

The image features four hands, each with the thumb pointing up in a gesture of approval or agreement. The hands are positioned on the left and bottom right sides of the frame. A large, solid green circle is located in the upper right quadrant, containing the text 'LOCALISM IN PRACTICE' in white, bold, uppercase letters.

LOCALISM IN PRACTICE

Published by the National Association of Local Councils
109 Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3LD
Tel: 020 7637 1865
Fax: 020 7436 7451
Email: nalc@nalc.gov.uk
Website: www.nalc.gov.uk



© NALC 2010. All rights reserve

Every effort has been made to ensure that the contents of this publication are correct at time of printing. NALC cannot accept responsibility for errors, omission and changes to information subsequent to printing. Reproduction of this publication in any form is forbidden except by prior express permission of the publisher.

Population figures by Census 2001

Printed by Darwin Press

LOCALISM
IN PRACTICE

Contents

Foreword by Cllr Michael Chater, NALC	6
Economy & recession	
Ingatestone & Fryerning Parish Council, Essex	10
Keighley Town Council, Yorkshire	11
Sevenoaks Town Council, Kent	14
Waltham Abbey Town Council, Essex	15
Climate change & sustainability	
Aylsham Town Council, Norfolk	18
Barnstaple Town Council, Devon	20
Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Parish Council, Staffordshire	23
Whittington & Fisherwick Parish Council, Staffordshire	24
Digital inclusion & engagement	
Epping Town Council, Essex	28
Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council, Worcestershire	29
Sandhurst Town Council, Berkshire	31
Stone Parish Council, Kent	32
The power of well-being	
Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council, Worcestershire	36
Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council, Hertfordshire	37
Leominster Town Council, Herefordshire	39
Hockley Parish Council, Essex	41

Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present this exciting publication showing through real examples of how local councils are delivering for people and communities and what localism and the Big Society means in practice.

Local (community, neighbourhood, parish, town and village) councils are the first tier of our local government in England and work to represent the local community, deliver services to meet local needs and improve quality of life and community well being.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) fully supports a fundamental shift of power to encourage initiatives by councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals. Empowered local people coming together to take more responsibility for their community through local councils is a tried, tested and trusted model of grass roots neighbourhood action. Given this important role local councils have in their communities, they are well placed to demonstrate

how best to approach and achieve localism.

However, in order to be effective and to fully respond to the needs of the community, local councils must communicate well and engage properly with local people.

Research affirms that the reputation and effectiveness of local councils depends upon public awareness. So a big part of our job is to ensure we communicate what we do and help raise the profile and reputation of local councils to a wide-ranging audience – from parliamentarians in Westminster to national organisations to civil society groups to people in areas currently without grass roots local democracy.

This new publication, the first in a series over coming months, aims to shine a spotlight on the

actions being taken at the local level on a range of issues facing our communities. From digital inclusion to climate change, from supporting the local economy to affordable housing, local councils are being inventive, innovative, collaborative – as well as making use of the new power of well-being – to overcome barriers to deliver solutions for local people.

I hope that you will not only enjoy reading about ideas being put into practice, but you will be inspired to share your own experiences as we together continue to make a central contribution to the Big Society and helping our local communities.

Cllr Michael Chater, chairman,
National Association of Local Councils

500.00 +
508.00 +
90.00 +
75.00 +
10.00 +
25.00 +
50.00 +
565.26 +
970.00 +
1,187.00 +
2,173.00 +
0. *

8,015. =
350. =
22.90 *
0. *

500.00 *
500.00 *
500.00 *
734.00 +
56.00 +
20 +
x +
0. *

00.00 +
480.00 +
500.00 +
525.00 +
300.00 +
400.00 +
1,200.00 +
0. *

150.00 *
1,025.00 +
520.81 +
04.47 +
0.00 +
00 +



**ECONOMY &
RECESSION**

Ingatestone & Fryerning Parish Council, Essex

Population: 5,000

Precept: £76,000

In 2006, Ingatestone & Fryerning Parish Council introduced a 'Victorian Christmas Evening' to promote local shops and businesses and reinforce the village's community spirit. The parish council's sub-committee, which is responsible for organising the event, includes involvement from local shop owners and business people, as well input from the principal authorities.

In addition to local shops opening late, local societies and organisations take part in the event by selling goods in aid of their own funds, with others contributing by providing entertainment. Examples include the Scouts selling hot chestnuts, the Women's Institute provide tea and cakes in the church, the Operatic Society sing carols, and the town crier and mayor of Brentwood attend dressed in their full regalia.

Local shopkeepers and the parish council's staff

and councillors dress in Victorian-style clothes and the event opens with a parade along the High Street led by a coach pulled by two white shire horses and two highland bagpipers.

The parish council also runs an annual Best Dressed Window Competition during the event and a fancy dress competition for children, organised in conjunction with local schools.

The community and the parish council see this event as an ongoing success story.

Keighley Town Council, Yorkshire

Population: 52,000

Precept: £383,250

Keighley Town Council has established a post of special projects co-ordinator. The co-ordinator meets with business people, local partnerships, events partners and so on, to develop good relations with businesses that wish to support community projects and the Mayor's Charity.

The co-ordinator is presently overseeing a project to buy the former police station for a civic centre. It is planned that the building, which will be self-financing and sustainable, will be used for a range of services and activities on offer to the community, including:

- free legal advice;
- free debt management advice;
- a police contact point;
- tourist and visitor and public information section;
- catering facilities;

- a convention centre;
- council offices;
- an allotments and storage area.

All of the above services will be provided by top-class, established local business people, who have expertise in each of their fields to offer this project in support to the town council. The total project cost is £1.1m and the town council has had secretary of state approval to borrow this money.

The town council is in the process of completing the purchase and then it will move forward with the renovation, with completion hopefully in April 2011.

The projects co-ordinator is also working on other schemes, with a new college in the town being one of these. The college opened in September this year, and the town council has worked closely with Leeds City College in

promoting the new Keighley campus. The council is working closely with the college and hopes to mobilise students possibly within a new Tourist Information Centre, something it considers the town is lacking, particularly for Keighley & Worth Valley Railway, Cliffe Castle Museum and East Riddlesden Hall, all of which are local attractions.

The town council also runs two big music events in the grounds of Cliffe Castle during July, attracting upwards of 2,000 people. In addition it also runs markets on Church Green – its new events area – on St George’s Day and Oktoberfest with street entertainment.



Sevenoaks Town Council, Kent

Population: 18,500

Precept: £715,000

Over the last 12 months, Sevenoaks Town Council has made a conscious decision to help combat the effects of the economic downturn on local people. One of its most significant initiatives has been to take over, under a 25-year commercial lease, a recently bankrupted theatre and arts complex, The Stag Arts Complex, from the district council.

To date, this has been a successful endeavour with the complex now in existence for nine months, and is performing to the published budget. Additionally, the project has created 20 full-time jobs, provided opportunities for around 400 local people to be involved as volunteers and has helped the regeneration of the town's night-time economy. One measurable return is the restoration of the district council's lost £12,000 evening car parking income, which vanished when the theatre closed. Indirectly, reports from

the town's shops, restaurants, cafes and other businesses are showing that the resurgent Stag's customers are now spending money in the town and the venue is attracting people who had stopped visiting Sevenoaks.

Another initiative being spearheaded by the town council is to counter the absence of a Job Centre. The council is providing an occasional advice and guidance facility through a new job club, offering free advice on CV writing and interview techniques. As a result of positive feedback the council has kept it going.

The venue for meetings has also moved to The Stag because it is in the centre of Sevenoaks. The council believed the job club would be more accessible to people without transport and could be used as a drop-in facility, making it less intimidating for people to come in and get free advice.

Waltham Abbey Town Council, Essex

Population: 20,400

Precept: £770,000

In conjunction with Epping Forest District Council, Waltham Abbey Town Council manages the only Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in the district council area. It provides information to visitors, including a considerable number of overseas visitors, as well as to local people.

The town council is in the process of installing several 'blue plaques' commemorating historical figures and promoting Waltham Abbey as a tourist destination. The TIC also runs coach trips for residents and acts as box office for several organisations within the town.

The town council organises several events within the town, including the 'Town Show' and the 'Cavalcade of Light' (festive lighting switch-on), which attracts thousands of visitors. It also hosts the local town partnership meetings, which aim to improve the town's economy, at no cost.

The town clerk is a member of the Legacy Committee, which was formed to make the most of the 2012 Olympic Games white water canoe course in the Lee Valley. This has led to excellent partnership working between several county and district councils.

The town council is also considering turning some of its land into a camp site (touring caravans and tents), because it has easy access from the M25, has a great heritage product and easy access to the Lee Valley Regional Park and Epping Forest.





**CLIMATE CHANGE
& SUSTAINABILITY**

Aylsham Town Council, Norfolk

Population: 6,000

Precept: £218,000

Aylsham Town Council was the first town in Norfolk to go 'plasticbagfree', a project run by Norfolk County Council in partnership with the town's traders association, the town council, and Broadland District Council.

Each household in the town was given a free cloth bag with the design on the bag the result of a competition among local schoolchildren.

The town council is about to embark on a further project with the county council and traders, which is centred around environmental reviews of buildings. These will be carried out by the county council as a free service to businesses on how to save money, energy and work more sustainably.

As a network of towns, Cittàslow UK is conscious of the climate change agenda and will identify a project that all towns can work on together for 2010.

The town council is looking to promote both Cittàslow and growing your own food as part of its food festival by taking space at the Farmers' Markets for seed/plant swaps and facilitating allotment holders to swap surplus produce. The town council is also seeking out more allotment land as demand currently outstrips supply.

The council works with Slow Food Aylsham, local schools and the community to promote local food through the food festival, children's cooking workshops and family learning days.

Many of its cluster schools grow vegetables in the school gardens, one school sells its produce, another sells eggs from the school hens, where the chicken shed is lit by a light bulb powered by a demonstration wind turbine.

This same school also has a Field Study Centre, which has been converted from some store

outbuildings, using photo-voltaics, sunpipes and sheeps wool insulation.

The new public toilets in Aylsham have now been open for two years and include many energy saving measures, including sunpipes, waterless urinals, time controlled taps with aerators to maximise flow but minimise use, dual flush toilets and sedum roofs. The toilets have also won a Campaign to Protect Rural England Award.

The town council, with Broadland District Council, also operates a 'light bulb library' where for a small deposit residents can take light bulbs home and try out the various energy saving bulbs to see which is best for them.

Barnstaple Town Council, Devon

Population: 20,724

Precept: £517,810

In 2007, Barnstaple Town Council carried out a 'green audit' on all town council premises at a minimal cost of £500, but which it has found to be extremely worthwhile in terms of savings in energy, materials and time. As a result of the audit, the town council has replaced all Heritage Centre exhibition lights with LEDs and installed energy efficient lighting in its buildings, including the Guildhall, Castle Centre, Heritage Centre and Barum House.

Other measures have included putting bricks in lavatories to reduce water consumption; renegotiating energy contracts for all council buildings; reducing the number of office printers from seven to two, with the majority of printing now being done on a central printer/copier; using email to transfer documents and information to councillors; and using stationery made from

recycled materials wherever possible.

The audit also served to put climate change and sustainability at the forefront of policy making decisions when formulating the council's development plan. Some examples are below.

- The town council owns four allotment sites and is increasing the number of allotments available by reclaiming overgrown land and dividing some large plots into two.
- It has also introduced a 'Tidy Up Our Town' project. Each year it organises a week-long event that brings together local community groups, residents associations, schools, the police and fire services. It has recently launched the Barnstaple Green Team and acts as the facilitator for schools, residents associations, environmental/green groups and local people to share experiences, join forces

to deliver projects and provide support and advice. The motto for the Green Team is 'I'll do what I can, where I can, when I can'. For further information on these initiatives see www.barnstapletowncouncil.co.uk.

- Regularly shortlisted for the Cemetery of Year Award, the town council won the Community Award for its environmental and community projects in Bear Street Cemetery, which is managed by the council on behalf of North Devon Council.
- Local children designed and painted murals on litter bins, built and installed bird boxes and planted wild flower sections. A recycling and composting facility was introduced for flowers and grass cuttings while tree branches are shredded and used as mulch. The local probation service assists council staff in delivering some of these projects.
- The council organised a Schools Environmental Forum to engage with young people in the town and exchange ideas on tackling climate change. It is now working with local schools to develop the Schools Energy Programme.

A further green audit will be carried out in 2010 to evaluate the results to date and set new targets.

reduce

reuse

recycle

Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Parish Council, Staffordshire

Population: 12,176

Precept: £58,400

Heath Hayes & Wimblebury Parish Council takes a proactive approach to environmental issues and has appointed a 'green councillor'. Plus, with a grant from the former Quality Parishes Investment Fund it has installed a new high efficiency boiler at the Hayes Green Community Centre, low energy bulbs throughout, including in the toilets where sensors ensure they are only used when needed.

The parish also liaises with a local group that has won eco-awards and is adopting its best practice where appropriate and introducing its own ideas for the area.

The council has acquired funding for a map to be delivered to its 15,000 residents to encourage walking and cycling, especially to and from schools. It also reviews all its policies from a green perspective and as a minor point, it has a Christmas lights competition where it awarded a

cash prize to the best five. The council discussed the use of electricity and now gives out low energy bulbs to the value of the prize.

The council also ensures that road problems are reported promptly to reduce congestion and wear and tear on vehicles. In addition, it promotes safer routes to school to improve fitness and reduce vehicle miles. Negotiations are currently underway with the district council for the transfer of ownership of some allotments to the parish council, as well as the release of other land for use as new allotments.

All 13 councillors are elected and 11 have received training in the power of well-being. A Statement of Community Engagement has been adopted and the council is adopting the power of well-being. It is also in the process of applying for re-accreditation for Quality Council status.

Whittington & Fisherwick Parish Council, Staffordshire

Population: 2,591

Precept: £42,380

The villages of Whittington & Fisherwick have established a very active and forward-thinking environmental group, which is pushing for the villages to go carbon neutral. While the group is not formally part of the parish council, the parish council actively supports its aims.

Following spiralling energy running costs, the parish council itself sought funding to double glaze and install roof insulation in its sports pavilion. It also raised funds to install an Eco Air Source pump heater in the pavilion and secured part funding from the Whittington & Fisherwick Environment Group, which has raised awareness in the village of all energy and eco-friendly projects through a newsletter.

As a result of public consultation, the community had requested the provision of allotments. As none were available within the village, the parish council

negotiated a long-term lease on a small parcel of land and created 31 allotment plots with an active allotment garden society. There is currently a waiting list for these plots.

The parish council has obtained the fishing rights, for which it makes no charge for use, for a section of waterway following local concern that fishing clubs outside the area would limit local use for fishing.

The council has also secured a further lease for land for recreational purposes and has already secured over £57,000 for refurbishing existing facilities on this land and built new tennis courts. The park has now opened up to the public.

Additionally, the parish council has purchased two acres of former Glebe land with a view to opening the area for further recreational areas and possibly a multi-use games area.

**LOCALLY
GROWN**





**DIGITAL INCLUSION
& ENGAGEMENT**



Epping Town Council, Essex

Population: 11,047

Precept: £410,000

One of the pressing issues in Epping has been the lack of a free newspaper and the perceived growing 'regionalisation' of the local 'paid for' paper. Local opinion is that this has marginalised local news and events and has had an impact on local organisations.

A former local news editor has established an online newspaper covering the district. For the last six months the town council has been trialling an arrangement for an Epping Town edition of local news. Recognising the relatively large elderly population in the area, the town council prints a small number of paper copies that are distributed from a number of locations around the town and also posts them to six physical noticeboards.

The town council also puts this edition of the newspaper on its website and shares it with its twin town in Germany.

The town council does not seek editorial control and therefore the newspaper can contain criticism of the town council, with the only restrictions being on party political comment and the promotion of immorality. As the town council does not have a specific power to provide this news-sheet, it has made use of Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council, Worcestershire

Population: 4,140

Precept: £46,500

Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council has run a website for several years and is now focusing its efforts on receiving greater feedback from the local community.

For the last 18 months, the parish council has set up and used a blog, www.parishblog.org, which is used periodically. By doing this, the parish council is developing its online communications with the website as a static information source and the blog as a dynamic interactive tool, acknowledging that this step forward will take time and involve an education process of both local councillors and the local community.

The chairman of the parish council has this year started to use Twitter, both as an attempt to engage with the younger end of the village population, and to also allow for a more personalised and informal conversation with the community.

The parish council is becoming increasingly aware of the importance and benefits of digital engagement with the community, which is generally affluent and either retired, home-working or commuting into Birmingham City with teenage or early 20s children.

The parish council is in the early stages of discussing an initiative to establish a community hub based around the schools, which could provide catering, meeting places and internet access for diverse age groups. The council is also working on tackling social inclusion through such a project, including reducing the fear of crime issues, improving volunteering and bringing the community closer together.

The council has opened tentative dialogue with some school governors who are so far supportive of such an initiative.



Sandhurst Town Council, Berkshire

Population: 21,500

Precept: £560,000

Sandhurst Town Council has been developing its website, www.sandhurst.gov.uk, and newsletter in response to feedback from the local community and has also developed and hosted a new 'What's on' site, www.sandhurstpride.co.uk, in partnership with the Sandhurst Area Extended Services Steering Group.

The town council's digital armoury now extends to a photo library of over 5,000 images of community life in Sandhurst, many of which are in the modern age section of its museum library.

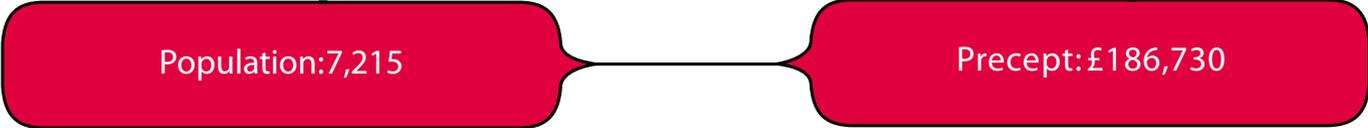
The town council also produces a PDF version of the newsletter, has an online message board and makes use of modern technology to link with 36 different partners forming a 'third party' communications network to disseminate news and messages. Information is published on its Local Community TV screen and it produces DVDs to

promote Sandhurst Pride and its Green Flag status at exhibitions and roadshows.

In 2008, as part of a wider programme of roadshow events, Tesco and Marks & Spencer stores in Sandhurst showed the town council's DVD on their televisions in store.

In all of its digital progress, the town council is aware that it deals with vast numbers of residents who either do not want to receive information electronically or do not have access to the internet. To this end, it provides hardcopy services via the first stop shop, using pamphlets, forms and news information.

Stone Parish Council, Kent



Population:7,215

Precept:£186,730

Stone Parish Council runs a successful website that receives around 1,500 hits per month. The website features all council information and news, plus details of local events, groups and organisations.

The site has the ability for visitors to sign up for html emails, which has resulted in a current database of 350 email addresses that receive regular news from the parish council.

All the parish council's newsletters are available online and readers are informed when a new upload has taken place should they prefer to read it electronically rather than wait for a hard copy to be delivered.

The parish council's long term plan is to create a page similar to iGoogle, which can provide local residents with links to everything they might require (local news, weather, local shops offers, bus times and so on) and to make it the council's

homepage, resulting in the council being able to reach local people on a daily basis.

The council already uses Twitter and Facebook as an additional communications medium and is currently investigating digital noticeboards.



POWER OF WELL-BEING



Chaddesley Corbett Parish Council, Worcestershire

Population: 1,600

Precept: £21,730

Chaddesley Corbett is a large parish of some 6,000 acres (2,428 hectares) set within the heart of the Worcestershire Countryside, and sits about 80 metres above sea level. The parish of Chaddesley Corbett with its unspoilt surroundings, attractive buildings and long history, provides enjoyment for residents and visitors alike.

The council adopted the power of well-being and has used it to turn part of an unused allotment site into a Community Orchard and has raised money from local residents for the planting of trees. The project, although not complete, is in its second year and much still needs to be done.

The remaining trees are due to be planted this autumn and donated benches will be installed so that people can sit and relax in the orchard.

The council is currently considering options the fruit from the orchard may offer the community.

Hatfield Broad Oak Parish Council, Hertfordshire

Population: 20,400

Precept: £25,500

Hatfield Broad Oak is in Essex, very close to Stansted Airport, and has a thriving community with a growing school, a post office shop and two pubs.

After the clerk gained the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA), the parish council began a project to create a village green with cricket, football and other leisure facilities on land generously offered for the purpose.

Having the power of well-being has simplified the council's procedures and led to enhanced awareness and communication about the project.

The council has already applied for, and been granted, permission for 'change of use'. The feasibility stages of the project are well underway with the required surveys of the protected wildlife (newts, bats and owls) completed. Plans have been drawn up by architects for the area, which include some landscaping and levelling. The council is

now applying for grant funding and the power has removed possible constraints to the project and simplified things.

The few villagers that had reservations about the project now recognise that the changes required to qualify for the power would bring improvements to the way the parish council operates.

The council was fortunate enough to have two-thirds of its members elected and all were willing to be trained. A working group was formed to draft a statement of intent on community engagement, which, with support from the Essex Association of Local Councils, was quite straightforward.

Having determined its eligibility, the council adopted the power in May 2009. The next step is to gain Quality Council status, and having qualified for the power of well-being this puts the council in a good position to achieve this.



Leominster Town Council, Herefordshire

Population: 11,500

Precept: £183,000

Leominster is a small market town in Herefordshire. The town council has 16 members and became a Quality Council in 2008. It then went on to achieve eligibility to use the power of well-being in 2009.

When it was discovered that the head teacher of Leominster Infants School wanted to introduce the Year Two infants to swimming, but was unable to secure funding from the Local Education Authority, Leominster Town Council stepped in to negotiate swimming lessons with Halo Leisure (the local leisure centre provider) and the physical education co-ordinator at the school. This was quickly and easily carried out and for a cost of around £1,400 a term, the children could all learn to swim.

At the end of the last summer term, the council received letters from some of the children saying

how much they all enjoyed going swimming and asking for more lessons next year so that they could try to win a badge.

This, the town council says, has been a very successful project that will continue as long as it has the power of well-being at its disposal.



Hockley Parish Council, Essex

Population: 10,000

Precept: £222,800

Hockley has used the power of well-being twice since determining its eligibility under the conditions and passing a resolution to adopt it.

The council has a children's play space in the community that is accessed via an unmade private road that the local residents repair. In order to assist with maintenance as a frontager through the power of well-being, the council has provided the residents with £100 to assist with the purchase of 'chippings' to repair holes in the road surface.

Tragically, last year, a young local school pupil died of swine flu. He was an active young man and his school, which has 600 pupils, raised £12,000 to build an 'Adventure Trail' that can be used by all pupils for many years to come. Using the power of well-being, the parish council donated £500 towards the project and the school was very grateful.

Have you been inspired by these good practice case studies?

If so, then you can continue being enthused by reading LCR magazine – the high-quality quarterly publication published by NALC.

Each issue features in-depth articles and features offering advice and good practice, along with regular spotlights on parish and town councils and top tips information to assist you with the real issues affecting local councils and communities.

In the latest issue of LCR, we unpick the 'Big Society' jungle by highlighting what local councils are already achieving within this framework. We also look at NALC's 2010 Local Council Award winners and how they have overcome great challenges and difficulties to be fine examples of localism. In these uncertain economic times, we showcase how a local council was involved in setting up a local currency – generating money for the town and keeping it within the area. Plus, there are top tips on media relations and using new

media vehicles such as social media. And this is all in just one issue!

In addition, LCR's website, LCR Online (www.lcronline.org.uk) brings you important news, features and events on the major issues affecting local communities via parish, town and community councils. We use good practice here to illustrate these points. And to encourage debate and feedback on all things to do with local government, the website also features blogs and twitter pages.

LCR and LCR Online act as the perfect compliment to this Localism in Practice guide. Every councillor and officer in local councils should be getting their own copy.

For more information on subscribing to LCR, email: lcr@nalc.gov.uk.



Published by the National
Association of Local Councils
109 Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3LD
Tel: 020 7637 1865
Fax: 020 7436 7451
Email: nalc@nalc.gov.uk
Website: www.nalc.gov.uk

© NALC 2010. All rights reserved

