

Investing in community buildings

Locality, with Stretford Public Hall



locality
the power of community

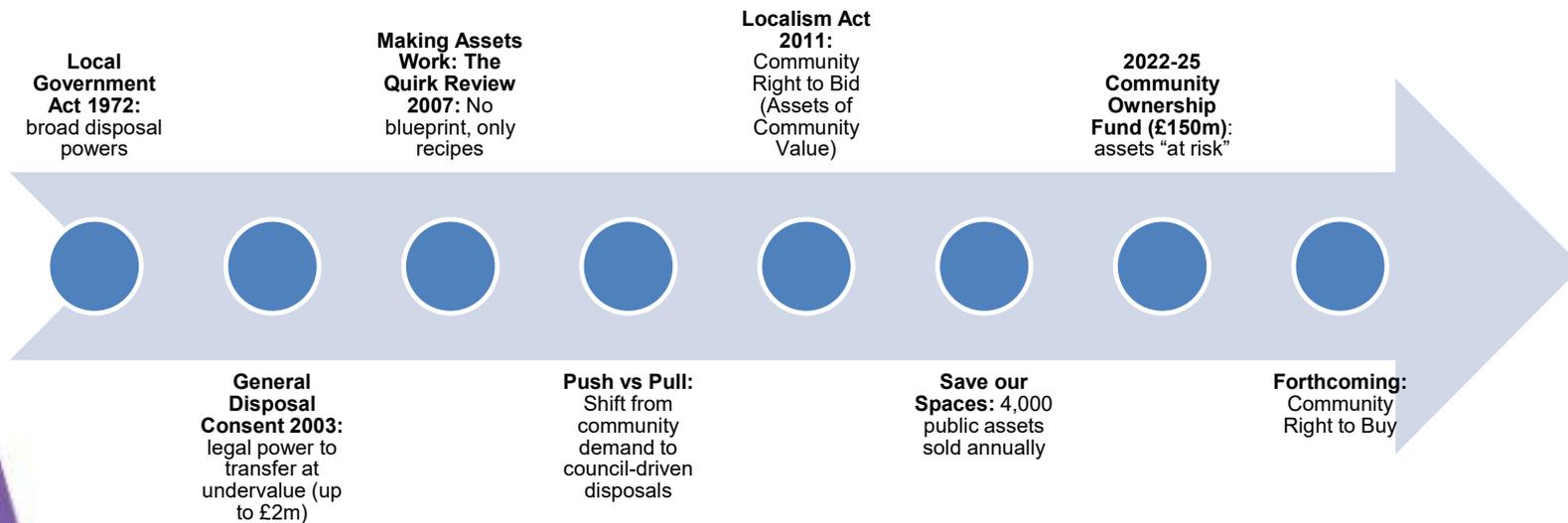


**We believe in the power of
community to create a
fairer society.**

Why community buildings matter

- **Community Wealth Building:** community anchors, circulating wealth locally
- **Investing in the voluntary sector:** strengthens community organisations, reducing dependency on grants
- **Routes to community-led service delivery:** co-produce services with communities, co-location and “hubs”
- **Pride in place:** visible regeneration and civic pride
- **Resilience against future shocks:** pandemic lessons, emergency response
- **Unlocking external investment:** funding streams councils can't access, community shares, crowdfunding, social investment

Policy timeline



Myth-busting

- **Communities lack skills or interest. Reality:** Many groups have strong governance and entrepreneurial capacity. Support is available.
- **Assets will be “captured” by one group. Reality:** Legal structures (CIO, CIC, asset locks) prevent private benefit.
- **It’s too politically sensitive. Reality:** Precedents demonstrate that community ownership enhances the council's reputation and fosters community trust.
- **It means freehold only. Reality:** Typically, it’s a long lease, although length is important for funding (funders need 25+ years).
- **It’s a financial liability for groups. Reality:** Yes, if there isn’t a viable plan, but it can be a springboard for long-term success.
- **It’s a financial risk for councils. Reality:** CAT reduces maintenance liabilities and unlocks social value.
- **It’s just about saving old buildings. Reality:** It’s about creating vibrant, multi-use space for future needs, including new build, housing and much more.

Strategic issues and opportunities

Risks:

- Perceived loss of control
- Capacity gaps
- Technical hurdles (TUPE, procurement)
- “Hands tied” deals - setting groups up to fail

Reward:

- Civil society and local government are two sides of the same coin
- Leveraging external investment and charitable funding
- Visible regeneration
- Economic impact
- Volunteering

Cost of doing nothing:

- Blight from empty buildings
- Lost social value
- Increased maintenance liabilities

Practical solutions for councils

- Develop a strategy (for consistency, transparency & decision making)
- Publish surplus assets list
- Standardise processes: EOI, Business Plan guidance, Lease template
- Secure long leases (25+ years)
- Aftercare

Stages and roles

- **Identify surplus assets and audit:** Property, community, regeneration teams
- **Publish pipeline & invite EOIs:** Communications, community engagement, sector partners
- **Assess EOIs and shortlist:** CAT panel (Property, Legal, Finance, Community, etc)
- **Business plan development:** Community group + council + external support
- **Negotiate Heads of Terms:** Legal, Property, Finance
- **Transfer and monitoring:** Community liaison

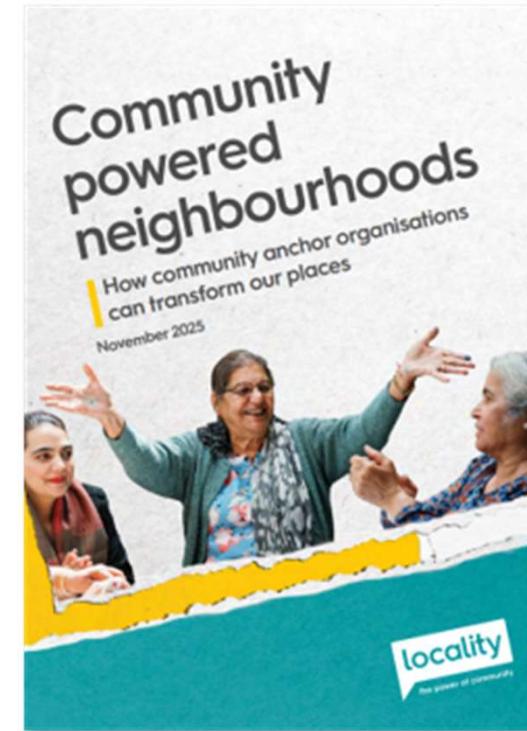


Lessons

- Leadership from the top of the council
- Start with community *need*, not just saving a building
- Secure long-term tenure for viability
- Blend income streams (enterprise + grants)
- Build governance capacity early
- Use phased development to manage risk

Beyond assets – we're here to help councils and boards

- Training and capacity-building for Board members.
- Facilitation of inclusive community-led decision-making processes.
- Expertise in the “powers and tools” in the policy toolkit, i.e. Neighbourhood Planning, ACV and CAT.



Q & A



Get specialist advice and support

Our team of local experts cover:

- Governance
- Business planning
- Financial resilience
- Community engagement & impact
- Marketing & communications
- Collaboration
- Ownership of land & buildings

Talk to us!

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