

## NOTE ON LOCALITY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### Background – Infrastructure and Funding to Encourage Services outside the Public Sector

Locality works with the Access Foundation and Power to Change. The Foundation, launched in 2015 with Lottery Funding, funds Enterprise Development and Investment Readiness and operates a Growth and Local Access Fund (Access Foundation, 2019).

Power to Change, created in 2015 with a £150mn endowment from Big Lottery, operates a Communities Business Fund, funding for Health and Social Care, Blended Funding with Key Fund and Homes in Community Hands. It advocates Community Shares (Power to Change, 2018)

Locality has received substantial sums of money from Government to undertake process, rather than outcome-driven, and support for selected local community bodies in Localism Act-related activities. This included formulaic, one-size-fits-all instruction on neighbourhood plans and registering Assets of Community Value (ACVs).

Locality's 'My Community' site incorporates a Community Economic Development programme run by Cooperatives UK, Locality, Community Development Finance Association and New Economics Foundation. (Locality, 2019). This joint activity effectively locks these organisations into joint programmes for outsourcing public services. 'My Community' and Locality deliver six programmes of grants and support on behalf of the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Locality and other community development organisations are also supported by various community "rights" programmes. An "Understanding the Community Right to Challenge" briefing, jointly published by Locality, Social Investment Business, which arranges social investment, and ACEVO, (Locality et al., 2019) includes Community Right to Build, Community Right to Bid, Public Services Reform under the July 2011 Open Public Services White Paper, the Social Value Act and Best Value. Alongside this, under the Right to Request programme, more than 50 social enterprises have been set up to provide NHS services. Many were previously provided by Primary Care Trusts.

### Locality's "Save our Spaces" Campaign

Locality's "Save Our Spaces: The Great British Sell Off" in June 2018 advocates increasing "the number of buildings taken into community ownership" (Locality, 2018, p. 11). Though Locality proclaims in "Save our Spaces" that it fights to save public buildings and spaces – with around 4,000 spaces, including libraries, parts, pools and town halls sold each year – the organisation is a key provider of funding and advice for communities to run libraries and other public buildings and spaces.

### Locality Benefits for Businesses

Locality claims 600 members. Sole traders join for £250. Corporates, including the private sector, join for £500 (Locality, 2019). Business members can exhibit at the annual Locality Convention and use the Locality membership logo to market materials and for promotion. Business members can also choose 'Partnership Plus', so that Locality will "chat about your requirements, so you can get exactly what you need. Locality will also help business members to arrange staff secondments and to try out business ideas for local communities. Business can obtain feedback from Locality on "how your business can work with local communities".

Locality sub-contracts much work to freelancers, applying few quality controls. Like other similar bodies, it thrives on a diet of self-congratulation and in the knowledge that there not many who call its work into question.

Locality and bodies above continue to receive funding from Government (Department of Culture, Media and Sport), Big Lottery and Big Society Capital. The main objective of their funding points in a similar direction – to encourage local communities to take over buildings and ultimately to provide public services. Community ownership of assets enables their borrowing, again with a view to enhancing the range of services provided.

### House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee

As recipients of government funds, Locality are obliged for accounting purposes to keep records of numbers of neighbourhood plans started and registered Assets of Community Value (ACVs). However, since they had no financial interest in what would happen next, they were unable to answer House of Commons Communities and Local Government Select Committee's questions on whether and to what degree these actions had secured longer-term sustainability for the communities concerned (Communities and Local Government Committee, 2014). The Chief Executive of Locality, Tony Armstrong was only able to say that 15,000 inquiries had been received and 730 grants had been awarded. When asked about actual process results – running libraries and other services, he could not give further information. At this hearing, the deputy Chief Executive of the Social Investment Business, was also unable to provide further information.

### Kerslake Localism Commission

Finding themselves short of funds, in partnership with Power to Change, in 2017 Locality commissioned Lord Bob Kerslake – who dismantled much of Sheffield's cooperatives legacy - to bring together a panel for a Commission on the Future of Localism. In its January 2018 Report, this recommended (Kerslake, 2018, p. 42):

- Supporting the general direction of Locality and community processes, including strengthening Community Rights frameworks
- New power partnership between local government and local people to unlock the potential of localism, including social value in procurement, embedding community control in local economic strategies and supporting neighbourhood planning.
- National government to show leadership in setting the conditions for localism to flourish, including strengthening Community Right to Buy and embedding localism in the devolution agenda

### More Outsourcing Examples

More proposals to move services outside local government and the NHS are made regularly, with little public awareness. Under the "Health as a Social Movement" programme, NESTA, New Economics Foundation and the Royal Society of Arts were part of a £700,000 project to create six "health vanguard sites". Members of these "social movements" are "people managing chronic health conditions or adhering to complex medication regimes, the people who have grievances with the status quo and can translate them into inspirational visions of a better life and society" (Castillo et al., 2016, p. 9).

All these initiatives are supported by the Access Foundation (Access Foundation, 2019) and 'Power to Change' (Power to Change, 2018) and encouraged by Locality, with their longer term aim of injecting private funding to provide setup, development and infrastructure costs for public service delivery.

## References

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