NNDC
10.	Impact and outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of progress against "obligations" as set out in "terms of engagement" contract - Value for money
11.	Forward strategy, if any <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fit for purpose - Impact of funding cuts: 25%, 50% or 100% - What would make job easier or outputs greater ?



VCS Together – Steering Committee Survey

Interviewer:	Interview Date:
Name of Organisation:	Name of contact:
Role in Organisation:	Phone No:

I understand that you are on the Steering Committee of VCS Together. We are undertaking a review of the VCS Together project on behalf of North Norfolk Community Partnership. I would be grateful if you spare a few minutes to answer a few brief questions please ? (All responses are confidential.)

1. What would you say was the main purpose (or purposes) of VCS Together ?

2. What services or activities have you or your organisation ever used or participated in of VCS Together?

	Yes	No	Details / Notes
Attended Steering Group Meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Received mailings / information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attended Forum events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attended Training events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Received one to one support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

.....

If no for any of above, any reason why not ?

3. Has VCS Together successfully represented your views or needs (of your organisation or client group) to the Council, Police, Heath Trust, (Community Partnership) etc:
 yes no not sure

If yes, can you give any examples ?.....

Where these successful ?

If no, do you know why not ?

(please write overleaf if more space required)

4. Could you suggest what future support needs, if any, your organisation might require from VCS Together ?
 yes none not sure

If yes, any details ?

.....

5. If VCS Together is to continue as (a) a Forum and/or (b) support structure for the voluntary and community groups in North Norfolk, what changes or improvements, if any, would you like to recommend ?
 (and in context of Big Society & Localism)

6. Any other comments:

(please write overleaf if more space required)

E. Funding Contract between NNCP and the LAPs

The Funding contract between NNCP and the individual LAPS is made up of two parts, obligations of NNCP to the LAP, and obligations of the LAP to NNCP, and reflects the formal understanding of the expectations of each partner in return for the core funding. These two parts are set out below:

Obligation of North Norfolk Community Partnership to Local Area Partnership

The North Norfolk Community Partnership will:

1. Work with the Local Area Partnership to provide a long-term, sustainable way of involving and consulting the community.
2. Acknowledge the local priorities, needs and aspirations identified in the Local Area Partnership action plan.
3. Provide a strategic overview of activity and projects in North Norfolk and disseminate information about best practice.
4. Provide a link between the Local Area Partnership, the County strategic Partnership (CSP), Norfolk Ambition (the County's Community Strategy) and the Local Area Agreement. (LAA)
5. Consult Local Area Partnership on relevant projects or activity – particularly at the planning or commissioning stage.
6. Inform Local Area Partnership of projects, activity and plans that could affect them.
7. Learn from all Area Partnerships as an ongoing means of updating the Community Strategy and projects/actions.
8. Review and update the community strategy and associated action plan, involving all local area partnerships in the process, as per a monitoring scheme to be developed.
9. Assist Local Area Partnership to identify resources as well as funding streams to support its activity.
10. Encourage local individuals and groups to become involved with their Local Area Partnership.
11. Adopt a code of governance to demonstrate accountability and transparency of decision making.
12. Report annually to all Local Area Partnerships on the progress and outcomes in the delivery of the community strategy and its associated action plan.

The Obligation of the Local Area Partnership to North Norfolk Community Partnership

The Local Area Partnership will:

1. Develop a partnership that includes and involves all parishes as well as the town(s) within the defined area as mutually agreed by the NNCP Board and LAPs.
2. To achieve formal legal registration status, such as becoming a Company limited by guarantee with charitable status, clearly separate from other existing legal entities.
3. Include on their Board democratically elected members (a minimum of 1 District Councillor) as well as representatives of community groups and organisations, aspiring at being all inclusive with the widest representation possible.
4. Maintain high standards of governance and adopt a code of governance to demonstrate accountability and transparency of decision making.
5. Create the right opportunity for engagement within the community and engage in priority setting within the area partnership by continual community involvement.
6. Sign off to the NNCP community strategy and its action plan.
7. From gathered evidence through community consultation and involvement, develop and regularly reassess and update their complete local vision statement with objectives and associated prioritised action plan for the activities and projects in their area.
8. Regularly maintain and review the needs of the local communities to influence the priorities, plans and aims of the Community Strategy
9. Define and commit to deliver specific outcomes within the above mentioned action plan which will meet local needs and priorities and contribute to wider priorities of the NNCP – linking to its districtwide action plan - and the Norfolk Local Area Agreement. And to this aim, ensure the engagement of the LAPs by attending relevant thematic group project meetings
10. Work with NNCP to address barriers to community activity, which may involve looking at policy changes within one or more services, or promote new thinking of mainstream services.
11. Ensure that LAPA meetings are attended and that the LAP works in partnership with other District LAPs to share resources and best practice with the aim to meet local needs and priorities and contribute to wider priorities of the NNCP. Ensure that the coordinator or delegated representative attend relevant partnership meetings.
12. Promote cross LAP and cross district boundaries activities.
13. Promote the work of NNCP, its vision for the district, funding and successes.
14. Actively work with Thematic Group Leads to identify resources to help deliver projects or activities locally and districtwide by attending meetings, sharing knowledge and resources, sharing in the delivery of projects.
15. Meet the agreed reporting obligations of the NNCP performance monitoring and provide the requested information on LAP activities to monitor the effectiveness of the LAPs within NNCP
16. Develop a business plan aimed at reducing core funding dependency from NNCP grant funding by March 2010 and at achieving match funding from external funding sources for core funding and the delivery activities of the LAP.
17. Offer best value for money to the community and NNCP

F. Independent Review of VCS Together Services

The following report represents the findings from an independent survey of the VCS Together Steering Group and a sample of voluntary and community groups across North Norfolk.

1. Review of the VCS Together Project and Services

From the background interviews and desk top research, it became clear that there was a limited take up of the range of services offered by VCS Together to the 420 known voluntary and community groups across North Norfolk. These services are planned and informed by a steering group made up of the larger voluntary organisations and delivered by VCS Together and Voluntary Norfolk.

The VCS staff were fully occupied servicing the Forum and delivering services, but it was unclear who was utilising these services, or how relevant or how effective these services were. It was, therefore, decided to undertake independent research within this assignment which required interviews with as many of the Forum representatives as possible, combined with telephone interviews with a random sample of VCS groups across North Norfolk.

The study examined the level and effectiveness of engagement of the voluntary and community sector with VCS Together, the benefits delivered by the services to the sector, and future the sustainability requirements of VCS groups. 12 out of 17 members of the VCS Together steering group and 51 representatives of the voluntary sector organisations were interviewed for this study.

2. Some Definitions

There are a range of possible definitions of the voluntary and community sector which include or exclude different organisations. This study uses a “general charities” definition from the Charity Commission but also includes faith based organisations (religious organisations) as a sample study to acknowledge that community capacity building activities of faith based organisations contribute to community development, but are often not acknowledged in the mainstream.

This report refers throughout to the term “voluntary sector” which incorporates both the voluntary and community sectors. It also refers to sub-sectors. The relevant definitions are below, noting that the boundaries between the voluntary and community sectors are blurred:

- **Voluntary organisations:** usually larger, professionally staffed agencies
- **Community organisations:** active at a local or community level, usually small, modestly funded and largely dependent on voluntary rather than paid effort
- **Sub-sectors:** voluntary or community sector organisations providing services to specific clients, groups or communities i.e. women, youth, disabled etc.
- **Faith based organisations:** normally part of a religious set up i.e. church or temple but run community capacity building projects and activities.

3. Observations

The voluntary sector (VCS) in North Norfolk makes a huge contribution to local communities, not only in terms of the services it provides, but also in creating strong vibrant local communities through providing organisations and clubs for people to join together and engage in their communities. It is difficult to say exactly how many voluntary sector organisations are currently operating in North Norfolk, but VCS Together has approximately 420 contacts on their database.

VCS Together is the Forum for voluntary groups active in North Norfolk. It has an active steering group consisting of 17 members who are representatives of the local voluntary sector organisations, and are elected to represent the interests of the wider voluntary sector. However some specialised organisations within the wider voluntary sector are not convinced that VCS Together or its steering group represent their views. The reasons include the requirement that larger organisations often have more specialist needs that cannot be met by generic CVS provision, and Change-Up funding from central government facilitated the response to the needs of larger and more specialist organisations in recent years, enabling them to come together through their own Forum. For any set up like VCS Together it is difficult to represent the sector in its entirety. However efforts can be made to ensure that the needs of large or specialist organisations are listened to and represented accordingly.

In addition to sector representation, VCS Together provides regular mailings and information, organises thematic events, organises training for the VCS staff and provides one to one support which is mostly related to funding and charity legal matters. It is considered to be an effective source for providing a platform to the local groups to come together to talk about the things that concern them, enables their voices to be formed and heard at policy tables. The services of the Forum are free and open to everyone involved in a local voluntary or community group that benefits people in North Norfolk.

VCS Together has come a long way since its inception and the Co-ordinator appointed in post in April 2005. Its services are highly regarded within the voluntary sector.

4. The Independent Study

The independent study included telephone interviews utilising a pre-structured survey (see appendix D) with the steering group members and a random selection of voluntary and community sector organisations. A summary of their responses are set out below:

A) The steering group response:

12 out of 17 steering group members were interviewed. The level of engagement among the steering group members with VCS Together is high. The steering group members have high levels of awareness and knowledge about what VCS Together is about, its aims and purposes, and how best to utilise its services and contribute to its core functions.

VCS Together is regarded as a great set up for the voluntary sector in North Norfolk. Most of the steering group members said that through VCS Together they know about the small organisations and their matters of concerns. Some members were even willing to provide extra support to small organisations as the need may require – such as mentoring arrangements.

Overall most of the members were quite satisfied with what VCS Together has achieved over the years. All steering group members expressed their desire to see VCS Together carry on doing what it already does, and named it as a powerful voice for the voluntary sector. One member mentioned that VCS has always embraced change and is on an ongoing evolution process. 7 members mentioned that it would be a shame if VCS Together disappeared due to funding cuts. One member mentioned that VCS Together is great value for money, and believed that VCS Together delivers quality services and good outcomes against its budget. Another noted, though, that whilst there is real value in maintaining some form of Forum to enable people and groups to come together and to network and share practice and experience, etc, this does not need to cost £60k plus per annum. They noted that there was a need for on-going infrastructure support, but this could be provided by range of different people organisations, and did not need to be Voluntary Norfolk.

Some other comments included observations that VCS Together should:

- a) try to combine the needs of the small groups with the larger groups
- b) undertake wider community engagement
- c) be a lot more efficient and businesslike
- d) use press (local and national) more effectively

B) Voluntary sector response to the survey

51 organisations were interviewed, out of which 21 organisations said that they had heard of VCS Together, 7 organisations said they may have heard of it, and 23 said that they hadn't heard of VCS Together. Of this 30, 27 said they want to know more about it via mailings and newsletters. Only 3 organisations said that they don't want to know about it, two of these organisations were providing services to young people.

The organisations that receive regular mailings / information from VCS Together regard it as a great source of information, and specifically about funding and training.

19 of the 51 organisations have attended training courses organised by VCS Together, 21 organisations have attended Forum events and liked the selected topic as well as invited guest speakers. 17 organisations have received one to one support from VCS together covering fundraising and charity legal matters.

Note: Most of the one to one support is provided by Andrew Campbell who spends up to 20 % of his time on one to one support. When development workers were in place, Andrew used to deal with more strategic matters and the development workers were providing one to one support. Overall voluntary sector organisations scored this service high in value.

5. Common factors in both responses

5.1 Sector representation

The sector representatives mentioned that VCS Together represented their views about funding cuts to the council. No examples were given regarding representation to the Police or to the Health Trust. Two specialised organisations interviewed said they work directly with the Police and the Health Authorities to represent the views of their

organisations. No specific examples were provided relating to representation at the Community Partnership, although sector representatives were aware of its existence and that voluntary sector individuals have a seat at the Community Partnership.

No specific examples were provided relating to the championing of voluntary sector issues. This may indicate that VCS Together's role as a voluntary sector champion is still to be developed.

Sector Sustainability - Present Funding situation

All respondents were concerned about the present funding situation and the sustainability of the voluntary sector. Many believed that the sector would survive through innovation, volunteering, and being economical. Two respondents from the steering group said that they believed mergers were inevitable. The respondents highlighted the role of the voluntary sector as a key partner because of its ability to reach disadvantaged communities, involve local people and service users, develop new approaches to meeting needs and add value through the contribution of volunteers.

The representatives acknowledged that there will certainly be a need for more collaboration, more mergers, joint ventures and partnership across organisations, based on the notion that this will achieve economies of scale, to ensure a diversity of provision within a particular service.

5.2 The confidence factor

Although engagement of voluntary sector organisations within VCS Together is relatively low compared to the steering group members, 18 organisations said they have the confidence to find support from VCS Together when needed. The level of confidence among voluntary sector representatives was high relating to VCS Together as a support mechanism, from which they can benefit as and when required.

5.3 Training

Voluntary sector groups stressed that there is a need for VCS Together to provide higher level training. Three specific examples were given:

- higher level voluntary sector management training
- higher level volunteer management training
- bespoke training specific to the needs of specialist groups.

5.4 Big Society and the Localism

Voluntary sector representatives were asked about their views on the Big Society and the Localism. 31 respondents (including steering group and the voluntary sector) believed that Big Society is what they have already been doing, 24 mentioned that they need more information on what exactly the Big Society is, 8 chose not to say anything about it. Nothing was said about the Localism or the Localism Bill.

5.5 Champion on behalf of the VCS

The research was unable to identify any examples of views being championed by VCS Together for or on behalf of the sector. However examples were given that voluntary sector views regarding the proposed reduction in voluntary sector funding were presented

to the Council, and a meeting was arranged to meet MP Nick Hurd, Minister for Civil Society.

6. Sub-sector study

Three sub-sectors within the wider voluntary sector were specifically identified and contacted to ask questions about their knowledge and awareness of VCS Together, their level of engagement, and any benefit they already receive or might receive in future from VCS Together.

a) Women

Five small women's organisations were contacted, 4 were aware of VCS Together, one didn't know about VCS Together but knew about Voluntary Norfolk - none of them were engaged with the Forum. These organisations were asked if they want to know more about VCS Together, 4 were not sure and thought VCS Together will not be able to meet their needs. Only one organisation wanted to know more about volunteering from VCS Together.

Overall these organisations felt that their issues were specific and VCS Together will not be able to represent them.

b) Faith

Three churches were contacted to find out if they know about VCS Together or want to know more and can benefit from its services. None of them knew about VCS Together, but all three of them were willing to know more and receive information, and said that their churches run community capacity building projects and that they could benefit from the existing VCS Together services.

c) Specialist Organisations

Two specialist organisations were interviewed. These organisations receive mailings and information, and sometimes attend Forum events. Due to the specialist nature of their work, they don't believe that VCS Together can meet their present or future needs specifically relating to fund raising and staff training.

7. Future Trends

It is likely there will be a decrease in the number of voluntary and community groups operating in North Norfolk as funding becomes more competitive and difficult to obtain over the coming years - 3 members of the steering group indicated possible mergers and 7 VCS representatives suggested greater collaboration. There is a possibility that more voluntary sector organisations could deliver public services, but a dialogue needs to start between the statutory and voluntary sector to explore this option further and ensure that relevant groups are "fit for purpose" should they wish to be commissioned to deliver services.

There will be a drive to have more mergers and collaborations, based on the notion that they will achieve economies of scale. There will certainly be a need for more collaboration, joint ventures and partnership across organisations to ensure a diversity of provision within a particular service. Examples highlighted during interviews included services for older people and youth. VCS Together needs to be able to advise and support groups

how to improve collaboration and where to access professional advice if mergers are a realistic option.

Two important roles in the future for the LAPs and VCS Together will be community engagement and ensuring sector sustainability. There is an expectation that VCS Together will provide the required support to enable organisations to sustain themselves over the coming years, engage in the commissioning agenda, deliver public services, and support collaborations and mergers.

Commissioning with the public sector means that project and service outcomes and outputs will be more specified; however, good practice in commissioning should lead to more flexibility in how organisations deliver those services, as the focus will be on the outcomes rather than on specifying the delivery mechanisms. Both the statutory and the voluntary sector needs to explore future commissioning in an appropriate dialogue which engage representatives from both sectors as equal partners.

Naya Naqvi
May 2011

G. Best Practice Examples From Across UK

The following notes come from a desktop review of around a dozen strategic partnerships and their associated council structures, with respect to their implementation of changes according to the 'Big Society' agenda.

There are clearly very significant challenges ahead in making the vision of 'community rights' and bottom-up developmental processes central to community development. There are also major challenges in transferring the management of local assets and services to local communities. All this will take time, nevertheless one can see already a number of partnerships doing more than just mapping existing themes onto those of the Big Society agenda, and who are developing their ideas in specific areas.

Key questions that have been explored as part of this brief review of best practice include:

- A) What are the mechanisms by which grassroots democracy is being strengthened?
- B) What are the tools and processes being applied to capture/frame community initiatives?
- C) What approaches are being taken to minimise bureaucratic and other obstacles that might hinder community initiatives?
- D) What evidence is there of communities being assisted in preparing to run local services, or to manage local assets?

The following summarises current thinking and efforts in these four areas:

A) Strengthening grassroots democracy

- Involvement of local people in decision making around funding allocations
- Explicit statement of belief in the ability of local people to lead
- 'Participatory Budgeting', and application of budgets down to street level
- Identification and grooming of young people to engage as activists
- Forum for councillors and young people to work together
- New technologies: e-petitions, social media, Twitter participation at meetings, and tools such as Izwe for developing ideas together as a community

Participatory Budgeting is an initiative which has its own government-backed Unit, supporting a number of projects around the country. The projects may be general or specific (for example health spending). The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has identified responsible officers for taking this idea forward. <http://www.participatorybudgeting.org.uk/>

New technology is increasingly playing a 're-vitalising' role in local communities. Initiatives range from e-petitions (for example in Brighton and Hove, where one e-petition attracted 1300 signatures), to local meetings where absent 'participants' use tools such as Twitter to take part (Buckinghamshire). In between these two approaches comes a tool such as Izwe, which has been used to take ideas forward in various communities, notably in a number of London Boroughs. Essentially a forum-based approach, it offers councils an opportunity to promote ideas and generate debate, for example regarding the future of library services or healthcare provision. The result of collaboration between researchers, community developers and web developers, Izwe continues to be further developed. <http://www.izwe.com/>

B) Capturing and nurturing local initiatives

- Neighbourhood forums able to request seed funding for projects

- Comprehensive neighbourhood plans developed with local communities (for example in Calderdale, where a set of six neighbourhood plans are being completed)
- **Winchester District Strategic Partnership** has a Climate Change Action Plan and explicitly involves Parish Councils in this area of its work – each PC contributes its elements (loft clearance service, community bus, maintenance of walking routes, allotments etc) and is given an overall perspective and targets, and is expected to sign up to the overall process.
- **Upper Eden Valley** is putting together a mixed arrangement of Parish Council partnerships to take forward its vision of the Big Society. One grouping of two PCs are undertaking initiatives including a share offer for ownership of a local pub; one grouping of 12 are taking a comprehensive approach to issues under 7 headings; and the major grouping of 17 are looking at more ambitious projects such as rolling out locally-managed broadband as has been done in nearby Alston.

C) Carrying ideas forward

- Follow project ideas ‘upwards’ through public sector structures and to funding routes
- Encourage council employees to become activists where they live
- ‘Barrier-busting’ through open dialogue with stakeholders

Council employees have in a number of local authorities already been taking part in volunteer activity in their areas. Usually this takes the form of a number of days off per year as well as assistance with training needs for the volunteer roles. Examples of this in action include specific days where council employees undertake visible activity in the local community, for example environmental improvements, or painting a centre for the elderly (Mid-Sussex District Council).

D) Running services and assets

- In general: be less risk averse
- Asset management must be based on clear community-based outcomes
- Look for opportunities e.g. pubs, shops, other facilities to be closed
- ‘adopt a street’ schemes
- Taking volunteering forward into Timebank type schemes with credits

‘**Adopt a street**’ schemes vary in their implementation, although are generally focused on managing litter and basic maintenance. In Windsor and Maidenhead (one of the Vanguard areas) a local neighbourhood group has adopted a ‘field’, in order to manage it and use it as a resource to bring members of the local community together. Groups that typically participate in the schemes include scouts and guides, local schools, and church groups. In Bury, a church group are taking the concept further, and activity in ‘adopted’ streets includes tidying residents’ gardens, and inviting residents to participate in communal meals.

The ‘**Timebank**’ concept of volunteering credits is being developed in Windsor and Maidenhead to enable volunteers who support vulnerable residents to accumulate and spend credits in the local community. Credits may subsequently be used by the individual to purchase a service (for example, have a swim in the pool) or could be donated to a local group. See http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/consultation_carebank.htm

Ideas under ‘**asset management**’ demonstrate genuine desire to manage local assets for greater local benefit. Audlem PC in Cheshire established a Community Trust in order to take over the running of a local daycare centre for elderly residents. Suffolk Coastal District Council have worked together with a local Town Council to transfer management of a community hall, play area and tennis courts, as well as with a Parish Council to transfer ownership of land that will be

developed into a local play area. Other ideas in this area include generating energy locally (typically wind and now in some cases small scale hydropower on local rivers).

Some common issues can be seen in terms of more **localised management of core services**. During the winter, East Riding LSP made £175,000 available to a total of 112 Town and Parish Councils to cope with the harsh winter. The money provided equipment, supplies and machinery hire. Central Bedfordshire Together (the LSP) envisages devolving services such as winter maintenance and grass cutting to Town and Parish Councils. Local Police are also promoting Street Watch, a scheme whereby local residents patrol their neighbourhood in pairs.

H. Sources of Information

North Norfolk Community Strategy
 North Norfolk Local Priorities: November 2010 Ipsos MORI
 Decentralisation and the Localism Bill: an essential guide, DCLG
 Norfolk's Big Conversation (NCC Briefing)
 Norfolk RCC Response to NCC's Big Conversation
 NHS Reforms and Norfolk County Council – Cabinet Report
 Charity Commission
 World Wide Web
 - LAP Websites
 - Voluntary Norfolk Website
 - www.voluntarynorfolk.org.uk/north_norfolk_development_support
 - www.northernorfolk.org/nncp/

Documents obtained from the NNCP Manager and the LAPs:

- a) Business Plan and appendices
- b) Project Updates
- c) Action Plans
- d) Scrutiny Partnership Questionnaire
- e) Year-end Accounts and Annual Report
- f) LAP Progress Reports to NNCP

Documents and reports produced and provided by Voluntary Norfolk
incl. Evaluation Report on BASIS II

Best Practice

Localism in Practice – NALC
 Action for Market Towns <http://towns.org.uk/2010/12/14/localism-in-practice-%E2%80%93-small-towns-with-big-ambitions/>

Strategic partnerships and other bodies referred to Best Practice summary

Sutton	http://www.suttonpartnership.net
Dudley	http://www.dudleylsp.org
Brighton and Hove	http://www.bandhsp.co.uk/
Central Bedfordshire	http://www.centraltogether.org.uk/
Winchester District	http://www.wdsp.co.uk/portal/
East Riding	http://www.lsp.eastriding.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/home/
Upper Eden Valley (not the LSP)	http://www.uecp.org.uk/Big%20Society.html
Windsor and Maidenhead (Council)	http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/consultation_big_society_projects.htm
Buckinghamshire (Rural Community Council)	http://www.communityimpactbucks.org.uk/pages/the-big-society-in-buckinghamshire.html#network
Calderdale (council)	http://www.calderdale.gov.uk/council/index.html
Mid Sussex (council)	http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/page.cfm?pageid=4346
Audlem PC	http://www.audlem.org/

I. Statements of Purpose

The following statements of purpose have been extracted from written documentation for each LAP and supplemented through interviews.

LAP	Statement of Purpose
Fakenham	<p><i>Aims to encourage local people, groups and organisations to work together for the benefit of the whole community. Through consultation and mutual support we aim to promote and improve community, economic and environmental resources and sustainability</i></p> <p><i>“A uniting force to make things happen”</i></p>
Griffon	<p><i>The promotion for the public benefit of urban or rural regeneration in areas of social and economic deprivation and in particular in the town and neighbouring parishes of North Walsham.</i></p>
Holt	<p><i>Improve the quality of life for people in Holt area by supporting and delivering projects that provide tangible benefits in response to need. Aim to develop and facilitate community-led sustainable projects (social, economic and environmental) for Holt and surrounding area</i></p>
Poppyland	<p><i>Promote and improve the social, economic and environmental well being of the area without compromising the quality of life for future generations.</i></p>
Stalham	<p><i>Enhance training and employment opportunities for the unemployed, and to foster the maintenance, improvement and provision of public amenities, recreational, and leisure facilities within the local area.</i></p>
Upcher	<p><i>Enhance the standard of living and quality of life for the inhabitants of the town and hinterland parishes in order to encourage a sustainable and resilient community.</i></p>
Wells	<p><i>Help create villages and towns that thrive as local communities and visitor destinations within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. To enable local people to live, work and enjoy a range of facilities in an area where the attractive natural and built environment is protected and enhanced.</i></p>

J. Project Activities

A selection of current projects being run or developed by the LAPs are set out below. This list is not comprehensive, but intended to provide a schedule of the main projects that each of the LAPS are currently engaged with.

<p>Fakenham LAP</p> <p>Resource centre in Fakenham Fakenham Community Bank Fakenham in Bloom Farmers Market Tourist Information Point Edmondson's Acres Christmas Lights Speedwatch programme Campaigning for support for a swimming pool Millenium Park BMX/Skate park Community Car Scheme Community chest - small local grants Website and newsletter Town Guide Recession Road Show Kick Start Family Events Support for Training Centre</p>	<p>Stalham with Happing LAP</p> <p>Happing Shop (which hosts Citizens Advice Bureau, Norfolk Credit Union, Learning for Everyone, Connexions and Norfolk Adult Education) Happing Festival Publish local walks books Safe Cycle Pathway Support for (youth) Poppy Centre Happing Cares Social Enterprise Community chest - small local grants Website and newsletter Free directory of businesses and organisations to every household</p>
<p>Griffon LAP</p> <p>Voyager (incl. Art Club, Drop-in, Community Garden, Griff 'n' Chips, Griff on line) Caring for Carers project Griffon Tourism Forum and development Krafty Kids Club Worstead Weaver's Project Griffon Gallery Ghost Walk- Local History Active North Norfolk East Small Business Support Project Community chest - small local grants Website and newsletter</p>	<p>Upcher LAP</p> <p>Information, advice and guidance hub Experience Sheringham website - Tourism promotion Pretty Corner Woods in partnership with Woodland Trust Setting up a local credit union Supporting local events development, such as an arts and literature festival and a Christmas lights switch on. Sustainable Communities Group Sheringham Moving Forward Open Door Community Project Community chest - small local grants Website and newsletter</p>

<p>Holt LAP</p> <p>Holt Vision Holt Area Community Bank North Norfolk Older People’s Forum Holt Festival Christmas Lights Holt Community Centre High Kelling Social Centre Holt Hall Adult Education and Holt Youth Project Holt Children’s Centre Melton Constable: Solar Street lighting and support from Village Games. Community chest - small local grants Website, Blog and newsletter</p>	<p>Wells LAP</p> <p>Walsingham Youth Project and Pavilion Community Action through Sports Maltings Project Wells Field Study Centre Homes for Wells Environmental Project LGBT Project Community Bank Community chest - small local grants Website and newsletter</p>
<p>Poppyland LAP</p> <p>Community Bank Mobile IT Training Mobile Skatepark Walks and Trails leaflets Speedwatch Poppyland Arts Festival Heritage Programme Coastwatch Poppyland Minibus Community chest - small local grants Website and newsletter</p>	