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Reforming neighbourhood governance to realise community potential:

A St George's House consultation

Local Trust

About this report

With reform of community or neighbourhood governance on the government's policy agenda, a consultation event hosted by Local Trust and St George's House asked how the existing system needs to change to realise the potential of residents in the most deprived or 'left behind' neighbourhoods to work together to improve their areas. The consultation discussed what is and isn't working, local government support for community governance and recommendations for reform.

The consultation concluded that established formal structures - parish and town councils and neighbourhood forums - provide a mechanism for people to engage, but processes can seem inaccessible, burdensome and lacking impact. Generally, power is still too concentrated in local government with communities, particularly the most deprived or 'left behind', not having enough say on the issues that matter most to them.

Recommendations for change include: allowing greater flexibility in approaches to community and neighbourhood governance; boosting community capacity and social infrastructure in deprived or 'left behind' neighbourhoods to enable engagement; reducing bureaucracy; developing community covenants and supporting a shift in local government in favour of community leadership.

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Introduction

There is renewed policy interest in community or neighbourhood governance as a means to 'level up' our most deprived and 'left behind' neighbourhoods. This report summarises discussion exploring this theme at a consultation held in September 2022 at St George's House, Windsor Castle. Local Trust organised the event in collaboration with St George's House, which 27 people with direct community leadership or specialist policy expertise attended. The consultation considered existing statutory mechanisms – parish and town councils and neighbourhood forums – and whether they enable residents in deprived and 'left behind' neighbourhoods to improve outcomes in their areas and the role of local government in promoting and supporting strong community governance.

Reinvigorating community or neighbourhood governance is part of the Levelling Up White Paper's promise of "a bold new approach to community empowerment" (DLUHC, 2022). The White Paper proposes a review of current statutory mechanisms and the piloting of community partnership approaches. It draws on the work of a number of individuals and organisations pushing for change on community governance: the Localism Commission's 2018 report highlighted the growing appetite amongst residents up and down the country to be more involved in neighbourhood-level decision-making; Danny Kruger MP's 2020 report 'Levelling Up Our Communities', for then Prime Minister Boris Johnson, recommended breathing new life into community or neighbourhood governance, in part through the piloting of 'community covenants'; and, most recently, the We're Right Here Campaign

has built on the covenant approach[1], amongst other proposals, as a means to shift power to communities.

We know that the residents of 'left behind' neighbourhoods (see the box on page 3) are keen to be more involved in community governance to help improve their neighbourhoods. Survation (2020) polling found that they hold a strong belief in the power of community action, with 63 per cent agreeing that residents have the capacity to really change the way their area is run. When asked if a fund were set up to help their community, who should lead decisions about how the money was spent, a clear majority (54 per cent) said local people, with a further 17 per cent saying it should be local charities and community organisations.

However, the limited number of parish councils and neighbourhood forums in the most deprived or 'left behind'

areas suggests that current statutory mechanisms are not an attractive option for the people living in these areas. The key question for the consultation was, therefore, how should these mechanisms be reformed to realise the latent demand in such areas for residents to engage and make a difference.

This report is structured according to the session questions which framed the consultation:

1. Are existing statutory mechanisms (parish and town councils, and neighbourhood forums) working for deprived or 'left behind' neighbourhoods?

2. How should local government support community governance?

Each session was kicked off by presentations from those with expertise on the topic, either because they had first-hand experience of working in their community or because of their role as a researcher or policy expert. The presentations were followed by a broader discussion involving all participants to widen the scope of evidence and insight. (Unless otherwise specified, quotations are drawn from these discussions.)

This report ends with a summary of participants' recommendations on how to achieve the objective of a system of community and neighbourhood governance that works effectively for the deprived or 'left behind' neighbourhoods who would most benefit from power and resources.

Defining 'left behind' neighbourhoods

In 2019, Local Trust commissioned research from Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI). This developed a new Community Needs Index (CNI), which mapped spaces and places to meet, community organisations and community engagement, and physical and digital connectivity (Local Trust, 2019). The research identified 225 wards which were both in the worst 10 per cent on this new index and on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, suggesting these wards are the most 'left behind' neighbourhoods in England.

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1. The full proposal can be found here: https://www.right-here.org/

Are existing statutory mechanisms (parish and town councils, and neighbourhood forums) working for deprived or 'left behind' neighbourhoods?

The consultation began with an introduction to existing statutory mechanisms. These include parish and town councils - established in 1894 – which are "very similar today to back then". Other mechanisms, including neighbourhood forums and neighbourhood planning, were established under the Localism Act 2011 as part of the community rights package[2]. Statutory mechanisms have access to resources to spend in their neighbourhood – through raising a precept and the Community Infrastructure Levy. The precept is a sum that parish councils can raise on the council tax bills charged by their billing authority (the unitary authority or district council). The development levy is a charge which allows local authorities to raise funds for local infrastructure from new development. It includes a portion allocated to the neighbourhood via the local parish council, where they exist.

This provided the necessary background to consider the state of community governance in deprived or 'left behind' neighbourhoods. Evidence showed that these areas are disproportionately "not parished and don't have a neighbourhood forum"; in fact, "only 17 'left behind' communities have initiated or completed a neighbourhood plan since 2011".

In practice, this results in a "two tiered system", with residents in these areas "effectively having no voice on important issues that impact their areas nor the resources in the form of the precept or development levies to be able to take action".

And in those areas where statutory mechanisms do currently exist, the discussion highlighted three issues which demonstrate their potential to help or hinder effective neighbourhood-level decision-making.

'Established structures bring people to the table'

Formal community governance structures bring residents to the table to engage in local affairs. They can help to ensure that the people who live in an area are able to drive area improvements by designing and delivering "better facilities, [including] parks, playgrounds and community hubs". Established structures provide a legitimate focal point for communication and help residents to believe that, if they

2. The Localism Act 2011 aimed to devolve power from government to communities, local government and individuals. It did this through setting out four key community rights: the Community Right to Bid, the Community Right to Challenge, Neighbourhood Planning, and the Community Right to Build.

get involved in their community, they can affect change in tangible ways.

Participants saw both parish and town councils and neighbourhood forums as having the potential to provide "stability" against a back drop where communities are having to operate in an environment that is constantly changing. Through "being established at the heart of a community for a long time and being something that will keep being there", formal structures give a sense of continuity to local work aimed at improving areas.

One participant, who is a community leader, shared the example of their local parish council to explain that councillors can be helpful and supportive allies supporting community-led change. They explained that as the parish council was longstanding and already had relationships with key local organisations, they were able to get people and resources on board to support residents' efforts to improve their area.

In a similar vein, setting up a neighbourhood forum was regarded as an important part of the neighbourhood planning process – perhaps the most valuable part in those areas without a parish council. "Neighbourhood planning is very lengthy and requires a lot of technical expertise … [but] the journey of engaging together was actually what was worthwhile". The process convened residents to map out a collective ambition for their local area, revealing a strong "appetite for more of a say over more issues". This highlights the potential of formal structures as a way for communities to build connections and develop the social capital which paves the way for local action.

But there were warnings that under the current system the energy and aspiration generated by these forums can be quashed. This is because "neighbourhood plans [were] sold to

[residents, as a means of] control of their local area, when in reality it only has any real influence over land use planning". Overall, participants agreed that when communities use neighbourhood planning as a springboard to take action on a wider range of issues, they should be able to tap into powers and resources to follow through on their ambitions, otherwise they are left frustrated and feeling disempowered. For this reason, the emerging idea (outlined in the White Paper) of 'neighbourhood priority statements', which could be produced through neighbourhood forums, merits attention (though the consultation did not discuss this in detail).

'Democracy in principle doesn't always reflect practice'

Statutory mechanisms like parish councils and neighbourhood forums are "democratic structures … [operating] at the neighbourhood level". Despite this, trust in "in our democracy and democratic structures [is] at an historic low" and neighbourhood-level mechanisms, particularly in the most deprived and 'left behind' areas, "have some of the lowest participation" and resident engagement rates.

One reason why local residents can feel disengaged and disillusioned by mechanisms which offer direct involvement in local matters is because although, in principle, these mechanisms are accountable to residents, in practice this is not always the case.

One participant explained that there was "a lack of a genuine [election] process" for the parish council in their area, "and the fact so many have been co-opted" can lead local people to regard it as unaccountable. They reported that "family and friends of existing members have been co-opted onto the council over and over", thwarting a genuine democratic

process. In this specific case, members used the parish's control over certain local services (community centres, public toilets etc) to wield power over other community groups and organisations. This had the effect of frustrating and obstructing efforts to build genuine cross-community connection and engagement.

Another participant indicated that similar issues of accountability could occur in neighbourhood forums, if local residents from across a diverse range of social groups and backgrounds are not given sufficient support to engage.

It was suggested that communities unhappy with the neighbourhood governance mechanism in their area could work to change it. In the case of a parish council, this would mean local residents "stand themselves for election and take it over", or for neighbourhood forums, "getting many more people involved who aren't already". However, testimony from community leaders at the consultation showed that such action was challenging and time consuming. It also relies upon a foundation of pre-existing community activity and engagement, besides the parish structure or forum, through which local residents can organise and collaborate. Having such a foundation, and knowing that they will be supported by the wider community, is the only way residents will feel empowered to take on such a "daunting process".

'Bureaucracy can be a burden'

Participants felt strongly that bureaucratic hurdles often frustrate or obstruct residents from setting up statutory structures to support them to drive change in their neighbourhood. A number explained that, under the current system, the process can be regarded as diverting energy, resources and momentum away from resident-led action.

A number of participants explained that instigating neighbourhood planning is "far from easy, given all of the stages and processes you have to go through … and even then it is not like you can use it easily to get things done". Setting up a parish council requires a similarly burdensome process: the community must petition local residents to trigger a community governance review, after which the local authority will decide whether a parish council should be established.

The energy and momentum required to get neighbourhood governance mechanisms up and running can seem like a distraction from the "real work" that local people want to do to create change in their communities. And the process also assumes that local residents already have associational and civic organisations through which to get together and start the ball rolling.

The bureaucratic burden that comes with existing statutory structures can be disproportionate to the impact and power that communities can exercise through them. Neighbourhood planning in particular was seen as something which "does not weigh up when you think about the amount of work people – and these are volunteers with their own lives – have to put into it".

Two specific reasons were shared as to why the "lengthy and arduous" process of neighbourhood planning is "sometimes not seen as worth it given the influence it actually gives residents":

1. The content of a neighbourhood plan cannot contradict planning in place for the wider district. In practical terms, this means that plans must be 'growth-orientated' and narrowly focused on land-use matters. A community leader highlighted that this can impact what can be said around private housing development - something of particular importance to deprived and 'left behind'

neighbourhoods.

2. The discretionary nature of the planning system means that, after going through the lengthy process, communities still face the risk that the neighbourhood plan and its policies will be subject to different interpretation by planning authorities and the inspectorate – or, in the worst cases, side-lined altogether.

Overall, participants felt current requirements are too "onerous on communities" and often seem "out of step" with the actual benefits that they bring, as well as the remit of plans being too narrow to address the breadth of issues that concern them.

Recommendations for reforming existing mechanisms

1. Improve flexibility so 'left behind' neighbourhoods can engage in community governance on their own terms

The general feeling was that residents in 'left behind' neighbourhoods have been unable to utilise or take advantage of the existing statutory structures currently available to them. There was appetite to address this, and to develop a new system of neighbourhood governance which would be more accessible to deprived and 'left behind' communities.

This new approach, it was felt, should reflect "the fact that context really matters … communities have different strengths, assets, and needs – and different structures will work for different areas". Therefore, it should not impose a single restrictive model on what are a "socially, culturally, geographically" heterogenous set of communities. And it should not reinvent the wheel – this would only produce more work and bureaucracy for

those on the ground. Instead, it should build on the strongest, most effective, mechanisms that already exist in communities.

A framework through which local people could nominate and get behind a neighbourhood governance model, access funding and appropriate support, and take action without bureaucratic barriers, was regarded as a "pragmatic response". Community partners – in the form of effective local community or voluntary organisations – could be nominated in places where a parish or town council or neighbourhood forum does not exist. But there was a strong feeling that these partners should be resident-led, in order to ensure that "the community does not lose its own identity … or become an extension of the voluntary sector".

Local Trust's experience of administering the Big Local programme is relevant here. The Big Local partnerships that deliver the programme in each of 150 areas must be constituted of more than 50 per cent local residents. Placing the same requirement on community partners – of their board or other internal governance structures – would help to ensure they were truly representative of residents in the area.

2. Boost community capacity to get more residents engaged

Local Trust's experience of supporting resident-led partnerships across England to transform their areas has shown that making neighbourhood governance structures accessible and engaging to residents is an important part of making sure they are democratic and transparent.

Consultation participants felt that government must recognise the "importance of capacity building and put resources into doing it" particularly in the most deprived or 'left behind'

neighbourhoods. Investment in "community capacity building" was felt necessary to ensure the communities in such areas have the knowledge and confidence to engage.

Capacity building support could improve transparency over the community governance process and how local people can get involved. These should be "accessible" in terms of the "language spoken and … venue" and other factors specific to a given community, but they should also be "fun and interactive … that way people come back". One community leader gave an example of events held as part of their areas' neighbourhood planning process, and how lessons can be learnt from experiences of communities across the country of bringing "families and individuals … and people who hadn't been involved before" into community governance processes in more welcoming ways.

Alongside this, there should be a programme of support for "those from backgrounds underrepresented in the current system" and whose voices and experiences are at risk of being overlooked. There is a particular need to increase diversity and representation amongst parish councillors. Potentially, this could be part of the work of a broader national academy for community leaders.

3. Reduce bureaucracy for less process more impact

One reason why there isn't wider take-up of formal community governance mechanisms is that they involve complex processes which require time and resources. Reducing red tape – making it easier to establish parish councils and put together a neighbourhood plan –

would be one way of engaging people in deprived or 'left behind' communities.

But there also need to be limits to the amount of bureaucracy and official procedure that residents must go through to utilise existing structures day to day. The balance needs to be shifted between what one participant described as "the checks and procedures that are needed when you are talking about a statutory mechanism and the things that residents are actually trying to do". In other words, procedures intended to protect accountability must be commensurate to the activity or investment that residents are trying to deliver: they should be "enabling [resident action] not disincentivising it".

And any formal procedure must come with some level of "guarantees for those who have volunteered their time, that they will get something out of it". For example, when it comes to neighbourhood planning, there must be some form of "guarantee" that the communities' plan will have priority when it comes to developments that impact their area.

The Big Local programme has shown the benefit of keeping bureaucracy to a minimum. The programme has very few rules. Partnership boards at the neighbourhood level have taken responsibility for a £1m budget to be spent over 10-15 years. Local 'accountable bodies' manage the grant administration and financial reporting to reduce the burden on volunteer community members. A genuine transfer of power is possible without overloading residents with bureaucratic requirements.

How should local government support community governance?

The discussion probed the relationship between communities and local government. One community leader explained how 'left behind' neighbourhoods are often "tagged with unfair negative reputations and bad stereotypes" and that this shapes "how council officers interact and deal with them". This has a direct impact on provision: 'left behind' neighbourhoods are regarded as "problems to be fixed" from the outside, rather than being made up of capable individuals who have unique access to knowledge and expertise on how outcomes in their area could be improved. Such capacities need to be enabled rather than side-lined.

Many people in 'left behind' areas have experienced waves of neighbourhood regeneration that, as one participant put it, have aimed to "'develop' them and their areas" without giving residents a genuine stake in the process. In return, "many people [in these areas] are unsure of or don't trust their local council" and its intentions for the neighbourhood that they call home.

But this context should not overshadow the fact that there is appetite and "real energy and ideas" amongst residents. They don't want to be 'done' to – "they want to have the opportunity to be a part of it". Residents in 'left behind' communities also bring invaluable local knowledge to the table.

There is an opportunity for these communities to utilise new and existing community governance mechanisms to fill this gap and "have more of a say over a wider range of issues". But, to have any impact, participants said this "must take place within the broader context of a shift in the approach of local government", from concentrating power in office buildings and committee rooms to one which pushes power down and out into communities themselves.

Towards a community-led approach

A number of participants during the consultation stressed that unlocking the power of communities must involve "a broader rethink of where power and responsibility lies across the different levels of government". They talked about a "concentration of power at the highest tiers of government", and how councils need to go further to share power and involve communities in decision-making. Communities themselves – "ones which always actually [are] most affected by decisions" – are not given the opportunities to shape services, facilities and developments in their areas.

It was argued that making community governance more impactful requires a "shift in the broader landscape of governance in this country". Specifically, this means decentralising power and a push towards a model "that has become known as the community paradigm". This is based on the principle of subsidiarity – that decisions should be taken at the lowest geographical level possible. This would give communities a genuine say over decisions which affect their neighbourhoods and the services they use.

A shift towards a community paradigm should be attractive to local authorities because it has the potential to "bring benefits in many of the areas where they face [the] greatest challenges". Community-powered approaches support prevention and unlock different ways to address the root causes of key challenges that communities and public services face.

Some local authorities are beginning to explore how they might shift power in this way. There are "examples from across the country of local authorities doing one or more" of the following:

1) Putting communities at the heart of decision-making: giving them a greater role in the design and delivery of public services.

2) Mobilising community assets: supporting and investing in communities to grow and enable change happening on the ground.

3) Catalysing cultural shifts: shifting how councils work with their communities and supporting council officers with the skills and capacity to do this, from being "a doer for or to them to an enabler of those who know their communities and so are most able to actually deliver".

However, local authorities cannot lay the foundations of such a radically different approach on their own. There was a strong feeling that neither "local government [nor] communities can or should do this without the right resources to support it". Although examples like "the Wigan Deal show money is saved overall", local government requires "investment to build its own capacity and expertise" to be able to support communities to achieve their potential. Likewise, communities need direct investment, particularly in 'left behind' neighbourhoods, to create the conditions where they feel confident and capable to make local decisions. Ultimately, this is about building social

capital "and an existing layer of civic and social infrastructure" in those areas which, by definition, have seen their social fabric frayed and local civic institutions closed down or hollowed out.

Recommendations for supporting community governance

1. Invest in social infrastructure to kickstart community action

'Social infrastructure' comprises the vital places, spaces, groups and organisations that build and nurture civic and associational activity. Social infrastructure is regarded as both "necessary for communities to be able to engage and participate in decision-making" and foundational to "a successful [system of] community governance".

But "structures without resources won't work: pre-existing legislation on community rights shows us that these ['left behind'] communities don't have the finance to do it themselves … and without [investment] it's not an option for them".

One proposal for long-term, targeted investment to support 'left behind' neighbourhoods to rebuild their social infrastructure is the Community Wealth Fund.[3] This independent endowment would provide funding and confidence and capacity building to communities in the most 'left behind neighborhoods' enabling them to reinvigorate local social infrastructure. The Community Wealth Fund was floated, in the recent government consultation, as one potential beneficiary of a share of the over £700m that will become available through the expansion of the dormant assets scheme. The proposal is supported by a cross-sector alliance of over 500 organisations.

One participant expressed the view that

a Community Wealth Fund would ensure that residents "can make opportunities work for them". In combination with reforms to community governance, it would mean that "[residents] have both of those things you need: money and power" to get things done in their areas.

2. Develop 'community covenants' to get partnership working off the ground

'Community covenants' are agreements between communities and their local authority and other public bodies that operate in their area. Covenants, as proposed in the Levelling Up White Paper (2022), would not replace old or new forms of neighbourhood governance but would provide a mechanism to better align residents' and local government and other public sector priorities locally. Covenants could "address the routine management issues that people care about … they are about shifting who takes those decisions and removing [professional] distance, so they are taken by the people on the frontline".

3. Democratise local governance for community representation at every level

Participants also felt local government should "reflect on its own structures and evaluate whether they are fit for serving communities with different needs and interests". From internal decision-making to cabinet structures, local government "needs to think about how we can revive democracy and representation at every level". Suggestions included a review of local government decision-making and power structures, and identification

of novel approaches which "boost representation and accountability" to communities. These could include approaches which engage residents on issues which have a wide impact and require cross-community collaboration, such as transport or the environment. This would also improve alignment between the needs and interests of communities at the neighbourhood level and the strategic direction of local authorities.

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3. More information on the Community Wealth Fund proposal can be found here: https://communitywealthfund.org.uk/

Taking the work forward

The consultation discussed how the agenda to reinvigorate community or neighbourhood governance might be taken forward. The steps below are intended as foundational: they draw on suggestions by consultation participants on how to build local, regional and national support for a shift to a community paradigm that is supported by effective and responsive neighbourhood governance mechanisms.

1. Developing a coalition of support

A coalition of support – amongst community groups and organisations, and the wider charity sector as well as actors in the public and private sector – is needed to advocate for and provide evidence of the importance of reform to neighbourhood governance and the wider public sector landscape.

This coalition should be a "broad family of support" – marked by "some shared language and concepts". The "differences and nuances of individual groups and organisations should be respected" but campaigning together on shared issues would develop a broad support base. One participant recommended that the coalition draw inspiration from the Collective Impact model, a network of community members, organisations and institutions who "integrate individual action with campaigns on nationwide stuff for change".

In terms of developing a shared language, this should reflect "what communities are doing and want to see happen". For example, there was specific reference to changing the name of 'parish' councils to "community or neighbourhood councils" to be more inclusive of the diverse range of communities who want to have more of a say in their area.

One short-term project was suggested to garner support for this coalition. This involved developing a short statement which community groups and supportive organisations in the charity, public and private sectors could support and advocate for. This would act as a foundational vision for change in the "most accessible format possible".

Alongside this, organisations engaged in influencing government policy on community and neighbourhood governance agreed to meet and discuss shared aims and opportunities to align their policy programmes.

2. Making the case to government

Participants agreed that recommendations about reform to community and neighbourhood governance "need to align with broader government objectives "and contribute to government priorities, like levelling up and boosting national economic growth".

And, in order to make this link with government objectives, the social and community sector must invest in "developing an evidence base about why the development of community governance or leadership is fundamental". The community and charity sector must

identify and amplify the particular social and economic benefits which would flow from a community-led approach to neighbourhood governance in order to make a more robust and appealing case to policymakers.

One participant proposed that a Community or Neighbourhood Governance Commission, drawing both "community leaders and experts together", could advance this agenda by providing a mechanism for dialogue between policy makers and community leaders. Such a commission could draw "inspiration from the work of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for 'left behind' neighbourhoods …. that has provided an independent and collaborative forum" with a focus on evidence sharing and co-creation of solutions to build community confidence and capacity in 'left behind' areas. The opportunity for community leaders from these areas to speak directly with policymakers was regarded as particularly valuable, removing the geographic and professional distance between those who make policy and those most impacted by it.

Conclusion

Community or neighbourhood governance has the potential to build capacity in the most deprived and 'left behind' neighbourhoods in the country, enabling local people to transform outcomes in the places in which they live and work.

The consultation discussed community governance in its current form, what is and isn't working, and what needs to change for the great potential latent in communities to be realised. It concluded that established structures provide a means for people to engage, but processes can seem inaccessible, burdensome and lacking impact. And, in the current system, power is still too concentrated in local government rather than shared with communities themselves.

Recommendations for change advocated by participants of the consultation include: allowing greater flexibility in approaches to community and neighbourhood governance; boosting community capacity and social infrastructure in deprived or 'left behind' neighbourhoods to enable engagement;

reducing bureaucracy; developing community covenants and supporting a shift in local government in favour of community leadership.

Participants also agreed to work together to develop a coalition of supportive individuals, groups and organisations who can effectively make the case to government in a way that fits with policymakers' priorities, grounded in and informed by a rigorous and objective evidence base.

List of participants

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Margaret Bolton – Director of Policy and Communications, Local Trust

Will Brett - We're Right Here campaign

Jack Burkinshaw – Chair, Brereton Million

Daniel Crowe – Policy and Parliamentary Manager, Local Trust

Millie Dessent – Policy Consultant

Val Fendley – Community Development Lead, Ramsey Million

Justin Griggs – Head of Policy and Communications, National Association of Local Councils

Alison Haskins – Chief Executive, Halifax Development Trust

Matt Leach – Chief Executive, Local Trust

Ben Lee – Director, Shared Intelligence

Toby Lloyd – Housing and Regeneration Policy Expert and Independent Consultant

Sue Merriman – Community Development Lead, Brereton Million

Kunle Olulode - Director, Voice4Change

Gavin Parker – Professor of Planning Studies, Reading University

Sarah Pearson – Professor of Social Research, Sheffield Hallam

Mark Pepper – Development Manager, Ambition Lawrence Weston

Stephen Perez – Coordinator, Arches Local

Grace Pollard – Senior Policy Researcher, New Local

Katy Roberts – Plan Coordinator, Boston Big Local

Ralph Rudden – Big Local Ambassador, Sale West

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Luke Stanley – Senior Researcher, Onward

Sarah Stearne – Policy and Parliamentary Assistant, Local Trust

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About Local Trust

Local Trust is a place-based funder supporting communities to transform and improve their lives and the places in which they live. We believe there is a need to put more power, resources, and decision-making into the hands of communities.

We do this by trusting local people. Our aims are to demonstrate the value of long term, unconditional, resident-led funding, and to draw on the learning from our work delivering the Big Local programme to promote a wider transformation in the way policy makers, funders and others engage with communities and place.

localtrust.org.uk

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About St George's House

St George's House is committed to effecting change for the better through nurturing open and honest dialogue. Founded in 1966 by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh and the then Dean of Windsor, Robin Woods, it is based in the grounds of Windsor castle. St George's House hosts around 60 consultations a year, bringing people together from across government, business, civil society and the church to explore solutions to major challenges in contemporary society. This report summarises discussion at one such consultation held in September 2022, as a partnership between St George's House and Local Trust on the theme of community or neighbourhood governance.